

Complete Works of

C. S. Lewis

DELPHI CLASSICS

Series Eight

The Complete Works of

C. S. LEWIS

(1898-1963)



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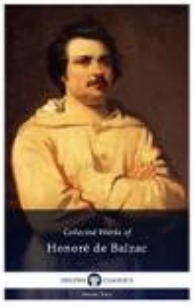


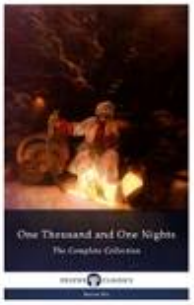
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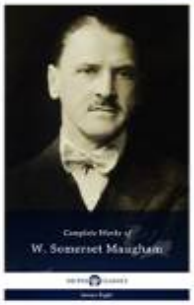
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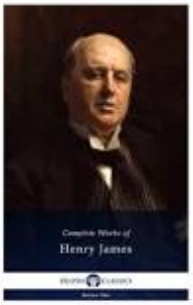
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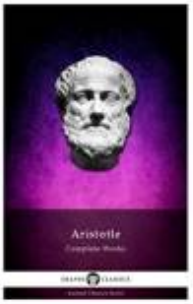


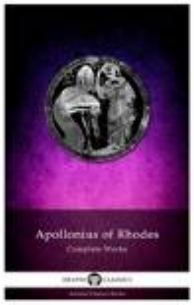


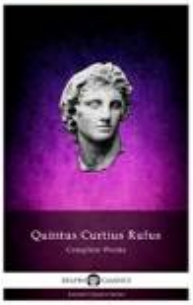




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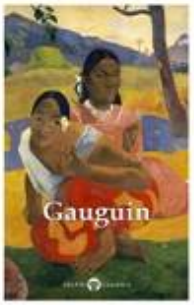






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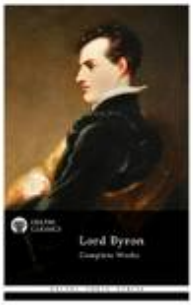




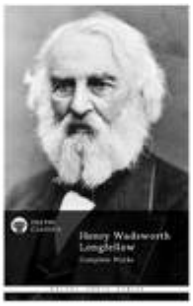


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The Complete Works of

C. S. LEWIS



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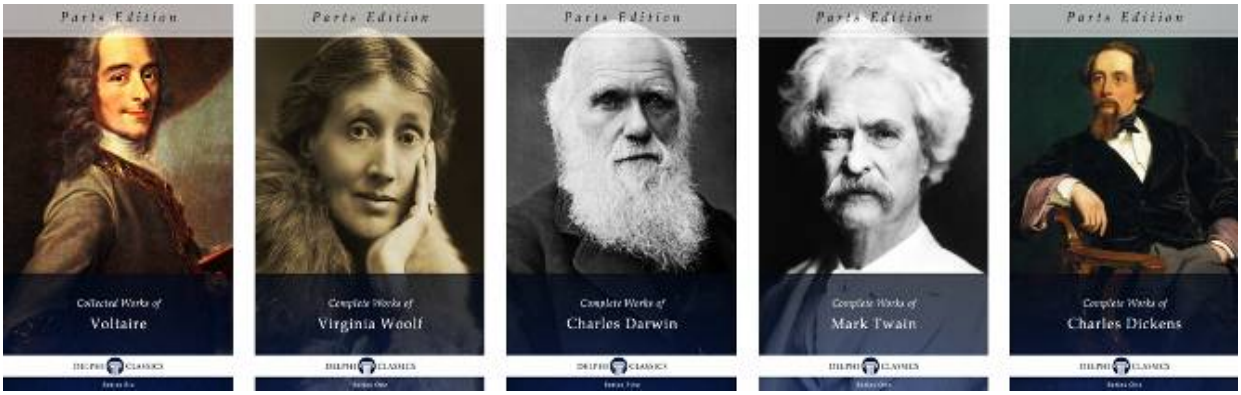
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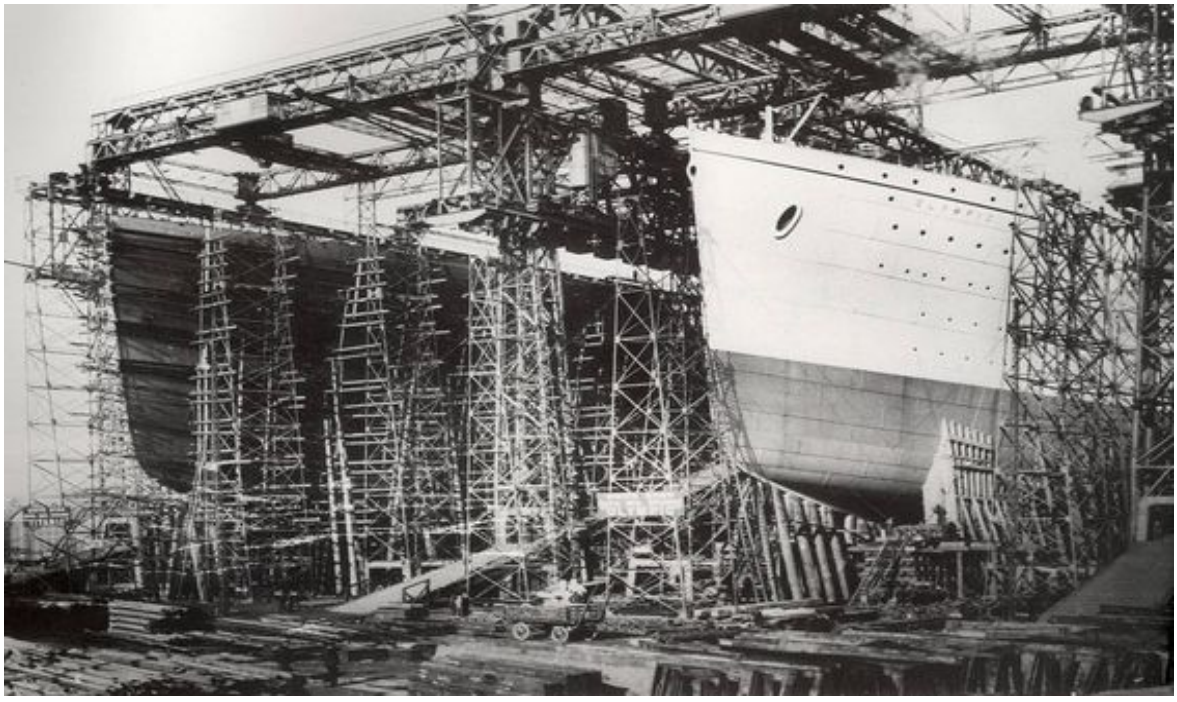
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The Space Trilogy



The Belfast Shipyard where the Titanic was built — Clive Staples Lewis was born in Dundela, east Belfast on 29 November 1898, overlooking the shipyard where the Titanic would soon be built.



Plaque commemorating the author's birth at Dundela Villas — the house no longer stands



St Mark's Church, Dundela — Lewis was baptised in the font at the west end of the church on 29 January 1899 by his grandfather, the Rev. Thomas Hamilton, Rector of St. Mark's.

[Page 24].

BAPTISMS administered in the Church of St. Mark in the Parish of Dundela in the Diocese of Down in the Year 1879

When Baptized.	When Born.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents Name. Christian.	Parents Name. Surname.	Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was Performed.
1879 Jan 29 No 186	Nov. 29 1878	Clive Stapleton	albert James & Florence Augusta	Lewis	Dundela Villa Strand Road	Solicitor	[illegible]

Lewis' entry in the baptism register

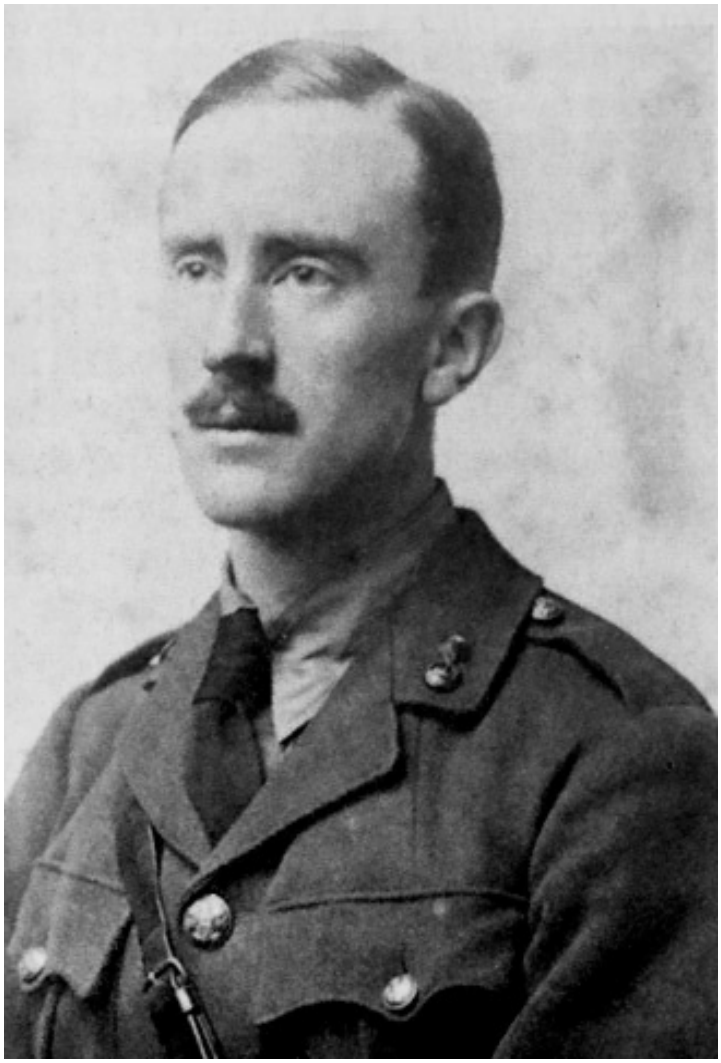
OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET (1938)



First published in 1938 by John Lane, The Bodley Head, this novel forms the first part of the Space Trilogy, which was influenced by David Lindsay's fantasy and science-fiction novel *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920). It is believed that *Out of the Silent Planet* came about following a conversation between Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, in which they both lamented the state of contemporary fiction. They agreed that Lewis would write a space-travel story and Tolkien would write a time-travel tale. Tolkien's story only exists as a fragment, published in *The Lost Road and Other Writings* (1987), edited by his son Christopher.

The narrative introduces Dr. Elwin Ransom, a professor of philology at a college of the University of Cambridge, gifted in many languages. At the front door of a house in the country, Ransom hears shouting and struggling inside. When he hurries around the back, he sees Weston and Devine trying to force Harry, a dull-witted young man, to enter a structure on the property. Ransom intervenes and Devine sees him as a better prospect than Harry for what he and Weston have in mind. With Weston's grudging consent, Devine offers Ransom a drink and accommodations for the night.

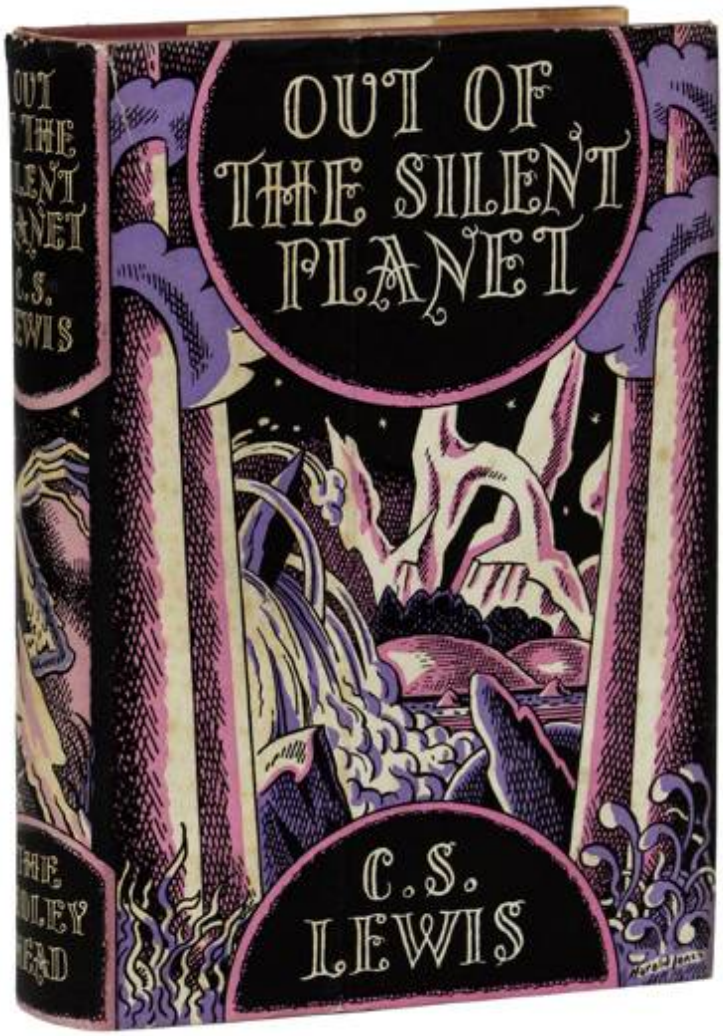
After enjoying what he thinks is a glass of water, Ransom realises that he has been drugged. He tries to escape, but is subdued by Weston and Devine. When he regains consciousness he finds himself in a spherical spacecraft on its way to a planet called Malacandra. The wonder and excitement of such a prospect relieves his anguish at being abducted, but Ransom is put on his guard when he overhears Weston and Devine deliberating whether they will again drug him or keep him conscious when they turn him over to the inhabitants of Malacandra, the *sorns*, as a sacrifice. Ransom is put to work as cook and scullion, but appropriates a knife and plans to escape. Once they land on the strange planet, Ransom takes his chance and runs off into the unknown landscape…



Lewis' close friend and fellow novelist, J. R. R. Tolkien, aged 24, 1916. They were both members of the informal literary discussion group known as the Inklings.

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POSTSCRIPT



The first edition

TO MY BROTHER

W. H. L.

A Life-Long Critic of the Space-And-Time Story

NOTE

Certain slighting references to earlier stories of this type which will be found in the following pages have been put there for purely dramatic purposes. The author would be sorry if any reader supposed he was too stupid to have enjoyed Mr. H. G. Wells's fantasies or too ungrateful to acknowledge his debt to them.

C. S. L.

ONE

The last drops of the thundershower had hardly ceased falling when the Pedestrian stuffed his map into his pocket, settled his pack more comfortably on his tired shoulders, and stepped out from the shelter of a large chestnut-tree into the middle of the road. A violent yellow sunset was pouring through a rift in the clouds to westward, but straight ahead over the hills the sky was the colour of dark slate. Every tree and blade of grass was dripping, and the road shone like a river. The Pedestrian wasted no time on the landscape but set out at once with the determined stride of a good walker who has lately realized that he will have to walk farther than he intended. That, indeed, was his situation. If he had chosen to look back, which he did not, he could have seen the spire of Much Nadderby, and, seeing it, might have uttered a malediction on the inhospitable little hotel which, though obviously empty, had refused him a bed. The place had changed hands since he last went for a walking-tour in these parts. The kindly old landlord on whom he had reckoned had been replaced by someone whom the barmaid referred to as ‘the lady,’ and the lady was apparently a British innkeeper of that orthodox school who regard guests as a nuisance. His only chance now was Sterk, on the far side of the hills, and a good six miles away. The map marked an inn at Sterk. The Pedestrian was too experienced to build any very sanguine hopes on this, but there seemed nothing else within range.

He walked fairly fast, and doggedly, without looking much about him, like a man trying to shorten the way with some interesting train of thought. He was tall, but a little round-shouldered, about thirty-five to forty years of age, and dressed with that particular kind of shabbiness which marks a member of the intelligentsia on a holiday. He might easily have been mistaken for a doctor or a schoolmaster at first sight, though he had not the man-of-the-world air of the one or the indefinable breeziness of the other. In fact, he was a philologist, and fellow of a Cambridge college. His name was Ransom.

He had hoped when he left Nadderby that he might find a night’s lodging at some friendly farm before he had walked as far as Sterk. But the land this side of the hills seemed almost uninhabited. It was a desolate, featureless sort of country mainly devoted to cabbage and turnip, with poor hedges and

few trees. It attracted no visitors like the richer country south of Nadderby and it was protected by the hills from the industrial areas beyond Sterk. As the evening drew in and the noise of the birds came to an end it grew more silent than an English landscape usually is. The noise of his own feet on the metalled road became irritating.

He had walked thus for a matter of two miles when he became aware of a light ahead. He was close under the hills by now and it was nearly dark, so that he still cherished hopes of a substantial farmhouse until he was quite close to the real origin of the light, which proved to be a very small cottage of ugly nineteenth-century brick. A woman darted out of the open doorway as he approached it and almost collided with him.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ she said. ‘I thought it was my Harry.’

Ransom asked her if there was any place nearer than Sterk where he might possibly get a bed.

‘No, sir,’ said the woman. ‘Not nearer than Sterk. I dare say as they might fix you up at Nadderby.’

She spoke in a humbly fretful voice as if her mind were intent on something else. Ransom explained that he had already tried Nadderby.

‘Then I don’t know, I’m sure, sir,’ she replied. ‘There isn’t hardly any house before Sterk, not what you want. There’s only The Rise, where my Harry works, and I thought you was coming from that way, sir, and that’s why I come out when I heard you, thinking it might be him. He ought to be home this long time.’

‘The Rise,’ said Ransom. ‘What’s that? A farm? Would they put me up?’

‘Oh no, sir. You see there’s no one there now except the Professor and the gentleman from London, not since Miss Alice died. They wouldn’t do anything like that, sir. They don’t even keep any servants, except my Harry for doing the furnace like, and he’s not in the house.’

‘What’s this professor’s name?’ asked Ransom, with a faint hope.

‘I don’t know, I’m sure, sir,’ said the woman. ‘The other gentleman’s Mr. Devine, he is, and Harry says the *other* gentleman is a professor. He don’t know much about it, you see, sir, being a little simple, and that’s why I don’t like him coming home so late, and they said they’d always send him home at six o’clock. It isn’t as if he didn’t do a good day’s work either.’

The monotonous voice and the limited range of the woman’s vocabulary did not express much emotion, but Ransom was standing sufficiently near to perceive that she was trembling and nearly crying. It occurred to him that

he ought to call on the mysterious professor and ask for the boy to be sent home: and it occurred to him just a fraction of a second later that once he were inside the house — among men of his own profession — he might very reasonably accept the offer of a night's hospitality. Whatever the process of thought may have been, he found that the mental picture of himself calling at The Rise had assumed all the solidity of a thing determined upon. He told the woman what he intended to do.

'Thank you very much, sir, I'm sure,' she said. 'And if you would be so kind as to see him out of the gate and on the road before you leave, if you see what I mean, sir. He's that frightened of the Professor and he wouldn't come away once your back was turned, sir, not if they hadn't sent him home themselves like.'

Ransom reassured the woman as well as he could and bade her good-bye, after ascertaining that he would find The Rise on his left in about five minutes. Stiffness had grown upon him while he was standing still, and he proceeded slowly and painfully on his way.

There was no sign of any lights on the left of the road — nothing but the flat fields and a mass of darkness which he took to be a copse. It seemed more than five minutes before he reached it and found that he had been mistaken. It was divided from the road by a good hedge and in the hedge was a white gate: and the trees which rose above him as he examined the gate were not the first line of a copse but only a belt, and the sky showed through them. He felt quite sure now that this must be the gate of The Rise and that these trees surrounded a house and garden. He tried the gate and found it locked. He stood for a moment undecided, discouraged by the silence and the growing darkness. His first inclination, tired as he felt, was to continue his journey to Sterk: but he had committed himself to a troublesome duty on behalf of the old woman. He knew that it would be possible, if one really wanted, to force a way through the hedge. He did not want to. A nice fool he would look, blundering in upon some retired eccentric — the sort of a man who kept his gates locked in the country — with this silly story of a hysterical mother in tears because her idiot boy had been kept half an hour late at his work! Yet it was perfectly clear that he would have to get in, and since one cannot crawl through a hedge with a pack on, he slipped his pack off and flung it over the gate. The moment he had done so, it seemed to him that he had not till now fully made up his mind — now that he must break into the garden if only in order to recover

the pack. He became very angry with the woman, and with himself, but he got down on his hands and knees and began to worm his way into the hedge.

The operation proved more difficult than he had expected and it was several minutes before he stood up in the wet darkness on the inner side of the hedge smarting from his contact with thorns and nettles. He groped his way to the gate, picked up his pack, and then for the first time turned to take stock of his surroundings. It was lighter on the drive than it had been under the trees and he had no difficulty in making out a large stone house divided from him by a width of untidy and neglected lawn. The drive branched into two a little way ahead of him — the right-hand path leading in a gentle sweep to the front door, while the left ran straight ahead, doubtless to the back premises of the house. He noticed that this path was churned up into deep ruts — now full of water — as if it were used to carrying a traffic of heavy lorries. The other, on which he now began to approach the house, was overgrown with moss. The house itself showed no light: some of the windows were shuttered, some gaped blank without shutter or curtain, but all were lifeless and inhospitable. The only sign of occupation was a column of smoke that rose from behind the house with a density which suggested the chimney of a factory, or at least of a laundry, rather than that of a kitchen. The Rise was clearly the last place in the world where a stranger was likely to be asked to stay the night, and Ransom, who had already wasted some time in exploring it, would certainly have turned away if he had not been bound by his unfortunate promise to the old woman.

He mounted the three steps which led into the deep porch, rang the bell, and waited. After a time he rang the bell again and sat down on a wooden bench which ran along one side of the porch. He sat so long that though the night was warm and starlit the sweat began to dry on his face and a faint chilliness crept over his shoulders. He was very tired by now, and it was perhaps this which prevented him from rising and ringing the third time: this, and the soothing stillness of the garden, the beauty of the summer sky, and the occasional hooting of an owl somewhere in the neighbourhood which seemed only to emphasize the underlying tranquillity of his surroundings. Something like drowsiness had already descended upon him when he found himself startled into vigilance. A peculiar noise was going on — a scuffling, irregular noise, vaguely reminiscent of a football scrum. He stood up. The noise was unmistakable by now. People in boots were

fighting or wrestling or playing some game. They were shouting too. He could not make out the words but he heard the monosyllabic barking ejaculations of men who are angry and out of breath. The last thing Ransom wanted was an adventure, but a conviction that he ought to investigate the matter was already growing upon him when a much louder cry rang out in which he could distinguish the words, ‘Let me go. Let me go,’ and then, a second later, ‘I’m not going in there. Let me go home.’

Throwing off his pack, Ransom sprang down the steps of the porch, and ran round to the back of the house as quickly as his stiff and footsore condition allowed him. The ruts and pools of the muddy path led him to what seemed to be a yard, but a yard surrounded with an unusual number of outhouses. He had a momentary vision of a tall chimney, a low door filled with red firelight, and a huge round shape that rose black against the stars, which he took for the dome of a small observatory: then all this was blotted out of his mind by the figures of three men who were struggling together so close to him that he almost cannoned into them. From the very first Ransom felt no doubt that the central figure, whom the two others seemed to be detaining in spite of his struggles, was the old woman’s Harry. He would like to have thundered out, ‘What are you doing to that boy?’ but the words that actually came — in rather an unimpressive voice — were, ‘Here! I say! . . .’

The three combatants fell suddenly apart, the boy blubbering. ‘May I ask,’ said the thicker and taller of the two men, ‘who the devil you may be and what you are doing here?’ His voice had all the qualities which Ransom’s had so regrettably lacked.

‘I’m on a walking-tour,’ said Ransom, ‘and I promised a poor woman — —’

‘Poor woman be damned,’ said the other. ‘How did you get in?’

‘Through the hedge,’ said Ransom, who felt a little ill-temper coming to his assistance. ‘I don’t know what you’re doing to that boy, but — —’

‘We ought to have a dog in this place,’ said the thick man to his companion, ignoring Ransom.

‘You mean we should have a dog if you hadn’t insisted on using Tartar for an experiment,’ said the man who had not yet spoken. He was nearly as tall as the other, but slender, and apparently the younger of the two, and his voice sounded vaguely familiar to Ransom.

The latter made a fresh beginning. ‘Look here,’ he said, ‘I don’t know what you are doing to that boy, but it’s long after hours and it is high time you sent him home. I haven’t the least wish to interfere in your private affairs, but — —’

‘Who are you?’ bawled the thick man.

‘My name is Ransom, if that is what you mean. And — —’

‘By Jove,’ said the slender man, ‘not Ransom who used to be at Wedenshaw?’

‘I was at school at Wedenshaw,’ said Ransom.

‘I thought I knew you as soon as you spoke,’ said the slender man. ‘I’m Devine. Don’t you remember me?’

‘Of course. I should think I do!’ said Ransom as the two men shook hands with the rather laboured cordiality which is traditional in such meetings. In actual fact Ransom had disliked Devine at school as much as anyone he could remember.

‘Touching, isn’t it?’ said Devine. ‘The far-flung line even in the wilds of Sterk and Nadderby. This is where we get a lump in our throats and remember Sunday-evening Chapel in the D.O.P. You don’t know Weston, perhaps?’ Devine indicated his massive and loud-voiced companion. ‘*The* Weston,’ he added. ‘You know. The great physicist. Has Einstein on toast and drinks a pint of Schrödinger’s blood for breakfast. Weston, allow me to introduce my old schoolfellow, Ransom. Dr. Elwin Ransom. *The* Ransom, you know. The great philologist. Has Jespersen on toast and drinks a pint — —’

‘I know nothing about it,’ said Weston, who was still holding the unfortunate Harry by the collar. ‘And if you expect me to say that I am pleased to see this person who has just broken into my garden, you will be disappointed. I don’t care twopence what school he was at nor on what unscientific foolery he is at present wasting money that ought to go to research. I want to know what he’s doing here: and after that I want to see the last of him.’

‘Don’t be an ass, Weston,’ said Devine in a more serious voice. ‘His dropping in is delightfully apropos. You mustn’t mind Weston’s little way, Ransom. Conceals a generous heart beneath a grim exterior, you know. You’ll come in and have a drink and something to eat of course?’

‘That’s very kind of you,’ said Ransom. ‘But about the boy — —’

Devine drew Ransom aside. ‘Balmy,’ he said in a low voice. ‘Works like a beaver as a rule but gets these fits. We are only trying to get him into the wash-house and keep him quiet for an hour or so till he’s normal again. Can’t let him go home in his present state. All done by kindness. You can take him home yourself presently if you like — and come back and sleep here.’

Ransom was very much perplexed. There was something about the whole scene suspicious enough and disagreeable enough to convince him that he had blundered on something criminal, while on the other hand he had all the deep, irrational conviction of his age and class that such things could never cross the path of an ordinary person except in fiction and could least of all be associated with professors and old schoolfellows. Even if they had been ill-treating the boy, Ransom did not see much chance of getting him from them by force.

While these thoughts were passing through his head, Devine had been speaking to Weston, in a low voice, but no lower than was to be expected of a man discussing hospitable arrangements in the presence of a guest. It ended with a grunt of assent from Weston. Ransom, to whose other difficulties a merely social embarrassment was now being added, turned with the idea of making some remark. But Weston was now speaking to the boy.

‘You have given enough trouble for one night, Harry,’ he said. ‘And in a properly governed country I’d know how to deal with you. Hold your tongue and stop snivelling. You needn’t go into the wash-house if you don’t want — —’

‘It weren’t the wash-house,’ sobbed the half-wit, ‘you know it weren’t. I don’t want to go in *that* thing again.’

‘He means the laboratory,’ interrupted Devine. ‘He got in there and was shut in by accident for a few hours once. It put the wind up him for some reason. Lo, the poor Indian, you know.’ He turned to the boy. ‘Listen, Harry,’ he said. ‘This kind gentleman is going to take you home as soon as he’s had a rest. If you’ll come in and sit down quietly in the hall I’ll give you something you like.’ He imitated the noise of a cork being drawn from a bottle — Ransom remembered it had been one of Devine’s tricks at school — and a guffaw of infantile knowingness broke from Harry’s lips.

‘Bring him in,’ said Weston as he turned away and disappeared into the house. Ransom hesitated to follow, but Devine assured him that Weston

would be very glad to see him. The lie was barefaced, but Ransom’s desire for a rest and a drink were rapidly overcoming his social scruples. Preceded by Devine and Harry, he entered the house and found himself a moment later seated in an arm-chair and awaiting the return of Devine, who had gone to fetch refreshments.

TWO

The room into which he had been shown revealed a strange mixture of luxury and squalor. The windows were shuttered and curtainless, the floor was uncarpeted and strewn with packing-cases, shavings, newspapers and boots, and the wall-paper showed the stains left by the pictures and furniture of the previous occupants. On the other hand, the only two arm-chairs were of the costliest type, and in the litter which covered the tables, cigars, oyster-shells and empty champagne-bottles jostled with tins of condensed milk and opened sardine-tins, with cheap crockery, broken bread, and teacups a quarter full of tea and cigarette-ends.

His hosts seemed to be a long time away, and Ransom fell to thinking of Devine. He felt for him that sort of distaste we feel for someone whom we have admired in boyhood for a very brief period and then outgrown. Devine had learned just half a term earlier than anyone else that kind of humour which consists in a perpetual parody of the sentimental or idealistic clichés of one's elders. For a few weeks his references to the Dear Old Place and to Playing the Game, to the White Man's Burden and a Straight Bat, had swept everyone, Ransom included, off their feet. But before he left Wedenshaw Ransom had already begun to find Devine a bore, and at Cambridge he had avoided him, wondering from afar how anyone so flashy and, as it were, ready-made, could be so successful. Then had come the mystery of Devine's election to the Leicester fellowship, and the further mystery of his increasing wealth. He had long since abandoned Cambridge for London, and was presumably something 'in the city.' One heard of him occasionally and one's informant usually ended either by saying, 'A damn clever chap, Devine, in his own way,' or else by observing plaintively, 'It's a mystery to me how that man has got where he is.' As far as Ransom could gather from their brief conversation in the yard, his old schoolfellow had altered very little.

He was interrupted by the opening of the door. Devine entered alone, carrying a bottle of whiskey on a tray with glasses, and a syphon.

'Weston is looking out something to eat,' he said as he placed the tray on the floor beside Ransom's chair, and addressed himself to opening the bottle. Ransom, who was very thirsty indeed by now, observed that his host was one of those irritating people who forget to use their hands when they

begin talking. Devine started to prise up the silver paper which covered the cork with the point of a corkscrew, and then stopped to ask:

‘How do you come to be in this benighted part of the country?’

‘I’m on a walking-tour,’ said Ransom; ‘slept at Stoke Underwood last night and had hoped to end at Nadderby to-night. They wouldn’t put me up, so I was going on to Sterk.’

‘God!’ exclaimed Devine, his corkscrew still idle. ‘Do you do it for money, or is it sheer masochism?’

‘Pleasure, of course,’ said Ransom, keeping his eye immovably on the still unopened bottle.

‘Can the attraction of it be explained to the uninitiate?’ asked Devine, remembering himself sufficiently to rip up a small portion of the silver paper.

‘I hardly know. To begin with, I like the actual walking — —’

‘God! You must have enjoyed the army. Jogging along to Thingummy, eh?’

‘No, no. It’s just the opposite of the army. The whole point about the army is that you are never alone for a moment and can never choose where you’re going or even what part of the road you’re walking on. On a walking-tour you are absolutely detached. You stop where you like and go on when you like. As long as it lasts you need consider no one and consult no one but yourself.’

‘Until one night you find a wire waiting at your hotel saying, “Come back at once,”’ replied Devine, at last removing the silver paper.

‘Only if you were fool enough to leave a list of addresses and go to them! The worst that could happen to me would be that man on the wireless saying, “Will Dr. Elwin Ransom, believed to be walking somewhere in the Midlands — —”’

‘I begin to see the idea,’ said Devine, pausing in the very act of drawing the cork. ‘It wouldn’t do if you were in business. You are a lucky devil! But can even you just disappear like that? No wife, no young, no aged but honest parent or anything of that sort?’

‘Only a married sister in India. And then, you see, I’m a don. And a don in the middle of long vacation is almost a non-existent creature, as you ought to remember. College neither knows nor cares where he is, and certainly no one else does.’

The cork at last came out of the bottle with a heart-cheering noise.

‘Say when,’ said Devine, as Ransom held out his glass. ‘But I feel sure there’s a catch somewhere. Do you really mean to say that no one knows where you are or when you ought to get back, and no one can get hold of you?’

Ransom was nodding in reply when Devine, who had picked up the syphon, suddenly swore. ‘I’m afraid this is empty,’ he said. ‘Do you mind having water? I’ll have to get some from the scullery. How much do you like?’

‘Fill it up, please,’ said Ransom.

A few minutes later Devine returned and handed Ransom his long-delayed drink. The latter remarked, as he put down the half-emptied tumbler with a sigh of satisfaction, that Devine’s choice of residence was at least as odd as his own choice of a holiday.

‘Quite,’ said Devine. ‘But if you knew Weston you’d realize that it’s much less trouble to go where he wants than to argue the matter. What you call a strong colleague.’

‘Colleague?’ said Ransom inquiringly.

‘In a sense.’ Devine glanced at the door, drew his chair closer to Ransom’s, and continued in a more confidential tone. ‘He’s the goods all right, though. Between ourselves, I am putting a little money into some experiments he has on hand. It’s all straight stuff — the march of progress and the good of humanity and all that, but it has an industrial side.’

While Devine was speaking something odd began to happen to Ransom. At first it merely seemed to him that Devine’s words were no longer making sense. He appeared to be saying that he was industrial all down both sides but could never get an experiment to fit him in London. Then he realized that Devine was not so much unintelligible as inaudible, which was not surprising, since he was now so far away — about a mile away, though perfectly clear like something seen through the wrong end of a telescope. From that bright distance where he sat in his tiny chair he was gazing at Ransom with a new expression on his face. The gaze became disconcerting. Ransom tried to move in his chair but found that he had lost all power over his own body. He felt quite comfortable, but it was as if his legs and arms had been bandaged to the chair and his head gripped in a vice; a beautifully padded, but quite immovable, vice. He did not feel afraid, though he knew that he ought to be afraid and soon would be. Then, very gradually, the room faded from his sight.

Ransom could never be sure whether what followed had any bearing on the events recorded in this book or whether it was merely an irresponsible dream. It seemed to him that he and Weston and Devine were all standing in a little garden surrounded by a wall. The garden was bright and sunlit, but over the top of the wall you could see nothing but darkness. They were trying to climb over the wall and Weston asked them to give him a hoist up. Ransom kept on telling him not to go over the wall because it was so dark on the other side, but Weston insisted, and all three of them set about doing so. Ransom was the last. He got astride on the top of the wall, sitting on his coat because of the broken bottles. The other two had already dropped down on the outside into the darkness, but before he followed them a door in the wall — which none of them had noticed — was opened from without and the queerest people he had ever seen came into the garden bringing Weston and Devine back with them. They left them in the garden and retired into the darkness themselves, locking the door behind them. Ransom found it impossible to get down from the wall. He remained sitting there, not frightened but rather uncomfortable because his right leg, which was on the outside, felt so dark and his left leg felt so light. ‘My leg will drop off if it gets much darker,’ he said. Then he looked down into the darkness and asked, ‘Who are you?’ and the Queer People must still have been there for they all replied, ‘Hoo — Hoo — Hoo?’ just like owls.

He began to realize that his leg was not so much dark as cold and stiff, because he had been resting the other on it for so long: and also that he was in an arm-chair in a lighted room. A conversation was going on near him and had, he now realized, been going on for some time. His head was comparatively clear. He realized that he had been drugged or hypnotized, or both, and he felt that some control over his own body was returning to him though he was still very weak. He listened intently without trying to move.

‘I’m getting a little tired of this, Weston,’ Devine was saying, ‘and specially as it’s my money that is being risked. I tell you he’ll do quite as well as the boy, and in some ways better. Only, he’ll be coming round very soon now and we must get him on board at once. We ought to have done it an hour ago.’

‘The boy was ideal,’ said Weston sulkily. ‘Incapable of serving humanity and only too likely to propagate idiocy. He was the sort of boy who in a civilized community would be automatically handed over to a state laboratory for experimental purposes.’

‘I dare say. But in England he is the sort of boy in whom Scotland Yard might conceivably feel an interest. This busybody, on the other hand, will not be missed for months, and even then no one will know where he was when he disappeared. He came alone. He left no address. He has no family. And finally he has poked his nose into the whole affair of his own accord.’

‘Well, I confess I don’t like it. He is, after all, human. The boy was really almost a — a preparation. Still, he’s only an individual, and probably a quite useless one. We’re risking our own lives too. In a great cause — —’

‘For the Lord’s sake don’t start all that stuff now. We haven’t time.’

‘I dare say,’ replied Weston, ‘he would consent if he could be made to understand.’

‘Take his feet and I’ll take his head,’ said Devine.

‘If you really think he’s coming round,’ said Weston, ‘you’d better give him another dose. We can’t start till we get the sunlight. It wouldn’t be pleasant to have him struggling in there for three hours or so. It would be better if he didn’t wake up till we were under weigh.’

‘True enough. Just keep an eye on him while I run upstairs and get another.’

Devine left the room. Ransom saw through his half-closed eyes that Weston was standing over him. He had no means of foretelling how his own body would respond, if it responded at all, to a sudden attempt of movement, but he saw at once that he must take his chance. Almost before Devine had closed the door he flung himself with all his force at Weston’s feet. The scientist fell forward across the chair, and Ransom, flinging him off with an agonizing effort, rose and dashed out into the hall. He was very weak and fell as he entered it: but terror was behind him and in a couple of seconds he had found the hall door and was working desperately to master the bolts. Darkness and his trembling hands were against him. Before he had drawn one bolt, booted feet were clattering over the carpetless floor behind him. He was gripped by the shoulders and the knees. Kicking, writhing, dripping with sweat, and bellowing as loud as he could in the faint hope of rescue, he prolonged the struggle with a violence of which he would have believed himself incapable. For one glorious moment the door was open, the fresh night air was in his face, he saw the reassuring stars and even his own pack lying in the porch. Then a heavy blow fell on his head. Consciousness faded, and the last thing of which he was aware was the grip

of strong hands pulling him back into the dark passage, and the sound of a closing door.

THREE

When Ransom came to his senses he seemed to be in bed in a dark room. He had a pretty severe headache, and this, combined with a general lassitude, discouraged him at first from attempting to rise or to take stock of his surroundings. He noticed, drawing his hand across his forehead, that he was sweating freely, and this directed his attention to the fact that the room (if it was a room) was remarkably warm. Moving his arms to fling off the bedclothes, he touched a wall at the right side of the bed: it was not only warm, but hot. He moved his left hand to and fro in the emptiness on the other side and noticed that there the air was cooler — apparently the heat was coming from the wall. He felt his face and found a bruise over the left eye. This recalled to his mind the struggle with Weston and Devine, and he instantly concluded that they had put him in an outhouse behind their furnace. At the same time he looked up and recognized the source of the dim light in which, without noticing it, he had all along been able to see the movements of his own hands. There was some kind of skylight immediately over his head — a square of night sky filled with stars. It seemed to Ransom that he had never looked out on such a frosty night. Pulsing with brightness as with some unbearable pain or pleasure, clustered in pathless and countless multitudes, dreamlike in clarity, blazing in perfect blackness, the stars seized all his attention, troubled him, excited him, and drew him up to a sitting position. At the same time they quickened the throb of his headache, and this reminded him that he had been drugged. He was just formulating to himself the theory that the stuff they had given him might have some effect on the pupil and that this would explain the unnatural splendour and fullness of the sky, when a disturbance of silver light, almost a pale and miniature sunrise, at one corner of the skylight, drew his eyes upward again. Some minutes later the orb of the full moon was pushing its way into the field of vision. Ransom sat still and watched. He had never seen such a moon — so white, so blinding and so large. ‘Like a great football just outside the glass,’ he thought, and then, a moment later, ‘No — it’s bigger than that.’ By this time he was quite certain that something was seriously wrong with his eyes: no moon could possibly be the size of the thing he was seeing.

The light of the huge moon — if it was a moon — had by now illuminated his surroundings almost as clearly as if it were day. It was a very strange room. The floor was so small that the bed and a table beside it occupied the whole width of it: the ceiling seemed to be nearly twice as wide and the walls sloped outward as they rose, so that Ransom had the impression of lying at the bottom of a deep and narrow wheelbarrow. This confirmed his belief that his sight was either temporarily or permanently injured. In other respects, however, he was recovering rapidly and even beginning to feel an unnatural lightness of heart and a not disagreeable excitement. The heat was still oppressive, and he stripped off everything but his shirt and trousers before rising to explore. His rising was disastrous and raised graver apprehensions in his mind about the effects of being drugged. Although he had been conscious of no unusual muscular effort, he found himself leaping from the bed with an energy which brought his head into sharp contact with the skylight and flung him down again in a heap on the floor. He found himself on the other side against the wall — the wall that ought to have sloped outwards like the side of a wheelbarrow, according to his previous reconnaissance. But it didn't. He felt it and looked at it: it was unmistakably at right angles to the floor. More cautiously this time, he rose again to his feet. He felt an extraordinary lightness of body: it was with difficulty that he kept his feet on the floor. For the first time a suspicion that he might be dead and already in the ghost-life crossed his mind. He was trembling, but a hundred mental habits forbade him to consider this possibility. Instead, he explored his prison. The result was beyond doubt: all the walls looked as if they sloped outwards so as to make the room wider at the ceiling than it was at the floor, but each wall as you stood beside it turned out to be perfectly perpendicular — not only to sight but to touch also if one stooped down and examined with one's fingers the angle between it and the floor. The same examination revealed two other curious facts. The room was walled and floored with metal, and was in a state of continuous faint vibration — a silent vibration with a strangely life-like and unmechanical quality about it. But if the vibration was silent, there was plenty of noise going on — a series of musical raps or percussions at quite irregular intervals which seemed to come from the ceiling. It was as if the metal chamber in which he found himself was being bombarded with small, tinkling missiles. Ransom was by now thoroughly frightened — not with the prosaic fright that a man suffers in a war, but with a heady, bounding

kind of fear that was hardly distinguishable from his general excitement: he was poised on a sort of emotional watershed from which, he felt, he might at any moment pass either into delirious terror or into an ecstasy of joy. He knew now that he was not in a house, but in some moving vessel. It was clearly not a submarine: and the infinitesimal quivering of the metal did not suggest the motion of any wheeled vehicle. A ship then, he supposed, or some kind of airship . . . but there was an oddity in all his sensations for which neither supposition accounted. Puzzled, he sat down again on the bed, and stared at the portentous moon.

An airship, some kind of flying-machine . . . but why did the moon look so big? It was larger than he had thought at first. No moon could really be that size; and he realized now that he had known this from the first but had repressed the knowledge through terror. At the same moment a thought came into his head which stopped his breath — there could be no full moon at all that night. He remembered distinctly that he had walked from Nadderby in a moonless night. Even if the thin crescent of a new moon had escaped his notice, it could not have grown to this in a few hours. It could not have grown to this at all — this megalomaniac disk, far larger than the football he had at first compared it to, larger than a child's hoop, filling almost half the sky. And where was the old 'man in the moon' — the familiar face that had looked down on all the generations of men? The thing wasn't the Moon at all; and he felt his hair move on his scalp.

At that moment the sound of an opening door made him turn his head. An oblong of dazzling light appeared behind him and instantly vanished as the door closed again, having admitted the bulky form of a naked man whom Ransom recognized as Weston. No reproach, no demand for an explanation, rose to Ransom's lips or even to his mind; not with that monstrous orb above them. The mere presence of a human being, with its offer of at least some companionship, broke down the tension in which his nerves had long been resisting a bottomless dismay. He found, when he spoke, that he was sobbing.

'Weston! Weston!' he gasped. 'What is it? It's not the Moon, not that size. It can't be, can it?'

'No,' replied Weston, 'it's the Earth.'

FOUR

Ransom's legs failed him, and he must have sunk back upon the bed, but he only became aware of this many minutes later. At the moment he was unconscious of everything except his fear. He did not even know what he was afraid of: the fear itself possessed his whole mind, a formless, infinite misgiving. He did not lose consciousness, though he greatly wished that he might do so. Any change — death or sleep, or, best of all, a waking which should show all this for a dream — would have been inexpressibly welcome. None came. Instead, the lifelong self-control of social man, the virtues which are half hypocrisy or the hypocrisy which is half a virtue, came back to him and soon he found himself answering Weston in a voice not shamefully tremulous.

'Do you mean that?' he asked.

'Certainly.'

'Then where are we?'

'Standing out from Earth about eighty-five thousand miles.'

'You mean we're — in space.' Ransom uttered the word with difficulty as a frightened child speaks of ghosts or a frightened man of cancer.

Weston nodded.

'What for?' said Ransom. 'And what on earth have you kidnapped me for? And how have you done it?'

For a moment Weston seemed disposed to give no answer; then, as if on a second thought, he sat down on the bed beside Ransom and spoke as follows:

'I suppose it will save trouble if I deal with these questions at once, instead of leaving you to pester us with them every hour for the next month. As to how we do it — I suppose you mean how the space-ship works — there's no good your asking that. Unless you were one of the four or five real physicists now living you couldn't understand: and if there were any chance of your understanding you certainly wouldn't be told. If it makes you happy to repeat words that don't mean anything — which is, in fact, what unscientific people want when they ask for an explanation — you may say we work by exploiting the less observed properties of solar radiation. As to why we are here, we are on our way to Malacandra. . . .'

'Do you mean a star called Malacandra?'

‘Even you can hardly suppose we are going out of the solar system. Malacandra is much nearer than that: we shall make it in about twenty-eight days.’

‘There isn’t a planet called Malacandra,’ objected Ransom.

‘I am giving it its real name, not the name invented by terrestrial astronomers,’ said Weston.

‘But surely this is nonsense,’ said Ransom. ‘How the deuce did you find out its real name, as you call it?’

‘From the inhabitants.’

It took Ransom some time to digest this statement. ‘Do you mean to tell me you claim to have been to this star before, or this planet, or whatever it is?’

‘Yes.’

‘You can’t really ask me to believe that,’ said Ransom. ‘Damn it all, it’s not an everyday affair. Why has no one heard of it? Why has it not been in all the papers?’

‘Because we are not perfect idiots,’ said Weston gruffly.

After a few moments’ silence Ransom began again. ‘Which planet is it in our terminology?’ he asked.

‘Once and for all,’ said Weston, ‘I am not going to tell you. If you know how to find out when we get there, you are welcome to do so: I don’t think we have much to fear from your scientific attainments. In the meantime, there is no reason for you to know.’

‘And you say this place is inhabited?’ said Ransom.

Weston gave him a peculiar look and then nodded. The uneasiness which this produced in Ransom rapidly merged in an anger which he had almost lost sight of amidst the conflicting emotions that beset him.

‘And what has all this to do with me?’ he broke out. ‘You have assaulted me, drugged me, and are apparently carrying me off as a prisoner in this infernal thing. What have I done to you? What do you say for yourself?’

‘I might reply by asking you why you crept into my backyard like a thief. If you had minded your own business you would not be here. As it is, I admit that we have had to infringe your rights. My only defence is that small claims must give way to great. As far as we know, we are doing what has never been done in the history of man, perhaps never in the history of the universe. We have learned how to jump off the speck of matter on which our species began; infinity, and therefore perhaps eternity, is being put into

the hands of the human race. You cannot be so small-minded as to think that the rights or the life of an individual or of a million individuals are of the slightest importance in comparison with this.'

'I happen to disagree,' said Ransom, 'and I always have disagreed, even about vivisection. But you haven't answered my question. What do you want me for? What good am I to do you on this — on Malacandra.'

'That I don't know,' said Weston. 'It was no idea of ours. We are only obeying orders.'

'Whose?'

There was another pause. 'Come,' said Weston at last, 'there is really no use in continuing this cross-examination. You keep on asking me questions I can't answer: in some cases because I don't know the answers, in others because you wouldn't understand them. It will make things very much pleasanter during the voyage if you can only resign your mind to your fate and stop bothering yourself and us. It would be easier if your philosophy of life were not so insufferably narrow and individualistic. I had thought no one could fail to be inspired by the role you are being asked to play: that even a worm, if it could understand, would rise to the sacrifice. I mean, of course, the sacrifice of time and liberty, and some little risk. Don't misunderstand me.'

'Well,' said Ransom, 'you hold all the cards, and I must make the best of it. I consider *your* philosophy of life raving lunacy. I suppose all that stuff about infinity and eternity means that you think you are justified in doing anything — absolutely anything — here and now, on the off chance that some creatures or other descended from man as we know him may crawl about a few centuries longer in some part of the universe.'

'Yes — anything whatever,' returned the scientist sternly, 'and all educated opinion — for I do not call classics and history and such trash education — is entirely on my side. I am glad you raised the point, and I advise you to remember my answer. In the meantime, if you will follow me into the next room, we will have breakfast. Be careful how you get up: your weight here is hardly appreciable compared with your weight on Earth.'

Ransom rose and his captor opened the door. Instantly the room was flooded with a dazzling golden light which completely eclipsed the pale earthlight behind him.

'I will give you darkened glasses in a moment,' said Weston as he preceded him into the chamber whence the radiance was pouring. It seemed

to Ransom that Weston went up a hill towards the doorway and disappeared suddenly downwards when he had passed it. When he followed — which he did with caution — he had the curious impression that he was walking up to the edge of a precipice: the new room beyond the doorway seemed to be built on its side so that its farther wall lay almost in the same plane as the floor of the room he was leaving. When, however, he ventured to put forward his foot, he found that the floor continued flush and as he entered the second room the walls suddenly righted themselves and the rounded ceiling was over his head. Looking back, he perceived that the bedroom in its turn was now heeling over — its roof a wall and one of its walls a roof.

'You will soon get used to it,' said Weston, following his gaze. 'The ship is roughly spherical, and now that we are outside the gravitational field of the Earth "down" means — and feels — towards the centre of our own little metal world. This, of course, was foreseen and we built her accordingly. The core of the ship is a hollow globe — we keep our stores inside it — and the surface of that globe is the floor we are walking on. The cabins are arranged all round this, their walls supporting an outer globe which from our point of view is the roof. As the centre is always "down," the piece of floor you are standing on always feels flat or horizontal and the wall you are standing against always seems vertical. On the other hand, the globe of floor is so small that you can always see over the edge of it — over what would be the horizon if you were a flea — and then you see the floors and wall of the next cabin in a different plane. It is just the same on Earth, of course, only we are not big enough to see it.'

After this explanation he made arrangements in his precise, ungracious way for the comfort of his guest or prisoner. Ransom, at his advice, removed all his clothes and substituted a little metal girdle hung with enormous weights to reduce, as far as possible, the unmanageable lightness of his body. He also assumed tinted glasses, and soon found himself seated opposite Weston at a small table laid for breakfast. He was both hungry and thirsty and eagerly attacked the meal which consisted of tinned meat, biscuit, butter and coffee.

But all these actions he had performed mechanically. Stripping, eating and drinking passed almost unnoticed, and all he ever remembered of his first meal in the space-ship was the tyranny of heat and light. Both were present in a degree which would have been intolerable on Earth, but each had a new quality. The light was paler than any light of comparable

intensity that he had ever seen; it was not pure white but the palest of all imaginable golds, and it cast shadows as sharp as a floodlight. The heat, utterly free from moisture, seemed to knead and stroke the skin like a gigantic masseur: it produced no tendency to drowsiness: rather, intense alacrity. His headache was gone: he felt vigilant, courageous and magnanimous as he had seldom felt on Earth. Gradually he dared to raise his eyes to the skylight. Steel shutters were drawn across all but a chink of the glass, and that chink was covered with blinds of some heavy and dark material; but still it was too bright to look at.

‘I always thought space was dark and cold,’ he remarked vaguely.

‘Forgotten the sun?’ said Weston contemptuously.

Ransom went on eating for some time. Then he began, ‘If it’s like this in the early morning,’ and stopped, warned by the expression on Weston’s face. Awe fell upon him: there were no mornings here, no evenings, and no night — nothing but the changeless noon which had filled for centuries beyond history so many millions of cubic miles. He glanced at Weston again, but the latter held up his hand.

‘Don’t talk,’ he said. ‘We have discussed all that is necessary. The ship does not carry oxygen enough for any unnecessary exertion; not even for talking.’

Shortly afterwards he rose, without inviting the other to follow him, and left the room by one of the many doors which Ransom had not yet seen opened.

FIVE

The period spent in the space-ship ought to have been one of terror and anxiety for Ransom. He was separated by an astronomical distance from every member of the human race except two whom he had excellent reasons for distrusting. He was heading for an unknown destination, and was being brought thither for a purpose which his captors steadily refused to disclose. Devine and Weston relieved each other regularly in a room which Ransom was never allowed to enter and where he supposed the controls of their machine must be. Weston, during his watches off, was almost entirely silent. Devine was more loquacious and would often talk and guffaw with the prisoner until Weston rapped on the wall of the control-room and warned them not to waste air. But Devine was secretive after a certain point. He was quite ready to laugh at Weston's solemn scientific idealism. He didn't give a damn, he said, for the future of the species or the meeting of two worlds.

'There's more to Malacandra than that,' he would add with a wink. But when Ransom asked him what more, he would lapse into satire and make ironical remarks about the white man's burden and the blessings of civilization.

'It *is* inhabited, then?' Ransom would press.

'Ah — there's always a native question in these things,' Devine would answer. For the most part his conversation ran on the things he would do when he got back to Earth: ocean-going yachts, the most expensive women and a big place on the Riviera figured largely in his plans. 'I'm not running all these risks for fun.'

Direct questions about Ransom's own role were usually met with silence. Only once, in reply to such a question, Devine, who was then in Ransom's opinion very far from sober, admitted that they were rather 'handing him the baby.'

'But I'm sure,' he added, 'you'll live up to the old school tie.'

All this, as I have said, was sufficiently disquieting. The odd thing was that it did not very greatly disquiet him. It is hard for a man to brood on the future when he is feeling so extremely well as Ransom now felt. There was an endless night on one side of the ship and an endless day on the other: each was marvellous and he moved from the one to the other at his will,

delighted. In the nights, which he could create by turning the handle of a door, he lay for hours in contemplation of the skylight. The Earth's disk was nowhere to be seen; the stars, thick as daisies on an uncut lawn, reigned perpetually with no cloud, no moon, no sunrise to dispute their sway. There were planets of unbelievable majesty, and constellations undreamed of: there were celestial sapphires, rubies, emeralds and pin-pricks of burning gold; far out on the left of the picture hung a comet, tiny and remote: and between all and behind all, far more emphatic and palpable than it showed on Earth, the undimensioned, enigmatic blackness. The lights trembled: they seemed to grow brighter as he looked. Stretched naked on his bed, a second Danaë, he found it night by night more difficult to disbelieve in old astrology: almost he felt, wholly he imagined, 'sweet influence' pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body. All was silence but for the irregular tinkling noises. He knew now that these were made by meteorites, small, drifting particles of the world-stuff that smote continually on their hollow drum of steel; and he guessed that at any moment they might meet something large enough to make meteorites of ship and all. But he could not fear. He now felt that Weston had justly called him little-minded in the moment of his first panic. The adventure was too high, its circumstance too solemn, for any emotion save a severe delight. But the days — that is, the hours spent in the sunward hemisphere of their microcosm — were the best of all. Often he rose after only a few hours' sleep to return, drawn by an irresistible attraction, to the regions of light; he could not cease to wonder at the noon which always awaited you however early you went to seek it. There, totally immersed in a bath of pure ethereal colour and of unrelenting though unwounding brightness, stretched his full length and with eyes half closed in the strange chariot that bore them, faintly quivering, through depth after depth of tranquillity far above the reach of night, he felt his body and mind daily rubbed and scoured and filled with new vitality. Weston, in one of his brief, reluctant answers, admitted a scientific basis for these sensations: they were receiving, he said, many rays that never penetrated the terrestrial atmosphere.

But Ransom, as time wore on, became aware of another and more spiritual cause for his progressive lightening and exultation of heart. A nightmare, long engendered in the modern mind by the mythology that follows in the wake of science, was falling off him. He had read of 'Space': at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the

black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now — now that the very name ‘Space’ seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. He could not call it ‘dead’; he felt life pouring into him from it every moment. How indeed should it be otherwise, since out of this ocean the worlds and all their life had come? He had thought it barren: he saw now that it was the womb of worlds, whose blazing and innumerable offspring looked down nightly even upon the earth with so many eyes — and here, with how many more! No: Space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens — the heavens which declared the glory — the

‘happy climes that ly
Where day never shuts his eye
Up in the broad fields of the sky.’

He quoted Milton’s words to himself lovingly, at this time and often.

He did not, of course, spend all his time in basking. He explored the ship (so far as he was allowed), passing from room to room with those slow movements which Weston enjoined upon them lest exertion should overtax their supply of air. From the necessity of its shape, the space-ship contained a good many more chambers than were in regular use: but Ransom was also inclined to think that its owners — or at least Devine — intended these to be filled with cargo of some kind on the return voyage. He also became, by an insensible process, the steward and cook of the company; partly because he felt it natural to share the only labours he could share — he was never allowed into the control-room — and partly in order to anticipate a tendency which Weston showed to make him a servant whether he would or no. He preferred to work as a volunteer rather than in admitted slavery: and he liked his own cooking a good deal more than that of his companions.

It was these duties that made him at first the unwilling, and then the alarmed, hearer of a conversation which occurred about a fortnight (he judged) after the beginning of their voyage. He had washed up the remains of their evening meal, basked in the sunlight, chatted with Devine — better company than Weston, though in Ransom’s opinion much the more odious of the two — and retired to bed at his usual time. He was a little restless, and after an hour or so it occurred to him that he had forgotten one or two small arrangements in the galley which would facilitate his work in the morning. The galley opened off the saloon or day-room, and its door was

close to that of the control-room. He rose and went there at once. His feet, like the rest of him, were bare.

The galley skylight was on the dark side of the ship, but Ransom did not turn on the light. To leave the door ajar was sufficient, as this admitted a stream of brilliant sunlight. As everyone who has ‘kept house’ will understand, he found that his preparations for the morning had been even more incomplete than he supposed. He did his work well, from practice, and therefore quietly. He had just finished and was drying his hands on the roller-towel behind the galley door when he heard the door of the control-room open and saw the silhouette of a man outside the galley — Devine’s, he gathered. Devine did not come forward into the saloon, but remained standing and talking — apparently into the control-room. It thus came about that while Ransom could hear distinctly what Devine said, he could not make out Weston’s answers.

‘I think it would be dam’ silly,’ said Devine. ‘If you could be sure of meeting the brutes where we alight there might be something in it. But suppose we have to trek? All we’d gain by your plan would be having to carry a drugged man and his pack instead of letting a live man walk with us and do his share of the work.’

Weston apparently replied.

‘But he *can’t* find out,’ returned Devine. ‘Unless someone is fool enough to tell him. Anyway, even if he suspects, do you think a man like that would have the guts to run away on a strange planet? Without food? Without weapons? You’ll find he’ll eat out of your hand at the first sight of a *Sorn*.’

Again Ransom heard the indistinct noise of Weston’s voice.

‘How should I know?’ said Devine. ‘It may be some sort of chief: much more likely a mumbo-jumbo.’

This time came a very short utterance from the control-room: apparently a question. Devine answered at once.

‘It would explain why he was wanted.’

Weston asked him something more.

‘Human sacrifice, I suppose. At least it wouldn’t be human from *their* point of view; you know what I mean.’

Weston had a good deal to say this time, and it elicited Devine’s characteristic chuckle.

‘Quite, quite,’ he said. ‘It is understood that you are doing it all from the highest motives. So long as they lead to the same actions as *my* motives,

you are quite welcome to them.’

Weston continued; and this time Devine seemed to interrupt him.

‘You’re not losing your own nerve, are you?’ he said. He was then silent for some time, as if listening. Finally, he replied:

‘If you’re so fond of the brutes as that you’d better stay and interbreed — if they have sexes, which we don’t yet know. Don’t you worry. When the time comes for cleaning the place up we’ll save one or two for you, and you can keep them as pets or vivisect them or sleep with them or all three — whichever way it takes you. . . . Yes, I know. Perfectly loathsome. I was only joking. Good night.’

A moment later Devine closed the door of the control-room, crossed the saloon and entered his own cabin. Ransom heard him bolt the door of it according to his invariable, though puzzling, custom. The tension with which he had been listening relaxed. He found that he had been holding his breath, and breathed deeply again. Then cautiously he stepped out into the saloon.

Though he knew that it would be prudent to return to his bed as quickly as possible, he found himself standing still in the now familiar glory of the light and viewing it with a new and poignant emotion. Out of this heaven, these happy climes, they were presently to descend — into *what*? *Sorns*, human sacrifice, loathsome sexless monsters. What was a *sorn*? His own role in the affair was now clear enough. Somebody or something had sent for him. It could hardly be for him personally. The somebody wanted a victim — any victim — from Earth. He had been picked because Devine had done the picking; he realized for the first time — in all circumstances a late and startling discovery — that Devine had hated him all these years as heartily as he hated Devine. But what was a *sorn*? ‘When he saw them he would eat out of Devine’s hands.’ His mind, like so many minds of his generation, was richly furnished with bogies. He had read his H. G. Wells and others. His universe was peopled with horrors such as ancient and mediæval mythology could hardly rival. No insect-like, vermiculate or crustacean Abominable, no twitching feelers, rasping wings, slimy coils, curling tentacles, no monstrous union of superhuman intelligence and insatiable cruelty seemed to him anything but likely on an alien world. The *sorns* would be . . . would be . . . he dared not think what the *sorns* would be. And he was to be given to them. Somehow this seemed more horrible than being caught by them. Given, handed over, offered. He saw in

imagination various incompatible monstrosities — bulbous eyes, grinning jaws, horns, stings, mandibles. Loathing of insects, loathing of snakes, loathing of things that squashed and squelched, all played their horrible symphonies over his nerves. But the reality would be worse: it would be an extra-terrestrial Otherness — something one had never thought of, never could have thought of. In that moment Ransom made a decision. He could face death, but not the *sorns*. He must escape when they got to Malacandra, if there were any possibility. Starvation, or even to be chased by *sorns*, would be better than being handed over. If escape were impossible, then it must be suicide. Ransom was a pious man. He hoped he would be forgiven. It was no more in his power, he thought, to decide otherwise than to grow a new limb. Without hesitation he stole back into the galley and secured the sharpest knife: henceforward he determined never to be parted from it.

Such was the exhaustion produced by terror that when he regained his bed he fell instantly into stupefied and dreamless sleep.

SIX

He woke much refreshed, and even a little ashamed of his terror on the previous night. His situation was, no doubt, very serious: indeed the possibility of returning alive to Earth must be almost discounted. But death could be faced, and rational fear of death could be mastered. It was only the irrational, the biological, horror of monsters that was the real difficulty: and this he faced and came to terms with as well as he could while he lay in the sunlight after breakfast. He had the feeling that one sailing in the heavens, as he was doing, should not suffer abject dismay before any earthbound creature. He even reflected that the knife could pierce other flesh as well as his own. The bellicose mood was a very rare one with Ransom. Like many men of his own age, he rather underestimated than overestimated his own courage; the gap between boyhood's dreams and his actual experience of the War had been startling, and his subsequent view of his own unheroic qualities had perhaps swung too far in the opposite direction. He had some anxiety lest the firmness of his present mood should prove a short-lived illusion; but he must make the best of it.

As hour followed hour and waking followed sleep in their eternal day, he became aware of a gradual change. The temperature was slowly falling. They resumed clothes. Later, they added warm underclothes. Later still, an electric heater was turned on in the centre of the ship. And it became certain, too — though the phenomenon was hard to seize — that the light was less overwhelming than it had been at the beginning of the voyage. It became certain to the comparing intellect, but it was difficult to *feel* what was happening as a diminution of light and impossible to think of it as 'darkening' because, while the radiance changed in degree, its unearthly quality had remained exactly the same since the moment he first beheld it. It was not, like fading light upon the Earth, mixed with the increasing moisture and phantom colours of the air. You might halve its intensity, Ransom perceived, and the remaining half would still be what the whole had been — merely less, not other. Halve it again, and the residue would still be the same. As long as it was at all, it would be itself — out even to that unimagined distance where its last force was spent. He tried to explain what he meant to Devine.

‘Like thingummy’s soap!’ grinned Devine. ‘Pure soap to the last bubble, eh?’

Shortly after this the even tenor of their life in the space-ship began to be disturbed. Weston explained that they would soon begin to feel the gravitational pull of Malacandra.

‘That means,’ he said, ‘that it will no longer be “down” to the centre of the ship. It will be “down” towards Malacandra — which from our point of view will be under the control-room. As a consequence, the floors of most of the chambers will become wall or roof, and one of the walls a floor. You won’t like it.’

The result of this announcement, so far as Ransom was concerned, was hours of heavy labour in which he worked shoulder to shoulder now with Devine and now with Weston as their alternating watches liberated them from the control-room. Water-tins, oxygen-cylinders, guns, ammunition and foodstuffs had all to be piled on the floors alongside the appropriate walls and lying on their sides so as to be upright when the new ‘downwards’ came into play. Long before the work was finished disturbing sensations began. At first Ransom supposed that it was the toil itself which so weighted his limbs: but rest did not alleviate the symptom, and it was explained to him that their bodies, in response to the planet that had caught them in its field, were actually gaining weight every minute and doubling in weight with every twenty-four hours. They had the experiences of a pregnant woman, but magnified almost beyond endurance.

At the same time their sense of direction — never very confident on the space-ship — became continuously confused. From any room on board, the next room’s floor had always looked downhill and felt level: now it looked downhill and felt a little, a very little, downhill as well. One found oneself running as one entered it. A cushion flung aside on the floor of the saloon would be found hours later to have moved an inch or so towards the wall. All of them were afflicted with vomiting, headache and palpitations of the heart. The conditions grew worse hour by hour. Soon one could only grope and crawl from cabin to cabin. All sense of direction disappeared in a sickening confusion. Parts of the ship were definitely below in the sense that their floors were upside down and only a fly could walk on them: but no part seemed to Ransom to be indisputably the right way up. Sensations of intolerable height and of falling — utterly absent in the heavens — recurred constantly. Cooking, of course, had long since been abandoned.

Food was snatched as best they could, and drinking presented great difficulties: you could never be sure that you were really holding your mouth below, rather than beside, the bottle. Weston grew grimmer and more silent than ever. Devine, a flask of spirits ever in his hand, flung out strange blasphemies and coprologies and cursed Weston for bringing them. Ransom ached, licked his dry lips, nursed his bruised limbs and prayed for the end.

A time came when one side of the sphere was unmistakably down. Clamped beds and tables hung useless and ridiculous on what was now wall or roof. What had been doors became trap-doors, opened with difficulty. Their bodies seemed made of lead. There was no more work to be done when Devine had set out the clothes — their Malacandrian clothes — from their bundles and squatted down on the end wall of the saloon (now its floor) to watch the thermometer. The clothes, Ransom noticed, included heavy woollen underwear, sheepskin jerkins, fur gloves and eared caps. Devine made no reply to his questions. He was engaged in studying the thermometer and in shouting down to Weston in the control-room.

‘Slower, slower,’ he kept shouting. ‘Slower, you damned fool. You’ll be in air in a minute or two.’ Then sharply and angrily, ‘Here! Let me get at it.’

Weston made no replies. It was unlike Devine to waste his advice: Ransom concluded that the man was almost out of his senses, whether with fear or excitement.

Suddenly the lights of the Universe seemed to be turned down. As if some demon had rubbed the heaven’s face with a dirty sponge, the splendour in which they had lived for so long blenched to a pallid, cheerless and pitiable grey. It was impossible from where they sat to open the shutters or roll back the heavy blind. What had been a chariot gliding in the fields of heaven became a dark steel box dimly lighted by a slit of window, and falling. They were falling out of the heaven, into a world. Nothing in all his adventures bit so deeply into Ransom’s mind as this. He wondered how he could ever have thought of planets, even of the Earth, as islands of life and reality floating in a deadly void. Now, with a certainty which never after deserted him, he saw the planets — the ‘earths’ he called them in his thought — as mere holes or gaps in the living heaven — excluded and rejected wastes of heavy matter and murky air, formed not by addition to, but by subtraction from, the surrounding brightness. And yet, he thought, beyond the solar system the brightness ends. Is that the real void, the real death? Unless . . . he groped for the idea . . . unless visible light is also a

hole or gap, a mere diminution of something else. Something that is to bright unchanging heaven as heaven is to the dark, heavy earths. . . .

Things do not always happen as a man would expect. The moment of his arrival in an unknown world found Ransom wholly absorbed in a philosophical speculation.

SEVEN

‘Having a doze?’ said Devine. ‘A bit blasé about new planets by now?’

‘Can you see anything?’ interrupted Weston.

‘I can’t manage the shutters, damn them,’ returned Devine. ‘We may as well get to the manhole.’

Ransom awoke from his brown study. The two partners were working together close beside him in the semi-darkness. He was cold and his body, though in fact much lighter than on Earth, still felt intolerably heavy. But a vivid sense of his situation returned to him; some fear, but more curiosity. It might mean death, but what a scaffold! Already cold air was coming in from without, and light. He moved his head impatiently to catch some glimpse between the labouring shoulders of the two men. A moment later the last nut was unscrewed. He was looking out through the manhole.

Naturally enough all he saw was the ground — a circle of pale pink, almost of white: whether very close and short vegetation or very wrinkled and granulated rock or soil he could not say. Instantly the dark shape of Devine filled the aperture, and Ransom had time to notice that he had a revolver in his hand— ‘For me or for *sorns* or for both?’ he wondered.

‘You next,’ said Weston curtly.

Ransom took a deep breath and his hand went to the knife beneath his belt. Then he got his head and shoulders through the manhole, his two hands on the soil of Malacandra. The pink stuff was soft and faintly resilient, like india-rubber; clearly vegetation. Instantly Ransom looked up. He saw a pale blue sky — a fine winter-morning sky it would have been on Earth — a great billowy cumular mass of rose-colour lower down which he took for a cloud, and then —

‘Get out,’ said Weston from behind him.

He scrambled through and rose to his feet. The air was cold but not bitterly so, and it seemed a little rough at the back of his throat. He gazed about him, and the very intensity of his desire to take in the new world at a glance defeated itself. He saw nothing but colours — colours that refused to form themselves into things. Moreover, he knew nothing yet well enough to see it: you cannot see things till you know roughly what they are. His first impression was of a bright, pale world — a water-colour world out of a child’s paint-box; a moment later he recognized the flat belt of light blue as

a sheet of water, or of something like water, which came nearly to his feet. They were on the shore of a lake or river.

‘Now then,’ said Weston, brushing past him. He turned and saw to his surprise a quite recognizable object in the immediate foreground — a hut of unmistakably terrestrial pattern though built of strange materials.

‘They’re human,’ he gasped. ‘They build houses?’

‘*We* do,’ said Devine. ‘Guess again,’ and, producing a key from his pocket, proceeded to unlock a very ordinary padlock on the door of the hut. With a not very clearly defined feeling of disappointment or relief Ransom realized that his captors were merely returning to their own camp. They behaved as one might have expected. They walked into the hut, let down the slats which served for windows, sniffed the close air, expressed surprise that they had left it so dirty, and presently re-emerged.

‘We’d better see about the stores,’ said Weston.

Ransom soon found that he was to have little leisure for observation and no opportunity of escape. The monotonous work of transferring food, clothes, weapons and many unidentifiable packages from the ship to the hut kept him vigorously occupied for the next hour or so, and in the closest contact with his kidnappers. But something he learned. Before anything else he learned that Malacandra was beautiful; and he even reflected how odd it was that this possibility had never entered into his speculations about it. The same peculiar twist of imagination which led him to people the universe with monsters had somehow taught him to expect nothing on a strange planet except rocky desolation or else a network of nightmare machines. He could not say why, now that he came to think of it. He also discovered that the blue water surrounded them on at least three sides: his view in the fourth direction was blotted out by the vast steel football in which they had come. The hut, in fact, was built either on the point of a peninsula or on the end of an island. He also came little by little to the conclusion that the water was not merely blue in certain lights like terrestrial water but ‘really’ blue. There was something about its behaviour under the very gentle breeze which puzzled him — something wrong or unnatural about the waves. For one thing, they were too big for such a wind, but that was not the whole secret. They reminded him somehow of the water that he had seen shooting up under the impact of shells in pictures of naval battles. Then suddenly realization came to him: they were the wrong shape, out of drawing, far too high for their length, too narrow at the base, too steep in the sides. He was

reminded of something he had read in one of those modern poets about a sea rising in ‘turreted walls.’

‘Catch!’ shouted Devine. Ransom caught and hurled the parcel on to Weston at the hut door.

On one side the water extended a long way — about a quarter of a mile, he thought, but perspective was still difficult in the strange world. On the other side it was much narrower, not wider than fifteen feet perhaps, and seemed to be flowing over a shallow — broken and swirling water that made a softer and more hissing sound than water on Earth; and where it washed the hither bank — the pinkish-white vegetation went down to the very brink — there was a bubbling and sparkling which suggested effervescence. He tried hard, in such stolen glances as the work allowed him, to make out something of the farther shore. A mass of something purple, so huge that he took it for a heather-covered mountain, was his first impression: on the other side, beyond the larger water, there was something of the same kind. But there, he could see over the top of it. Beyond were strange upright shapes of whitish green: too jagged and irregular for buildings, too thin and steep for mountains. Beyond and above these again was the rose-coloured cloud-like mass. It might really be a cloud, but it was very solid-looking and did not seem to have moved since he first set eyes on it from the manhole. It looked like the top of a gigantic red cauliflower — or like a huge bowl of red soapsuds — and it was exquisitely beautiful in tint and shape.

Baffled by this, he turned his attention to the nearer shore beyond the shallows. The purple mass looked for a moment like a plump of organ-pipes, then like a stack of rolls of cloth set up on end, then like a forest of gigantic umbrellas blown inside out. It was in faint motion. Suddenly his eyes mastered the object. The purple stuff was vegetation: more precisely it was vegetables, vegetables about twice the height of English elms, but apparently soft and flimsy. The stalks — one could hardly call them trunks — rose smooth and round, and surprisingly thin, for about forty feet: above that, the huge plants opened into a sheaf-like development, not of branches but of leaves, leaves large as lifeboats but nearly transparent. The whole thing corresponded roughly to his idea of a submarine forest: the plants, at once so large and so frail, seemed to need water to support them, and he wondered that they could hang in the air. Lower down, between the stems,

he saw the vivid purple twilight, mottled with paler sunshine, which made up the internal scenery of the wood.

‘Time for lunch,’ said Devine suddenly. Ransom straightened his back: in spite of the thinness and coldness of the air, his forehead was moist. They had been working hard and he was short of breath. Weston appeared from the door of the hut and muttered something about ‘finishing first.’ Devine, however, overruled him. A tin of beef and some biscuits were produced, and the men sat down on the various boxes which were still plentifully littered between the space-ship and the hut. Some whiskey — again at Devine’s suggestion and against Weston’s advice — was poured into the tin cups and mixed with water; the latter, Ransom noticed, was drawn from their own water-tins and not from the blue lakes.

As often happens, the cessation of bodily activity drew Ransom’s attention to the excitement under which he had been labouring ever since their landing. Eating seemed almost out of the question. Mindful, however, of a possible dash for liberty, he forced himself to eat very much more than usual, and appetite returned as he ate. He devoured all that he could lay hands on either of food or drink: and the taste of that first meal was ever after associated in his mind with the first unearthly strangeness (never fully recaptured) of the bright, still, sparkling, unintelligible landscape — with needling shapes of pale green, thousands of feet high, with sheets of dazzling blue soda-water, and acres of rose-red soapsuds. He was a little afraid that his companions might notice, and suspect, his new achievements as a trencherman; but their attention was otherwise engaged. Their eyes never ceased roving the landscape; they spoke abstractedly and often changed position, and were ever looking over their shoulders. Ransom was just finishing his protracted meal when he saw Devine stiffen like a dog, and lay his hand in silence on Weston’s shoulder. Both nodded. They rose. Ransom, gulping down the last of his whiskey, rose too. He found himself between his two captors. Both revolvers were out. They were edging him to the shore of the narrow water, and they were looking and pointing across it.

At first he could not see clearly what they were pointing at. There seemed to be some paler and slenderer plants than he had noticed before amongst the purple ones: he hardly attended to them, for his eyes were busy searching the ground — so obsessed was he with the reptile fears and insect fears of modern imagining. It was the reflections of the new white objects in the water that sent his eyes back to them: long, streaky, white reflections

motionless in the running water — four or five, no, to be precise, six of them. He looked up. Six white things *were* standing there. Spindly and flimsy things, twice or three times the height of a man. His first idea was that they were images of men, the work of savage artists; he had seen things like them in books of archæology. But what could they be made of, and how could they stand? — so crazily thin and elongated in the leg, so top-heavily pouted in the chest, such stalky, flexible-looking distortions of earthly bipeds . . . like something seen in one of those comic mirrors. They were certainly not made of stone or metal, for now they seemed to sway a little as he watched; now with a shock that chased the blood from his cheeks he saw that they were alive, that they were moving, that they were coming at him. He had a momentary, scared glimpse of their faces, thin and unnaturally long, with long, drooping noses and drooping mouths of half-spectral, half-idiotic solemnity. Then he turned wildly to fly and found himself gripped by Devine.

‘Let me go,’ he cried.

‘Don’t be a fool,’ hissed Devine, offering the muzzle of his pistol. Then, as they struggled, one of the things sent its voice across the water to them: an enormous horn-like voice far above their heads.

‘They want us to go across,’ said Weston.

Both the men were forcing him to the water’s edge. He planted his feet, bent his back and resisted donkey-fashion. Now the other two were both in the water, pulling him, and he was still on the land. He found that he was screaming. Suddenly a second, much louder and less articulate noise broke from the creatures on the far bank. Weston shouted too, relaxed his grip on Ransom and suddenly fired his revolver not across the water but up it. Ransom saw why at the same moment.

A line of foam like the track of a torpedo was speeding towards them, and in the midst of it some large, shining beast. Devine shrieked a curse, slipped and collapsed into the water. Ransom saw a snapping jaw between them, and heard the deafening noise of Weston’s revolver again and again beside him and, almost as loud, the clamour of the monsters on the far bank, who seemed to be taking the water too. He had had no need to make a decision. The moment he was free he had found himself automatically darting behind his captors, then behind the space-ship and on as fast as his legs could carry him into the utterly unknown beyond it. As he rounded the metal sphere a wild confusion of blue, purple and red met his eyes. He did

not slacken his pace for a moment’s inspection. He found himself splashing through water and crying out not with pain but with surprise because the water was warm. In less than a minute he was climbing out on to dry land again. He was running up a steep incline. And now he was running through purple shadow between the stems of another forest of the huge plants.

EIGHT

A month of inactivity, a heavy meal and an unknown world do not help a man to run. Half an hour later, Ransom was walking, not running, through the forest, with a hand pressed to his aching side and his ears strained for any noise of pursuit. The clamour of revolver-shots and voices behind him (not all human voices) had been succeeded first by rifle-shots and calls at long intervals and then by utter silence. As far as eye could reach he saw nothing but the stems of the great plants about him receding in the violet shade, and far overhead the multiple transparency of huge leaves filtering the sunshine to the solemn splendour of twilight in which he walked. Whenever he felt able he ran again; the ground continued soft and springy, covered with the same resilient weed which was the first thing his hands had touched in Malacandra. Once or twice a small red creature scuttled across his path, but otherwise there seemed to be no life stirring in the wood; nothing to fear — except the fact of wandering unprovisioned and alone in a forest of unknown vegetation thousands or millions of miles beyond the reach or knowledge of man.

But Ransom was thinking of *sorns* — for doubtless those were the *sorns*, those creatures they had tried to give him to. They were quite unlike the horrors his imagination had conjured up, and for that reason had taken him off his guard. They appealed away from the Wellsian fantasies to an earlier, almost an infantile, complex of fears. Giants — ogres — ghosts — skeletons: those were its key words. Spooks on stilts, he said to himself; surrealistic bogy-men with their long faces. At the same time, the disabling panic of the first moments was ebbing away from him. The idea of suicide was now far from his mind; instead, he was determined to back his luck to the end. He prayed, and he felt his knife. He felt a strange emotion of confidence and affection towards himself — he checked himself on the point of saying, ‘We’ll stick to one another.’

The ground became worse and interrupted his meditation. He had been going gently upwards for some hours with steeper ground on his right, apparently half scaling, half skirting a hill. His path now began to cross a number of ridges, spurs doubtless of the higher ground on the right. He did not know why he should cross them, but for some reason he did; possibly a vague memory of earthly geography suggested that the lower ground would

open out to bare places between wood and water where *sorns* would be more likely to catch him. As he continued crossing ridges and gullies he was struck with their extreme steepness; but somehow they were not very difficult to cross. He noticed, too, that even the smallest hummocks of earth were of an unearthly shape — too narrow, too pointed at the top and too small at the base. He remembered that the waves on the blue lakes had displayed a similar oddity. And glancing up at the purple leaves he saw the same theme of perpendicularity — the same rush to the sky — repeated there. They did not tip over at the ends; vast as they were, air was sufficient to support them so that the long aisles of the forest all rose to a kind of fan tracery. And the *sorns*, likewise — he shuddered as he thought it — they too were madly elongated.

He had sufficient science to guess that he must be on a world lighter than the Earth, where less strength was needed and nature was set free to follow her skyward impulse on a superterrestrial scale. This set him wondering where he was. He could not remember whether Venus was larger or smaller than Earth, and he had an idea that she would be hotter than this. Perhaps he was on Mars; perhaps even on the Moon. The latter he at first rejected on the ground that, if it were so, he ought to have seen the Earth in the sky when they landed; but later he remembered having been told that one face of the Moon was always turned away from the Earth. For all he knew he was wandering on the Moon’s outer side; and, irrationally enough, this idea brought about him a bleaker sense of desolation than he had yet felt.

Many of the gullies which he crossed now carried streams, blue hissing streams, all hastening to the lower ground on his left. Like the lake they were warm, and the air was warm above them, so that as he climbed down and up the sides of the gullies he was continually changing temperatures. It was the contrast, as he crested the farther bank of one such small ravine, which first drew his attention to the growing chilliness of the forest; and as he looked about him he became certain that the light was failing too. He had not taken night into his calculations. He had no means of guessing what night might be on Malacandra. As he stood gazing into the deepening gloom a sigh of cold wind crept through the purple stems and set them all swaying, revealing once again the startling contrast between their size and their apparent flexibility and lightness. Hunger and weariness, long kept at bay by the mingled fear and wonder of his situation, smote him suddenly. He shivered and forced himself to proceed. The wind increased. The mighty

leaves danced and dipped above his head, admitting glimpses of a pale and then a paler sky; and then, discomfortingly, of a sky with one or two stars in it. The wood was no longer silent. His eyes darted hither and thither in search of an approaching enemy and discovered only how quickly the darkness grew upon him. He welcomed the streams now for their warmth.

It was this that first suggested to him a possible protection against the increasing cold. There was really no use in going farther; for all he knew he might as well be walking towards danger as away from it. All was danger; he was no safer travelling than resting. Beside some stream it might be warm enough to lie. He shuffled on to find another gully, and went so far that he began to think he had got out of the region of them. He had almost determined to turn back when the ground began falling steeply; he slipped, recovered and found himself on the bank of a torrent. The trees — for as ‘trees’ he could not help regarding them — did not quite meet overhead, and the water itself seemed to have some faintly phosphorescent quality, so that it was lighter here. The fall from right to left was steep. Guided by some vague picnicker’s hankering for a ‘better’ place, he went a few yards upstream. The valley grew steeper, and he came to a little cataract. He noticed dully that the water seemed to be descending a little too slowly for the incline, but he was too tired to speculate about it. The water was apparently hotter than that of the lake — perhaps nearer its subterranean source of heat. What he really wanted to know was whether he dared drink it. He was very thirsty by now; but it looked very poisonous, very unwatery. He would try not to drink it; perhaps he was so tired that thirst would let him sleep. He sank on his knees and bathed his hands in the warm torrent; then he rolled over in a hollow close beside the fall, and yawned.

The sound of his own voice yawning — the old sound heard in night-nurseries, school dormitories and in so many bedrooms — liberated a flood of self-pity. He drew his knees up and hugged himself; he felt a sort of physical, almost a filial, love for his own body. He put his wrist-watch to his ear and found that it had stopped. He wound it. Muttering, half whimpering to himself, he thought of men going to bed on the far-distant planet Earth — men in clubs, and liners, and hotels, married men, and small children who slept with nurses in the room, and warm, tobacco-smelling men tumbled together in forecastles and dug-outs. The tendency to talk to himself was irresistible . . . ‘We’ll look after you, Ransom . . . we’ll stick together, old man.’ It occurred to him that one of those creatures with

snapping jaws might live in the stream. ‘You’re quite right, Ransom,’ he answered mumblingly. ‘It’s not a safe place to spend the night. We’ll just rest a bit till you feel better, then we’ll go on again. Not now. Presently.’

NINE

It was thirst that woke him. He had slept warm, though his clothes were damp, and found himself lying in sunlight, the blue waterfall at his side dancing and coruscating with every transparent shade in the whole gamut of blue and flinging strange lights far up to the underside of the forest leaves. The realization of his position, as it rolled heavily back upon consciousness, was unbearable. If only he hadn't lost his nerve the *sorns* would have killed him by now. Then he remembered with inexpressible relief that there was a man wandering in the wood — poor devil — he'd be glad to see him. He would come up to him and say, 'Hullo, Ransom,' — he stopped, puzzled. No, it was only himself: he *was* Ransom. Or was he? Who was the man whom he had led to a hot stream and tucked up in bed, telling him not to drink the strange water? Obviously some new-comer who didn't know the place as well as he. But whatever Ransom had told him, he was going to drink now. He lay down on the bank and plunged his face in the warm rushing liquid. It was good to drink. It had a strong mineral flavour, but it was very good. He drank again and found himself greatly refreshed and steadied. All that about the other Ransom was nonsense. He was quite aware of the danger of madness, and applied himself vigorously to his devotions and his toilet. Not that madness mattered much. Perhaps he was mad already, and not really on Malacandra but safe in bed in an English asylum. If only it might be so! He would ask Ransom — curse it! there his mind went playing the same trick again. He rose and began walking briskly away.

The delusions recurred every few minutes as long as this stage of his journey lasted. He learned to stand still mentally, as it were, and let them roll over his mind. It was no good bothering about them. When they were gone you could resume sanity again. Far more important was the problem of food. He tried one of the 'trees' with his knife. As he expected, it was toughly soft like a vegetable, not hard like wood. He cut a little piece out of it, and under this operation the whole gigantic organism vibrated to its top — it was like being able to shake the mast of a full-rigged ship with one hand. When he put it in his mouth he found it almost tasteless but by no means disagreeable, and for some minutes he munched away contentedly. But he made no progress. The stuff was quite unswallowable and could only

be used as a chewing-gum. As such he used it, and after it many other pieces; not without some comfort.

It was impossible to continue yesterday's flight as a flight — inevitably it degenerated into an endless ramble, vaguely motivated by the search for food. The search was necessarily vague, since he did not know whether Malacandra held food for him nor how to recognize it if it did. He had one bad fright in the course of the morning, when, passing through a somewhat more open glade, he became aware first of a huge, yellow object, then of two, and then of an indefinite multitude coming towards him. Before he could fly he found himself in the midst of a herd of enormous pale furry creatures more like giraffes than anything else he could think of, except that they could and did raise themselves on their hind legs and even progress several paces in that position. They were slenderer, and very much higher, than giraffes, and were eating the leaves off the tops of the purple plants. They saw him and stared at him with their big liquid eyes, snorting in *basso profondissimo*, but had apparently no hostile intentions. Their appetite was voracious. In five minutes they had mutilated the tops of a few hundred 'trees' and admitted a new flood of sunlight into the forest. Then they passed on.

This episode had an infinitely comforting effect on Ransom. The planet was not, as he had begun to fear, lifeless except for *sorns*. Here was a very presentable sort of animal, an animal which man could probably tame, and whose food man could possibly share. If only it were possible to climb the 'trees'! He was staring about him with some idea of attempting this feat, when he noticed that the devastation wrought by the leaf-eating animals had opened a vista overhead beyond the plant-tops to a collection of the same greenish-white objects which he had seen across the lake at their first landing.

This time they were much closer. They were enormously high, so that he had to throw back his head to see the top of them. They were something like pylons in shape, but solid; irregular in height and grouped in an apparently haphazard and disorderly fashion. Some ended in points that looked from where he stood as sharp as needles, while others, after narrowing towards the summit, expanded again into knobs or platforms that seemed to his terrestrial eyes ready to fall at any moment. He noticed that the sides were rougher and more seamed with fissures than he had realized at first, and between two of them he saw a motionless line of twisting blue brightness

— obviously a distant fall of water. It was this which finally convinced him that the things, in spite of their improbable shape, were mountains; and with that discovery the mere oddity of the prospect was swallowed up in the fantastic sublime. Here, he understood, was the full statement of that *perpendicular* theme which beast and plant and earth all played on Malacandra — here in this riot of rock, leaping and surging skyward like solid jets from some rock-fountain, and hanging by their own lightness in the air, so shaped, so elongated, that all terrestrial mountains must ever after seem to him to be mountains lying on their sides. He felt a lift and lightening at the heart.

But next moment his heart stood still. Against the pallid background of the mountains and quite close to him — for the mountains themselves seemed but a quarter of a mile away — a moving shape appeared. He recognized it instantly as it moved slowly (and, he thought, stealthily) between two of the denuded plant-tops — the giant stature, the cadaverous leanness, the long, drooping, wizard-like profile of a *sorn*. The head appeared to be narrow and conical; the hands or paws with which it parted the stems before it as it moved were thin, mobile, spidery and almost transparent. He felt an immediate certainty that it was looking for him. All this he took in in an infinitesimal time. The ineffaceable image was hardly stamped on his brain before he was running as hard as he could into the thickest of the forest.

He had no plan save to put as many miles as he could between himself and the *sorn*. He prayed fervently that there might be only one; perhaps the wood was full of them — perhaps they had the intelligence to make a circle round him. No matter — there was nothing for it now but sheer running, running knife in hand. The fear had all gone into action; emotionally he was cool and alert, and ready — as ready as he ever would be — for the last trial. His flight led him downhill at an ever-increasing speed; soon the incline was so steep that if his body had had terrestrial gravity he would have been compelled to take to his hands and knees and clamber down. Then he saw something gleaming ahead of him. A minute later he had emerged from the wood altogether; he was standing, blinking in the light of sun and water, on the shore of a broad river, and looking out on a flat landscape of intermingled river, lake, island and promontory — the same sort of country on which his eyes had first rested in Malacandra.

There was no sound of pursuit. Ransom dropped down on his stomach and drank, cursing a world where *cold* water appeared to be unobtainable. Then he lay still to listen and to recover his breath. His eyes were upon the blue water. It was agitated. Circles shuddered and bubbles danced ten yards away from his face. Suddenly the water heaved and a round, shining, black thing like a cannonball came into sight. Then he saw eyes and mouth — a puffing mouth bearded with bubbles. More of the thing came up out of the water. It was gleaming black. Finally it splashed and wallowed to the shore and rose, steaming, on its hind legs — six or seven feet high and too thin for its height, like everything in Malacandra. It had a coat of thick black hair, lucid as seal-skin, very short legs with webbed feet, a broad beaver-like or fish-like tail, strong fore-limbs with webbed claws or fingers, and some complication half-way up the belly which Ransom took to be its genitals. It was something like a penguin, something like an otter, something like a seal; the slenderness and flexibility of the body suggested a giant stoat. The great round head, heavily whiskered, was mainly responsible for the suggestion of seal; but it was higher in the forehead than a seal's and the mouth was smaller.

There comes a point at which the actions of fear and precaution are purely conventional, no longer felt as terror or hope by the fugitive. Ransom lay perfectly still, pressing his body as well down into the weed as he could, in obedience to a wholly theoretical idea that he might thus pass unobserved. He felt little emotion. He noted in a dry, objective way that this was apparently to be the end of his story — caught between a *sorn* from the land and a big, black animal from the water. He had, it is true, a vague notion that the jaws and mouth of the beast were not those of a carnivore; but he knew that he was too ignorant of zoology to do more than guess.

Then something happened which completely altered his state of mind. The creature, which was still steaming and shaking itself on the bank and had obviously not seen him, opened its mouth and began to make noises. This in itself was not remarkable; but a lifetime of linguistic study assured Ransom almost at once that these were articulate noises. The creature was *talking*. It had language. If you are not yourself a philologist, I am afraid you must take on trust the prodigious emotional consequences of this realization in Ransom's mind. A new world he had already seen — but a new, an extra-terrestrial, a non-human language was a different matter. Somehow he had not thought of this in connection with the *sorns*; now, it

flashed upon him like a revelation. The love of knowledge is a kind of madness. In the fraction of a second which it took Ransom to decide that the creature was really talking, and while he still knew that he might be facing instant death, his imagination had leaped over every fear and hope and probability of his situation to follow the dazzling project of making a Malacandrian grammar. *An Introduction to the Malacandrian language — The Lunar verb — A concise Martian-English Dictionary* . . . the titles flitted through his mind. And what might one not discover from the speech of a non-human race? The very form of language itself, the principle behind all possible languages, might fall into his hands. Unconsciously he raised himself on his elbow and stared at the black beast. It became silent. The huge bullet head swung round and lustrous amber eyes fixed him. There was no wind on the lake or in the wood. Minute after minute in utter silence the representatives of two so far-divided species stared each into the other's face.

Ransom rose to his knees. The creature leaped back, watching him intently, and they became motionless again. Then it came a pace nearer, and Ransom jumped up and retreated, but not far; curiosity held him. He summoned up his courage and advanced holding out his hand; the beast misunderstood the gesture. It backed into the shallows of the lake and he could see the muscles tightened under its sleek pelt, ready for sudden movement. But there it stopped; it, too, was in the grip of curiosity. Neither dared let the other approach, yet each repeatedly felt the impulse to do so himself, and yielded to it. It was foolish, frightening, ecstatic and unbearable all in one moment. It was more than curiosity. It was like a courtship — like the meeting of the first man and the first woman in the world; it was like something beyond that; so natural is the contact of sexes, so limited the strangeness, so shallow the reticence, so mild the repugnance to be overcome, compared with the first tingling intercourse of two different, but rational, species.

The creature suddenly turned and began walking away. A disappointment like despair smote Ransom.

'Come back,' he shouted in English. The thing turned, spread out its arms and spoke again in its unintelligible language; then it resumed its progress. It had not gone more than twenty yards away when Ransom saw it stoop down and pick something up. It returned. In its hand (he was already thinking of its webbed fore-paw as a hand) it was carrying what appeared to

be a shell — the shell of some oyster-like creature, but rounder and more deeply domed. It dipped the shell in the lake and raised it full of water. Then it held the shell to its own middle and seemed to be pouring something into the water. Ransom thought with disgust that it was urinating in the shell. Then he realized that the protuberances on the creature's belly were not genital organs nor organs at all; it was wearing a kind of girdle hung with various pouch-like objects, and it was adding a few drops of liquid from one of these to the water in the shell. This done it raised the shell to its black lips and drank — not throwing back its head like a man but bowing it and sucking like a horse. When it had finished it refilled the shell and once again added a few drops from the receptacle — it seemed to be some kind of skin bottle — at its waist. Supporting the shell in its two arms, it extended them towards Ransom. The intention was unmistakable. Hesitantly, almost shyly, he advanced and took the cup. His finger-tips touched the webbed membrane of the creature's paws and an indescribable thrill of mingled attraction and repulsion ran through him; then he drank. Whatever had been added to the water was plainly alcoholic; he had never enjoyed a drink so much.

'Thank you,' he said in English. 'Thank you very much.'

The creature struck itself on the chest and made a noise. Ransom did not first realize what it meant. Then he saw that it was trying to teach him its name — presumably the name of the species.

'*Hross*' it said, '*Hross*' and flapped itself.

'*Hross*,' repeated Ransom, and pointed at it; then 'Man,' and struck his own chest.

'*Hmā — hmā — hmān*,' imitated the *hross*. It picked up a handful of earth, where earth appeared between weed and water at the bank of the lake.

'*Handra*,' it said. Ransom repeated the word. Then an idea occurred to him.

'*Malacandra?*' he said in an inquiring voice. The *hross* rolled its eyes and waved its arms, obviously in an effort to indicate the whole landscape. Ransom was getting on well. *Handra* was earth the element; *Malac-andra* the 'earth' or planet as a whole. Soon he would find out what *Malac* meant. In the meantime 'H disappears after C' he noted, and made his first step in Malacandrian phonetics. The *hross* was now trying to teach him the meaning of *Handramit*. He recognized the root *handra-* again (and noted 'They have suffixes as well as prefixes'), but this time he could make

nothing of the *hross's* gestures, and remained ignorant what a *handramit* might be. He took the initiative by opening his mouth, pointing to it and going through the pantomime of eating. The Malacandrian word for *food* or *eat* which he got in return proved to contain consonants unreproducible by a human mouth, and Ransom, continuing the pantomime, tried to explain that his interest was practical as well as philological. The *hross* understood him, though he took some time to understand from its gestures that it was inviting him to follow it. In the end, he did so.

It took him only as far as where it had got the shell, and here, to his not very reasonable astonishment, Ransom found that a kind of boat was moored. Man-like, when he saw the artefact he felt more certain of the *hross's* rationality. He even valued the creature the more because the boat, allowing for the usual Malacandrian height and flimsiness, was really very like an earthly boat; only later did he set himself the question, 'What else could a boat be like?' The *hross* produced an oval platter of some tough but slightly flexible material, covered it with strips of a spongy, orange-coloured substance and gave it to Ransom. He cut a convenient length off with his knife and began to eat; doubtfully at first and then ravenously. It had a bean-like taste but sweeter; good enough for a starving man. Then, as his hunger ebbed, the sense of his situation returned with dismaying force. The huge, seal-like creature seated beside him became unbearably ominous. It seemed friendly; but it was very big, very black, and he knew nothing at all about it. What were its relations to the *sorns*? And was it really as rational as it appeared?

It was only many days later that Ransom discovered how to deal with these sudden losses of confidence. They arose when the rationality of the *hross* tempted you to think of it as a man. Then it became abominable — a man seven feet high, with a snaky body, covered, face and all, with thick black animal hair, and whiskered like a cat. But starting from the other end you had an animal with everything an animal ought to have — glossy coat, liquid eye, sweet breath and whitest teeth — and added to all these, as though Paradise had never been lost and earliest dreams were true, the charm of speech and reason. Nothing could be more disgusting than the one impression; nothing more delightful than the other. It all depended on the point of view.

TEN

When Ransom had finished his meal and drunk again of the strong waters of Malacandra, his host rose and entered the boat. He did this head-first like an animal, his sinuous body allowing him to rest his hands on the bottom of the boat while his feet were still planted on the land. He completed the operation by flinging rump, tail and hind legs all together about five feet into the air and then whisking them neatly on board with an agility which would have been quite impossible to an animal of his bulk on Earth.

Having got into the boat, he proceeded to get out again and then pointed to it. Ransom understood that he was being invited to follow his example. The question which he wanted to ask above all others could not, of course, be put. Were the *hrossa* (he discovered later that this was the plural of *hross*) the dominant species on Malacandra, and the *sorns*, despite their more man-like shape, merely a semi-intelligent kind of cattle? Fervently he hoped that it might be so. On the other hand, the *hrossa* might be the domestic animals of the *sorns*, in which case the latter would be superintelligent. His whole imaginative training somehow encouraged him to associate superhuman intelligence with monstrosity of form and ruthlessness of will. To step on board the *hross's* boat might mean surrendering himself to *sorns* at the other end of the journey. On the other hand, the *hross's* invitation might be a golden opportunity of leaving the *sorn*-haunted forests for ever. And by this time the *hross* itself was becoming puzzled at his apparent inability to understand it. The urgency of its signs finally determined him. The thought of parting from the *hross* could not be seriously entertained; its animality shocked him in a dozen ways, but his longing to learn its language, and, deeper still, the shy, ineluctable fascination of unlike for unlike, the sense that the key to prodigious adventure was being put in his hands — all this had really attached him to it by bonds stronger than he knew. He stepped into the boat.

The boat was without seats. It had a very high prow, an enormous expanse of free-board, and what seemed to Ransom an impossibly shallow draught. Indeed, very little of it even rested on the water; he was reminded of a modern European speed-boat. It was moored by something that looked at first like rope; but the *hross* cast off not by untying but by simply pulling the apparent rope in two as one might pull in two a piece of soft toffee or a

roll of plasticine. It then squatted down on its rump in the stern-sheets and took up a paddle — a paddle of such enormous blade that Ransom wondered how the creature could wield it, till he again remembered how light a planet they were on. The length of the *hross's* body enabled him to work freely in the squatting position despite the high gunwale. It paddled quickly.

For the first few minutes they passed between banks wooded with the purple trees, upon a waterway not more than a hundred yards in width. Then they doubled a promontory, and Ransom saw that they were emerging on to a much larger sheet of water — a great lake, almost a sea. The *hross*, now taking great care and often changing direction and looking about it, paddled well out from the shore. The dazzling blue expanse grew moment by moment wider around them; Ransom could not look steadily at it. The warmth from the water was oppressive; he removed his cap and jerkin, and by so doing surprised the *hross* very much.

He rose cautiously to a standing position and surveyed the Malacandrian prospect which had opened on every side. Before and behind them lay the glittering lake, here studded with islands, and there smiling uninterruptedly at the pale blue sky; the sun, he noticed, was almost immediately overhead — they were in the Malacandrian tropics. At each end the lake vanished into more complicated groupings of land and water, softly, featherily embossed in the purple giant weed. But this marshy land or chain of archipelagoes, as he now beheld it, was bordered on each side with jagged walls of the pale green mountains, which he could still hardly call mountains, so tall they were, so gaunt, sharp, narrow and seemingly unbalanced. On the starboard they were not more than a mile away and seemed divided from the water only by a narrow strip of forest; to the left they were far more distant, though still impressive — perhaps seven miles from the boat. They ran on each side of the watered country as far as he could see, both onwards and behind them; he was sailing, in fact, on the flooded floor of a majestic canyon nearly ten miles wide and of unknown length. Behind and sometimes above the mountain peaks he could make out in many places great billowy piles of the rose-red substance which he had yesterday mistaken for cloud. The mountains, in fact, seemed to have no fall of ground behind them; they were rather the serrated bastion of immeasurable tablelands, higher in many places than themselves, which made the Malacandrian horizon left and right as far as eye could reach.

Only straight ahead and straight astern was the planet cut with the vast gorge, which now appeared to him only as a rut or crack in the tableland.

He wondered what the cloud-like red masses were and endeavoured to ask by signs. The question was, however, too particular for sign-language. The *hross*, with a wealth of gesticulation — its arms or fore-limbs were more flexible than his and in quick motion almost whip-like — made it clear that it supposed him to be asking about the high ground in general. It named this *harandra*. The low, watered country, the gorge or canyon, appeared to be *handramit*. Ransom grasped the implications, *handra* earth, *harandra* high earth, mountain, *handramit*, low earth, valley. Highland and lowland, in fact. The peculiar importance of the distinction in Malacandrian geography he learned later.

By this time the *hross* had attained the end of its careful navigation. They were a couple of miles from land when it suddenly ceased paddling and sat tense with its paddle poised in the air; at the same moment the boat quivered and shot forward as if from a catapult. They had apparently availed themselves of some current. In a few seconds they were racing forward at some fifteen miles an hour and rising and falling on the strange, sharp, perpendicular waves of Malacandra with a jerky motion quite unlike that of the choppiest sea that Ransom had ever met on Earth. It reminded him of disastrous experiences on a trotting horse in the army; and it was intensely disagreeable. He gripped the gunwale with his left hand and mopped his brow with his right — the damp warmth from the water had become very troublesome. He wondered if the Malacandrian food, and still more the Malacandrian drink, were really digestible by a human stomach. Thank heaven he was a good sailor! At least a fairly good sailor. At least ——

Hastily he leaned over the side. Heat from blue water smote up to his face; in the depth he thought he saw eels playing: long, silver eels. The worst happened not once but many times. In his misery he remembered vividly the shame of being sick at a children’s party . . . long ago in the star where he was born. He felt a similar shame now. It was not thus that the first representative of humanity would choose to appear before a new species. Did *hrossa* vomit too? Would it know what he was doing? Shaking and groaning, he turned back into the boat. The creature was keeping an eye on him, but its face seemed to him expressionless; it was only long after that he learned to read the Malacandrian face.

The current meanwhile seemed to be gathering speed. In a huge curve they swung across the lake to within a furlong of the farther shore, then back again, and once more onward, in giddy spirals and figures of eight, while purple wood and jagged mountain raced backwards and Ransom loathingly associated their sinuous course with the nauseous curling of the silver eels. He was rapidly losing all interest in Malacandra: the distinction between Earth and other planets seemed of no importance compared with the awful distinction of earth and water. He wondered despairingly whether the *hross* habitually lived on water. Perhaps they were going to spend the night in this detestable boat. . . .

His sufferings did not, in fact, last long. There came a blessed cessation of the choppy movement and a slackening of speed, and he saw that the *hross* was backing water rapidly. They were still afloat, with shores close on each side; between them a narrow channel in which the water hissed furiously — apparently a shallow. The *hross* jumped overboard, splashing abundance of warm water into the ship; Ransom, more cautiously and shakily, clambered after it. He was about up to his knees. To his astonishment, the *hross*, without any appearance of effort, lifted the boat bodily on to the top of its head, steadied it with one forepaw, and proceeded, erect as a Grecian caryatid, to the land. They walked forward — if the swinging movement of the *hross's* short legs from its flexible hips could be called walking — beside the channel. In a few minutes Ransom saw a new landscape.

The channel was not only a shallow but a rapid — the first, indeed, of a series of rapids by which the water descended steeply for the next half-mile. The ground fell away before them and the canyon — or *handramit* — continued at a very much lower level. Its walls, however, did not sink with it, and from his present position Ransom got a clearer notion of the lie of the land. Far more of the highlands to left and right were visible, sometimes covered with the cloud-like red swellings, but more often level, pale and barren to where the smooth line of their horizon marched with the sky. The mountain peaks now appeared only as the fringe or border of the true highland, surrounding it as the lower teeth surround the tongue. He was struck by the vivid contrast between *harandra* and *handramit*. Like a rope of jewels the gorge spread beneath him, purple, sapphire blue, yellow and pinkish white, a rich and variegated inlay of wooded land and disappearing, reappearing, ubiquitous water. Malacandra was less like earth than he had

been beginning to suppose. The *handramit* was no true valley rising and falling with the mountain chain it belonged to. Indeed, it did not belong to a mountain chain. It was only an enormous crack or ditch, of varying depth, running through the high and level *harandra*; the latter, he now began to suspect, was the true ‘surface’ of the planet — certainly would appear as surface to a terrestrial astronomer. To the *handramit* itself there seemed no end; uninterrupted and very nearly straight, it ran before him, a narrowing line of colour, to where it clove the horizon with a V-shaped indenture. There must be a hundred miles of it in view, he thought; and he reckoned that he had put some thirty or forty miles of it behind him since yesterday.

All this time they were descending beside the rapids to where the water was level again and the *hross* could relaunch its skiff. During this walk Ransom learned the words for boat, rapid, water, sun and carry; the latter, as his first verb, interested him particularly. The *hross* was also at some pains to impress upon him an association or relation which it tried to convey by repeating the contrasted pairs of words *hrossa-handramit* and *séroni-harandra*. Ransom understood him to mean that the *hrossa* lived down in the *handramit* and the *séroni* up on the *harandra*. What the deuce were *séroni*, he wondered. The open reaches of the *harandra* did not look as if anything lived up there. Perhaps the *hrossa* had a mythology — he took it for granted they were on a low cultural level — and the *séroni* were gods or demons.

The journey continued, with frequent, though decreasing, recurrences of nausea for Ransom. Hours later he realized that *séroni* might very well be the plural of *sorn*.

The sun declined, on their right. It dropped quicker than on Earth, or at least on those parts of Earth that Ransom knew, and in the cloudless sky it had little sunset pomp about it. In some other queer way which he could not specify it differed from the sun he knew; but even while he speculated the needle-like mountain-tops stood out black against it and the *handramit* grew dark, though eastward (to their left) the high country of the *harandra* still shone pale rose, remote and smooth and tranquil, like another and more spiritual world.

Soon he became aware that they were landing again, that they were treading solid ground, were making for the depth of the purple forest. The motion of the boat still worked in his fantasy and the earth seemed to sway beneath him; this, with weariness and twilight, made the rest of the journey

dream-like. Light began to glare in his eyes. A fire was burning. It illuminated the huge leaves overhead, and he saw stars beyond them. Dozens of *hrossa* seemed to have surrounded him; more animal, less human, in their multitude and their close neighbourhood to him, than his solitary guide had seemed. He felt some fear, but more a ghastly inappropriateness. He wanted men — any men, even Weston and Devine. He was too tired to do anything about these meaningless bullet heads and furry faces — could make no response at all. And then, lower down, closer to him, more mobile, came in throngs the whelps, the puppies, the cubs, whatever you called them. Suddenly his mood changed. They were jolly little things. He laid his hand on one black head and smiled; the creature scurried away.

He never could remember much of that evening. There was more eating and drinking, there was continual coming and going of black forms, there were strange eyes luminous in the firelight; finally, there was sleep in some dark, apparently covered place.

ELEVEN

Ever since he awoke on the space-ship Ransom had been thinking about the amazing adventure of going to another planet, and about his chances of returning from it. What he had not thought about was *being* on it. It was with a kind of stupefaction each morning that he found himself neither arriving in, nor escaping from, but simply living on, Malacandra; waking, sleeping, eating, swimming and even, as the days passed, talking. The wonder of it smote him most strongly when he found himself, about three weeks after his arrival, actually going for a walk. A few weeks later he had his favourite walks, and his favourite foods; he was beginning to develop habits. He knew a male from a female *hross* at sight, and even individual differences were becoming plain. Hyoi who had first found him — miles away to the north — was a very different person from the grey-muzzled, venerable Hnohra who was daily teaching him the language; and the young of the species were different again. They were delightful. You could forget all about the rationality of *hrossa* in dealing with them. Too young to trouble him with the baffling enigma of reason in an inhuman form, they solaced his loneliness, as if he had been allowed to bring a few dogs with him from the Earth. The cubs, on their part, felt the liveliest interest in the hairless goblin which had appeared among them. With them, and therefore indirectly with their dams, he was a brilliant success.

Of the community in general his earlier impressions were all gradually being corrected. His first diagnosis of their culture was what he called ‘old stone age.’ The few cutting instruments they possessed were made of stone. They seemed to have no pottery but a few clumsy vessels used for boiling, and boiling was the only cookery they attempted. Their common drinking vessel, dish and ladle all in one was the oyster-like shell in which he had first tasted *hross* hospitality; the fish which it contained was their only animal food. Vegetable fare they had in great plenty and variety, some of it delicious. Even the pinkish-white weed which covered the whole *handramit* was edible at a pinch, so that if he had starved before Hyoi found him he would have starved amidst abundance. No *hross*, however, ate the weed (*honodraskrud*) for choice, though it might be used *faute de mieux* on a journey. Their dwellings were beehive-shaped huts of stiff leaf and the villages — there were several in the neighbourhood — were always built

beside rivers for warmth and well upstream towards the walls of the *handramit* where the water was hottest. They slept on the ground. They seemed to have no arts except a kind of poetry and music which was practised almost every evening by a team or troupe of four *hrossa*. One recited half chanting at great length while the other three, sometimes singly and sometimes antiphonally, interrupted him from time to time with song. Ransom could not find out whether these interruptions were simply lyrical interludes or dramatic dialogue arising out of the leader's narrative. He could make nothing of the music. The voices were not disagreeable and the scale seemed adapted to human ears, but the time-pattern was meaningless to his sense of rhythm. The occupations of the tribe or family were at first mysterious. People were always disappearing for a few days and reappearing again. There was a little fishing and much journeying in boats of which he never discovered the object. Then one day he saw a kind of caravan of *hrossa* setting out by land each with a load of vegetable food on its head. Apparently there was some kind of trade in Malacandra.

He discovered their agriculture in the first week. About a mile down the *handramit* one came to broad lands free of forest and clothed for many miles together in low pulpy vegetation in which yellow, orange and blue predominated. Later on, there were lettuce-like plants about the height of a terrestrial birch-tree. Where one of these overhung the warmth of water you could step into one of the lower leaves and lie deliciously as in a gently moving, fragrant hammock. Elsewhere it was not warm enough to sit still for long out of doors; the general temperature of the *handramit* was that of a fine winter's morning on Earth. These food-producing areas were worked communally by the surrounding villages, and division of labour had been carried to a higher point than he expected. Cutting, drying, storing, transport and something like manuring were all carried on, and he suspected that some at least of the water channels were artificial.

But the real revolution in his understanding of the *hrossa* began when he had learned enough of their language to attempt some satisfaction of their curiosity about himself. In answer to their questions he began by saying that he had come out of the sky. Hnohra immediately asked from which planet or earth (*handra*). Ransom, who had deliberately given a childish version of the truth in order to adapt it to the supposed ignorance of his audience, was a little annoyed to find Hnohra painfully explaining to him that he could not live in the sky because there was no air in it; he might have come through

the sky but he must have come from a *handra*. He was quite unable to point Earth out to them in the night sky. They seemed surprised at his inability, and repeatedly pointed out to him a bright planet low on the western horizon — a little south of where the sun had gone down. He was surprised that they selected a planet instead of a mere star and stuck to their choice; could it be possible that they understood astronomy? Unfortunately he still knew too little of the language to explore their knowledge. He turned the conversation by asking them the name of the bright southern planet, and was told that it was Thulcandra — the silent world or planet.

'Why do you call it *Thulc*?' he asked. 'Why silent?' No one knew.

'The *séroni* know,' said Hnohra. 'That is the sort of thing they know.'

Then he was asked how he had come, and made a very poor attempt at describing the space-ship — but again:

'The *séroni* would know.'

Had he come alone? No, he had come with two others of his kind — bad men ('bent' men was the nearest *hrossian* equivalent) who tried to kill him, but he had run away from them. The *hrossa* found this very difficult, but all finally agreed that he ought to go to Oyarsa. Oyarsa would protect him. Ransom asked who Oyarsa was. Slowly, and with many misunderstandings, he hammered out the information that Oyarsa (1) lived at Meldilorn; (2) knew everything and ruled everyone; (3) had always been there; and (4) was not a *hross*, nor one of the *séroni*. Then Ransom, following his own idea, asked if Oyarsa had made the world. The *hrossa* almost barked in the fervour of their denial. Did people in Thulcandra not know that Maleldil the Young had made and still ruled the world? Even a child knew that. Where did Maleldil live, Ransom asked.

'With the Old One.'

And who was the Old One? Ransom did not understand the answer. He tried again.

'Where was the Old One?'

'He is not that sort,' said Hnohra, 'that he has to live anywhere,' and proceeded to a good deal which Ransom did not follow. But he followed enough to feel once more a certain irritation. Ever since he had discovered the rationality of the *hrossa* he had been haunted by a conscientious scruple as to whether it might not be his duty to undertake their religious instruction; now, as a result of his tentative efforts, he found himself being treated as if *he* were the savage and being given a first sketch of civilized

religion — a sort of *hrossian* equivalent of the shorter catechism. It became plain that Maleldil was a spirit without body, parts or passions.

‘He is not a *hnau*,’ said the *hrossa*.

‘What is *hnau*?’ asked Ransom.

‘You are *hnau*. I am *hnau*. The *séroni* are *hnau*. The *pfifltriggi* are *hnau*.’

‘*Pfifltriggi?*’ said Ransom.

‘More than ten days’ journey to the west,’ said Hnohra. ‘The *harandra* sinks down not into a *handramit* but into a broad place, an open place, spreading every way. Five days’ journey from the north to the south of it; ten days’ journey from the east to the west. The forests are of other colours there than here, they are blue and green. It is very deep there, it goes to the roots of the world. The best things that can be dug out of the earth are there. The *pfifltriggi* live there. They delight in digging. What they dig they soften with fire and make things of it. They are little people, smaller than you, long in the snout, pale, busy. They have long limbs in front. No *hnau* can match them in making and shaping things as none can match us in singing. But let *Hmān* see.’

He turned and spoke to one of the younger *hrossa* and presently, passed from hand to hand, there came to him a little bowl. He held it close to the firelight and examined it. It was certainly of gold, and Ransom realized the meaning of Devine’s interest in Malacandra.

‘Is there much of this thing?’ he asked.

Yes, he was told, it was washed down in most of the rivers; but the best and most was among the *pfifltriggi*, and it was they who were skilled in it. *Arbol hru*, they called it — Sun’s blood. He looked at the bowl again. It was covered with fine etching. He saw pictures of *hrossa* and of smaller, almost frog-like animals; and then, of *sorns*. He pointed to the latter inquiringly.

‘*Séroni*,’ said the *hrossa*, confirming his suspicions. ‘They live up almost on the *harandra*. In the big caves.’

The frog-like animals — or tapir-headed, frog-bodied animals — were *pfifltriggi*. Ransom turned it over in his mind. On Malacandra, apparently, three distinct species had reached rationality, and none of them had yet exterminated the other two. It concerned him intensely to find out which was the real master.

‘Which of the *hnau* rule?’ he asked.

‘Oyarsa rules,’ was the reply.

‘Is he *hnau*?’

This puzzled them a little. The *séroni*, they thought, would be better at that kind of question. Perhaps Oyarsa was *hnau*, but a very different *hnau*. He had no death and no young.

‘These *séroni* know more than the *hrossa*?’ asked Ransom.

This produced more a debate than an answer. What emerged finally was that the *séroni* or *sorns* were perfectly helpless in a boat, and could not fish to save their lives, could hardly swim, could make no poetry, and even when *hrossa* had made it for them could understand only the inferior sorts; but they were admittedly good at finding out things about the stars and understanding the darker utterances of Oyarsa and telling what happened in Malacandra long ago — longer ago than anyone could remember.

‘Ah — the intelligentsia,’ thought Ransom. ‘They must be the real rulers, however it is disguised.’

He tried to ask what would happen if the *sorns* used their wisdom to make the *hrossa* do things — this was as far as he could get in his halting Malacandrian. The question did not sound nearly so urgent in this form as it would have done if he had been able to say ‘used their scientific resources for the exploitation of their uncivilized neighbours.’ But he might have spared his pains. The mention of the *sorns’* inadequate appreciation of poetry had diverted the whole conversation into literary channels. Of the heated, and apparently technical, discussion which followed he understood not a syllable.

Naturally his conversations with the *hrossa* did not all turn on Malacandra. He had to repay them with information about Earth. He was hampered in this both by the humiliating discoveries which he was constantly making of his own ignorance about his native planet, and partly by his determination to conceal some of the truth. He did not want to tell them too much of our human wars and industrialisms. He remembered how H. G. Wells’s Cavor had met his end on the Moon; also he felt shy. A sensation akin to that of physical nakedness came over him whenever they questioned him too closely about men — the *hmāna* as they called them. Moreover, he was determined not to let them know that he had been brought there to be given to the *sorns*; for he was becoming daily more certain that these were the dominant species. What he did tell them fired the imagination of the *hrossa*: they all began making poems about the strange *handra* where the plants were hard like stone and the earth-weed green like

rock and the waters cold and salt, and *hmāna* lived out on top, on the *harandra*.

They were even more interested in what he had to tell them of the aquatic animal with snapping jaws which he had fled from in their own world and even in their own *handramit*. It was a *hnakra*, they all agreed. They were intensely excited. There had not been a *hnakra* in the valley for many years. The youth of the *hrossa* got out their weapons — primitive harpoons with points of bone — and the very cubs began playing at *hnakra*-hunting in the shallows. Some of the mothers showed signs of anxiety and wanted the cubs to be kept out of the water, but in general the news of the *hnakra* seemed to be immensely popular. Hyoi set off at once to do something to his boat, and Ransom accompanied him. He wished to make himself useful, and was already beginning to have some vague capacity with the primitive *hrossian* tools. They walked together to Hyoi's creek, a stone's throw through the forest.

On the way, where the path was single and Ransom was following Hyoi, they passed a little she-*hross*, not much more than a cub. She spoke as they passed, but not to them: her eyes were on a spot about five yards away.

'Who do you speak to, Hrikki?' said Ransom.

'To the *eldil*.'

'Where?'

'Did you not see him?'

'I saw nothing.'

'There! There!' she cried suddenly. 'Ah! He is gone. Did you not see him?'

'I saw no one.'

'Hyoi!' said the cub, 'the *hmān* cannot see the *eldil*.'

But Hyoi, continuing steadily on his way, was already out of earshot, and had apparently noticed nothing. Ransom concluded that Hrikki was 'pretending' like the young of his own species. In a few moments he rejoined his companion.

TWELVE

They worked hard at Hyoi's boat till noon and then spread themselves on the weed close to the warmth of the creek, and began their midday meal. The war-like nature of their preparations suggested many questions to Ransom. He knew no word for war, but he managed to make Hyoi understand what he wanted to know. Did *séroni* and *hrossa* and *pfifltriggi* ever go out like this, with weapons, against each other?

'What for?' asked Hyoi.

It was difficult to explain. 'If both wanted one thing and neither would give it,' said Ransom, 'would the other at last come with force? Would they say, give it or we kill you?'

'What sort of thing?'

'Well — food, perhaps.'

'If the other *hnau* wanted food, why should we not give it to them? We often do.'

'But how if we had not enough for ourselves?'

'But Maleldil will not stop the plants growing.'

'Hyoi, if you had more and more young, would Maleldil broaden the *handramit* and make enough plants for them all?'

'The *séroni* know that sort of thing. But why should we have more young?'

Ransom found this difficult. At last he said:

'Is the begetting of young not a pleasure among the *hrossa*?'

'A very great one, *Hmān*. This is what we call love.'

'If a thing is a pleasure, a *hmān* wants it again. He might want the pleasure more often than the number of young that could be fed.'

It took Hyoi a long time to get the point.

'You mean,' he said slowly, 'that he might do it not only in one or two years of his life but again?'

'Yes.'

'But why? Would he want his dinner all day or want to sleep after he had slept? I do not understand.'

'But a dinner comes every day. This love, you say, comes only once while the *hross* lives?'

‘But it takes his whole life. When he is young he has to look for his mate; and then he has to court her; then he begets young; then he rears them; then he remembers all this, and boils it inside him and makes it into poems and wisdom.’

‘But the pleasure he must be content only to remember?’

‘That is like saying “My food I must be content only to eat.”’

‘I do not understand.’

‘A pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered. You are speaking, *Hmān*, as if the pleasure were one thing and the memory another. It is all one thing. The *séroni* could say it better than I say it now. Not better than I could say it in a poem. What you call remembering is the last part of the pleasure, as the *crah* is the last part of a poem. When you and I met, the meeting was over very shortly, it was nothing. Now it is growing something as we remember it. But still we know very little about it. What it will be when I remember it as I lie down to die, what it makes in me all my days till then — that is the real meeting. The other is only the beginning of it. You say you have poets in your world. Do they not teach you this?’

‘Perhaps some of them do,’ said Ransom. ‘But even in a poem does a *hross* never long to hear one splendid line over again?’

Hyoi’s reply unfortunately turned on one of those points in their language which Ransom had not mastered. There were two verbs which both, as far as he could see, meant to *long* or *yearn*; but the *hrossa* drew a sharp distinction, even an opposition, between them. Hyoi seemed to him merely to be saying that every one would long for it (*wondelone*) but no one in his senses could long for it (*hluntheline*).

‘And indeed,’ he continued, ‘the poem is a good example. For the most splendid line becomes fully splendid only by means of all the lines after it; if you went back to it you would find it less splendid than you thought. You would kill it. I mean in a good poem.’

‘But in a bent poem, Hyoi?’

‘A bent poem is not listened to, *Hmān*.’

‘And how of love in a bent life?’

‘How could the life of a *hnau* be bent?’

‘Do you say, Hyoi, that there are no bent *hrossa*?’

Hyoi reflected. ‘I have heard,’ he said at last, ‘of something like what you mean. It is said that sometimes here and there a cub at a certain age gets strange twists in him. I have heard of one that wanted to eat earth; there

might, perhaps, be somewhere a *hross* likewise that wanted to have the years of love prolonged. I have not heard of it, but it might be. I have heard of something stranger. There is a poem about a *hross* who lived long ago, in another *handramit*, who saw things all made two — two suns in the sky, two heads on a neck; and last of all they say that he fell into such a frenzy that he desired two mates. I do not ask you to believe it, but that is the story: that he loved two *hressni*.'

Ransom pondered this. Here, unless Hyoi was deceiving him, was a species naturally continent, naturally monogamous. And yet, was it so strange? Some animals, he knew, had regular breeding seasons; and if nature could perform the miracle of turning the sexual impulse outward at all, why could she not go further and fix it, not morally but instinctively, to a single object? He even remembered dimly having heard that some terrestrial animals, some of the 'lower' animals, were naturally monogamous. Among the *hrossa*, anyway, it was obvious that unlimited breeding and promiscuity were as rare as the rarest perversions. At last it dawned upon him that it was not they, but his own species, that were the puzzle. That the *hrossa* should have such instincts was mildly surprising; but how came it that the instincts of the *hrossa* so closely resembled the unattained ideals of that far-divided species Man whose instincts were so deplorably different? What was the history of Man? But Hyoi was speaking again.

'Undoubtedly,' he said. 'Maleldil made us so. How could there ever be enough to eat if everyone had twenty young? And how could we endure to live and let time pass if we were always crying for one day or one year to come back — if we did not know that every day in a life fills the whole life with expectation and memory and that these *are* that day?'

'All the same,' said Ransom, unconsciously nettled on behalf of his own world, 'Maleldil has let in the *hnakra*.'

'Oh, but that is so different. I long to kill this *hnakra* as he also longs to kill me. I hope that my ship will be the first and I first in my ship with my straight spear when the black jaws snap. And if he kills me, my people will mourn and my brothers will desire still more to kill him. But they will not wish that there were no *hnéraki*; nor do I. How can I make you understand, when you do not understand the poets? The *hnakra* is our enemy, but he is also our beloved. We feel in our hearts his joy as he looks down from the mountain of water in the north where he was born; we leap with him when

he jumps the falls; and when winter comes, and the lake smokes higher than our heads, it is with his eyes that we see it and know that his roaming time is come. We hang images of him in our houses, and the sign of all the *hrossa* is a *hnakra*. In him the spirit of the valley lives; and our young play at being *hnéraki* as soon as they can splash in the shallows.'

'And then he kills them?'

'Not often them. The *hrossa* would be bent *hrossa* if they let him get so near. Long before he had come down so far we should have sought him out. No, *Hmān*, it is not a few deaths roving the world around him that make a *hnau* miserable. It is a bent *hnau* that would blacken the world. And I say also this. I do not think the forest would be so bright, nor the water so warm, nor love so sweet, if there were no danger in the lakes. I will tell you a day in my life that has shaped me; such a day as comes only once, like love, or serving Oyarsa in Meldilorn. Then I was young, not much more than a cub, when I went far, far up the *handramit* to the land where stars shine at midday and even water is cold. A great waterfall I climbed. I stood on the shore of Balki the pool, which is the place of most awe in all worlds. The walls of it go up for ever and ever and huge and holy images are cut in them, the work of old times. There is the fall called the Mountain of Water. Because I have stood there alone, Maleldil and I, for even Oyarsa sent me no word, my heart has been higher, my song deeper, all my days. But do you think it would have been so unless I had known that in Balki *hnéraki* dwelled? There I drank life because death was in the pool. That was the best of drinks save one.'

'What one?' asked Ransom.

'Death itself in the day I drink it and go to Maleldil.'

Shortly after that they rose and resumed their work. The sun was declining as they came back through the wood. It occurred to Ransom to ask Hyoi a question.

'Hyoi,' he said, 'it comes into my head that when I first saw you and before you saw me, you were already speaking. That was how I knew that you were *hnau*, for otherwise I should have thought you a beast, and run away. But who were you speaking to?'

'To an *eldil*.'

'What is that? I saw no one.'

'Are there no *eldila* in your world, *Hmān*? That must be strange.'

'But what are they?'

‘They come from Oyarsa — they are, I suppose, a kind of *hnau*.’

‘As we came out to-day I passed a child who said she was talking to an *eldil*, but I could see nothing.’

‘One can see by looking at your eyes, *Hmān*, that they are different from ours. But *eldila* are hard to see. They are not like us. Light goes through them. You must be looking in the right place and the right time; and that is not likely to come about unless the *eldil* wishes to be seen. Sometimes you can mistake them for a sunbeam or even a moving of the leaves; but when you look again you see that it was an *eldil* and that it is gone. But whether your eyes can ever see them I do not know. The *séroni* would know that.’

THIRTEEN

The whole village was astir next morning before the sunlight — already visible on the *harandra* — had penetrated the forest. By the light of the cooking-fires Ransom saw an incessant activity of *hrossa*. The females were pouring out steaming food from clumsy pots; Hnohra was directing the transportation of piles of spears to the boats; Hyoi, in the midst of a group of the most experienced hunters, was talking too rapidly and too technically for Ransom to follow; parties were arriving from the neighbouring villages; and the cubs, squealing with excitement, were running hither and thither among their elders.

He found that his own share in the hunt had been taken for granted. He was to be in Hyoi's boat, with Hyoi and Whin. The two *hrossa* would take it in turns to paddle, while Ransom and the disengaged *hross* would be in the bows. He understood the *hrossa* well enough now to know that they were making him the noblest offer in their power, and that Hyoi and Whin were each tormented by the fear lest he should be paddling when the *hnakra* appeared. A short time ago, in England, nothing would have seemed more impossible to Ransom than to accept the post of honour and danger in an attack upon an unknown but certainly deadly aquatic monster. Even more recently, when he had first fled from the *sorns*, or when he had lain pitying himself in the forest by night, it would hardly have been in his power to do what he was intending to do to-day. For his intention was clear. Whatever happened, he must show that the human species also were *hnau*. He was only too well aware that such resolutions might look very different when the moment came, but he felt an unwonted assurance that somehow or other he would be able to go through with it. It was necessary, and the necessary was always possible. Perhaps, too, there was something in the air he now breathed, or in the society of the *hrossa*, which had begun to work a change in him.

The lake was just giving back the first rays of the sun when he found himself kneeling side by side with Whin, as he had been told to, in the bows of Hyoi's ship, with a little pile of throwing-spears between his knees and one in his right hand, stiffening his body against the motion as Hyoi paddled them out into their place. At least a hundred boats were taking part in the hunt. They were in three parties. The central, and far the smallest,

was to work its way up the current by which Hyoi and Ransom had descended after their first meeting. Longer ships than he had yet seen, eight-paddled ships, were used for this. The habit of the *hnakra* was to float down the current whenever he could; meeting the ships, he would presumably dart out of it into the still water to left or right. Hence while the central party slowly beat up the current, the light ships, paddling far faster, would cruise at will up and down either side of it to receive the quarry as soon as he broke what might be called his ‘cover.’ In this game numbers and intelligence were on the side of the *hrossa*; the *hnakra* had speed on his side, and also invisibility, for he could swim under water. He was nearly invulnerable except through his open mouth. If the two hunters in the bows of the boat he made for muffed their shots, this was usually the last of them and of their boat.

In the light skirmishing parties there were two things a brave hunter could aim at. He could keep well back and close to the long-ships where the *hnakra* was most likely to break out, or he could get as far forward as possible in the hope of meeting the *hnakra* going at its full speed and yet untroubled by the hunt, and of inducing it, by a well-aimed spear, to leave the current then and there. One could thus anticipate the beaters and kill the beast — if that was how the matter ended — on one’s own. This was the desire of Hyoi and Whin; and almost — so strongly they infected him — of Ransom. Hence, hardly had the heavy craft of the beaters begun their slow progress up-current amid a wall of foam when he found his own ship speeding northward as fast as Hyoi could drive her, already passing boat after boat and making for the freest water. The speed was exhilarating. In the cold morning the warmth of the blue expanse they were clearing was not unpleasant. Behind them arose, re-echoed from the remote rock pinnacles on either side of the valley, the bell-like, deep-mouthed voices of more than two hundred *hrossa*, more musical than a cry of hounds but closely akin to it in quality as in purport. Something long sleeping in the blood awoke in Ransom. It did not seem impossible at this moment that even he might be the *hnakra*-slayer; that the fame of *Hmān hnakrapunt* might be handed down to posterity in this world that knew no other man. But he had had such dreams before, and knew how they ended. Imposing humility on the newly risen riot of his feelings, he turned his eyes to the troubled water of the current which they were skirting, without entering, and watched intently.

For a long time nothing happened. He became conscious of the stiffness of his attitude and deliberately relaxed his muscles. Presently Whin reluctantly went aft to paddle, and Hyoi came forward to take his place. Almost as soon as the change had been effected, Hyoi spoke softly to him and said, without taking his eyes off the current:

‘There is an *eldil* coming to us over the water.’

Ransom could see nothing — or nothing that he could distinguish from imagination and the dance of sunlight on the lake. A moment later Hyoi spoke again, but not to him.

‘What is it, sky-born?’

What happened next was the most uncanny experience Ransom had yet had on Malacandra. He heard the voice. It seemed to come out of the air, about a yard above his head, and it was almost an octave higher than the *hross’s* — higher even than his own. He realized that a very little difference in his ear would have made the *eldil* as inaudible to him as it was invisible.

‘It is the Man with you, Hyoi,’ said the voice. ‘He ought not to be there. He ought to be going to Oyarsa. Bent *hnau* of his own kind from Thulcandra are following him; he should go to Oyarsa. If they find him anywhere else there will be evil.’

‘He hears you, sky-born,’ said Hyoi. ‘And have you no message for my wife? You know what she wishes to be told.’

‘I have a message for Hleri,’ said the *eldil*. ‘But you will not be able to take it. I go to her now myself. All that is well. Only — let the Man go to Oyarsa.’

There was a moment’s silence.

‘He is gone,’ said Whin. ‘And we have lost our share in the hunt.’

‘Yes,’ said Hyoi with a sigh. ‘We must put *Hmān* ashore and teach him the way to Meldilorn.’

Ransom was not so sure of his courage but that one part of him felt an instant relief at the idea of any diversion from their present business. But the other part of him urged him to hold on to his newfound manhood; now or never — with such companions or with none — he must leave a deed on his memory instead of one more broken dream. It was in obedience to something like conscience that he exclaimed:

‘No, no. There is time for that after the hunt. We must kill the *hnakra* first.’

‘Once an *eldil* has spoken,’ began Hyoi, when suddenly Whin gave a great cry (a ‘bark’ Ransom would have called it three weeks ago) and pointed. There, not a furlong away, was the torpedo-like track of foam; and now, visible through a wall of foam, they caught the metallic glint of the monster’s sides. Whin was paddling furiously. Hyoi threw and missed. As his first spear smote the water his second was already in the air. This time it must have touched the *hnakra*. He wheeled right out of the current. Ransom saw the great black pit of his mouth twice open and twice shut with its snap of shark-like teeth. He himself had thrown now — hurriedly, excitedly, with unpractised hand.

‘Back,’ shouted Hyoi to Whin who was already backing water with every pound of his vast strength. Then all became confused. He heard Whin shout ‘Shore!’ There came a shock that flung him forward almost into the *hnakra’s* jaws and he found himself at the same moment up to his waist in water. It was at him the teeth were snapping. Then as he flung shaft after shaft into the great cavern of the gaping brute he saw Hyoi perched incredibly on its back — on its nose — bending forward and hurling from there. Almost at once the *hross* was dislodged and fell with a wide splash nearly ten yards away. But the *hnakra* was killed. It was wallowing on its side, bubbling out its black life. The water around him was dark and stank.

When he recollected himself they were all on shore, wet, steaming, trembling with exertion and embracing one another. It did not now seem strange to him to be clasped to a breast of wet fur. The breath of the *hrossa* which, though sweet, was not human breath, did not offend him. He was one with them. That difficulty which they, accustomed to more than one rational species, had perhaps never felt, was now overcome. They were all *hnau*. They had stood shoulder to shoulder in the face of an enemy, and the shapes of their heads no longer mattered. And he, even Ransom, had come through it and not been disgraced. He had grown up.

They were on a little promontory free of forest, on which they had run aground in the confusion of the fight. The wreckage of the boat and the corpse of the monster lay confused together in the water beside them. No sound from the rest of the hunting party was audible; they had been almost a mile ahead when they met the *hnakra*. All three sat down to recover their breath.

‘So,’ said Hyoi, ‘we are *hnakrapunti*. This is what I have wanted all my life.’

At that moment Ransom was deafened by a loud sound — a perfectly familiar sound which was the last thing he expected to hear. It was a terrestrial, human and civilized sound; it was even European. It was the crack of an English rifle; and Hyoi, at his feet, was struggling to rise and gasping. There was blood on the white weed where he struggled. Ransom dropped on his knees beside him. The huge body of the *hross* was too heavy for him to turn round. Whin helped him.

'Hyoi, can you hear me?' said Ransom with his face close to the round seal-like head. 'Hyoi, it is through me that this has happened. It is the other *hmāna* who have hit you, the bent two that brought me to Malacandra. They can throw death at a distance with a thing they have made. I should have told you. We are all a bent race. We have come here to bring evil on Malacandra. We are only half *hnau* — Hyoi . . .' His speech died away into the inarticulate. He did not know the words for 'forgive,' or 'shame,' or 'fault,' hardly the word for 'sorry.' He could only stare into Hyoi's distorted face in speechless guilt. But the *hross* seemed to understand. It was trying to say something, and Ransom laid his ear close to the working mouth. Hyoi's dulling eyes were fixed on his own, but the expression of a *hross* was not even now perfectly intelligible to him.

'*Hnā — hmā*,' it muttered and then, at last, '*Hmān hnakrapunt*.' Then there came a contortion of the whole body, a gush of blood and saliva from the mouth; his arms gave way under the sudden dead weight of the sagging head, and Hyoi's face became as alien and animal as it had seemed at their first meeting. The glazed eyes and the slowly stiffening, bedraggled fur, were like those of any dead beast found in an earthly wood.

Ransom resisted an infantile impulse to break out into imprecations on Weston and Devine. Instead he raised his eyes to meet those of Whin who was crouching — *hrossa* do not kneel — on the other side of the corpse.

'I am in the hands of your people, Whin,' he said. 'They must do as they will. But if they are wise they will kill me and certainly they will kill the other two.'

'One does not kill *hnau*,' said Whin. 'Only Oyarsa does that. But these other, where are they?'

Ransom glanced around. It was open on the promontory but thick wood came down to where it joined the mainland, perhaps two hundred yards away.

‘Somewhere in the wood,’ he said. ‘Lie down, Whin, here where the ground is lowest. They may throw from their thing again.’

He had some difficulty in making Whin do as he suggested. When both were lying in dead ground, their feet almost in the water, the *hross* spoke again.

‘Why did they kill him?’ he asked.

‘They would not know he was *hnau*,’ said Ransom. ‘I have told you that there is only one kind of *hnau* in our world. They would think he was a beast. If they thought that, they would kill him for pleasure, or in fear, or’ (he hesitated) ‘because they were hungry. But I must tell you the truth, Whin. They would kill even a *hnau*, knowing it to be *hnau*, if they thought its death would serve them.’

There was a short silence.

‘I am wondering,’ said Ransom, ‘if they saw me. It is for me they are looking. Perhaps if I went to them they would be content and come no farther into your land. But why do they not come out of the wood to see what they have killed?’

‘Our people are coming,’ said Whin, turning his head. Ransom looked back and saw the lake black with boats. The main body of the hunt would be with them in a few minutes.

‘They are afraid of the *hrossa*,’ said Ransom. ‘That is why they do not come out of the wood. I will go to them, Whin.’

‘No,’ said Whin. ‘I have been thinking. All this has come from not obeying the *eldil*. He said you were to go to Oyarsa. You ought to have been already on the road. You must go now.’

‘But that will leave the bent *hmāna* here. They may do more harm.’

‘They will not set on the *hrossa*. You have said they are afraid. It is more likely that we will come upon them. Never fear — they will not see us or hear us. We will take them to Oyarsa. But you must go now, as the *eldil* said.’

‘Your people will think I have run away because I am afraid to look in their faces after Hyoi’s death.’

‘It is not a question of thinking but of what an *eldil* says. This is cubs’ talk. Now listen, and I will teach you the way.’

The *hross* explained to him that five days’ journey to the south the *handramit* joined another *handramit*; and three days’ up this other *handramit* to west and north was Meldilorn and the seat of Oyarsa. But

there was a shorter way, a mountain road, across the corner of the *harandra* between the two canyons, which would bring him down to Meldilorn on the second day. He must go into the wood before them and through it till he came to the mountain wall of the *handramit*; and he must work south along the roots of the mountains till he came to a road cut up between them. Up this he must go, and somewhere beyond the tops of the mountains he would come to the tower of Augray. Augray would help him. He could cut weed for his food before he left the forest and came into the rock country. Whin realized that Ransom might meet the other two *hmāna* as soon as he entered the wood.

‘If they catch you,’ he said, ‘then it will be as you say, they will come no farther into our land. But it is better to be taken on your way to Oyarsa than to stay here. And once you are on the way to him, I do not think he will let the bent ones stop you.’

Ransom was by no means convinced that this was the best plan either for himself or for the *hrossa*. But the stupor of humiliation in which he had lain ever since Hyoi fell forbade him to criticize. He was anxious only to do whatever they wanted him to do, to trouble them as little as was now possible, and above all to get away. It was impossible to find out how Whin felt; and Ransom sternly repressed an insistent, whining impulse to renewed protestations and regrets, self-accusations that might elicit some word of pardon. Hyoi with his last breath had called him *hnakra*-slayer; that was forgiveness generous enough and with that he must be content. As soon as he had mastered the details of his route he bade farewell to Whin and advanced alone towards the forest.

FOURTEEN

Until he reached the wood Ransom found it difficult to think of anything except the possibility of another rifle bullet from Weston or Devine. He thought that they probably still wanted him alive rather than dead, and this, combined with the knowledge that a *hross* was watching him, enabled him to proceed with at least external composure. Even when he had entered the forest he felt himself in considerable danger. The long branchless stems made ‘cover’ only if you were very far away from the enemy; and the enemy in this case might be very close. He became aware of a strong impulse to shout out to Weston and Devine and give himself up; it rationalized itself in the form that this would remove them from the district, as they would probably take him off to the *sorns* and leave the *hrossa* unmolested. But Ransom knew a little psychology and had heard of the hunted man’s irrational instinct to give himself up — indeed, he had felt it himself in dreams. It was some such trick, he thought, that his nerves were now playing him. In any case he was determined henceforward to obey the *hrossa* or *eldila*. His efforts to rely on his own judgment in Malacandra had so far ended tragically enough. He made a strong resolution, defying in advance all changes of mood, that he would faithfully carry out the journey to Meldilorn if it could be done.

This resolution seemed to him all the more certainly right because he had the deepest misgivings about that journey. He understood that the *harandra*, which he had to cross, was the home of the *sorns*. In fact he was walking of his own free will into the very trap that he had been trying to avoid ever since his arrival on Malacandra. (Here the first change of mood tried to raise its head. He thrust it down.) And even if he got through the *sorns* and reached Meldilorn, who or what might Oyarsa be? Oyarsa, Whin had ominously observed, did not share the *hrossa’s* objection to shedding the blood of a *hnau*. And again, Oyarsa ruled *sorns* as well as *hrossa* and *pfifltriggi*. Perhaps he was simply the arch-*sorn*. And now came the second change of mood. Those old terrestrial fears of some alien, cold intelligence, superhuman in power, sub-human in cruelty, which had utterly faded from his mind among the *hrossa*, rose clamouring for readmission. But he strode on. He was going to Meldilorn. It was not possible, he told himself, that the *hrossa* should obey any evil or monstrous creature; and they had told him

— or had they? he was not quite sure — that Oyarsa was not a *sorn*. Was Oyarsa a god? — perhaps that very idol to whom the *sorns* wanted to sacrifice him. But the *hrossa*, though they said strange things about him, clearly denied that he was a god. There was one God, according to them, Maleldil the Young; nor was it possible to imagine Hyoi or Hnohra worshipping a bloodstained idol. Unless, of course, the *hrossa* were after all under the thumb of the *sorns*, superior to their masters in all the qualities that human beings value, but intellectually inferior to them and dependent on them. It would be a strange but not an inconceivable world; heroism and poetry at the bottom, cold scientific intellect above it, and overtopping all some dark superstition which scientific intellect, helpless against the revenge of the emotional depths it had ignored, had neither will nor power to remove. A mumbo-jumbo . . . but Ransom pulled himself up. He knew too much now to talk that way. He and all his class would have called the *eldila* a superstition if they had been merely described to them, but now he had heard the voice himself. No, Oyarsa was a real person if he was a person at all.

He had now been walking for about an hour, and it was nearly midday. No difficulty about his direction had yet occurred; he had merely to keep going uphill and he was certain of coming out of the forest to the mountain wall sooner or later. Meanwhile he felt remarkably well, though greatly chastened in mind. The silent, purple half-light of the woods spread all around him as it had spread on the first day he spent in Malacandra, but everything else was changed. He looked back on that time as on a nightmare, on his own mood at that time as a sort of sickness. Then all had been whimpering, unanalysed, self-nourishing, self-consuming dismay. Now, in the clear light of an accepted duty, he felt fear indeed, but with it a sober sense of confidence in himself and in the world, and even an element of pleasure. It was the difference between a landsman in a sinking ship and a horseman on a bolting horse: either may be killed, but the horseman is an agent as well as a patient.

About an hour after noon he suddenly came out of the wood into bright sunshine. He was only twenty yards from the almost perpendicular bases of the mountain spires, too close to them to see their tops. A sort of valley ran up in the re-entrant between two of them at the place where he had emerged: an unclimbable valley consisting of a single concave sweep of stone, which in its lower parts ascended steeply as the roof of a house and

farther up seemed almost vertical. At the top it even looked as if it hung over a bit, like a tidal wave of stone at the very moment of breaking; but this, he thought, might be an illusion. He wondered what the *hrossa's* idea of a road might be.

He began to work his way southward along the narrow, broken ground between wood and mountain. Great spurs of the mountains had to be crossed every few moments, and even in that light-weight world it was intensely tiring. After about half an hour he came to a stream. Here he went a few paces into the forest, cut himself an ample supply of the groundweed, and sat down beside the water's edge for lunch. When he had finished he filled his pockets with what he had not eaten and proceeded.

He began soon to be anxious about his road, for if he could make the top at all he could do it only by daylight, and the middle of the afternoon was approaching. But his fears were unnecessary. When it came it was unmistakable. An open way through the wood appeared on the left — he must be somewhere behind the *hross* village now — and on the right he saw the road, a single ledge or, in places, a trench, cut sidewise and upwards across the sweep of such a valley as he had seen before. It took his breath away — the insanely steep, hideously narrow staircase without steps, leading up and up from where he stood to where it was an almost invisible thread on the pale green surface of the rock. But there was no time to stand and look at it. He was a poor judge of heights, but he had no doubt that the top of the road was removed from him by a more than Alpine distance. It would take him at least till sundown to reach it. Instantly he began the ascent.

Such a journey would have been impossible on earth; the first quarter of an hour would have reduced a man of Ransom's build and age to exhaustion. Here he was at first delighted with the ease of his movement, and then staggered by the gradient and length of the climb which, even under Malacandrian conditions, soon bowed his back and gave him an aching chest and trembling knees. But this was not the worst. He heard already a singing in his ears, and noticed that despite his labour there was no sweat on his forehead. The cold, increasing at every step, seemed to sap his vitality worse than any heat could have done. Already his lips were cracked; his breath, as he panted, showed like a cloud; his fingers were numb. He was cutting his way up into a silent arctic world, and had already passed from an English to a Lapland winter. It frightened him, and he

decided that he must rest here or not at all; a hundred paces more and if he sat down he would sit for ever. He squatted on the road for a few minutes, slapping his body with his arms. The landscape was terrifying. Already the *handramit* which had made his world for so many weeks was only a thin purple cleft sunk amidst the boundless level desolation of the *harandra* which now, on the farther side, showed clearly between and above the mountain peaks. But long before he was rested he knew that he must go on or die.

The world grew stranger. Among the *hrossa* he had almost lost the feeling of being on a strange planet; here it returned upon him with desolating force. It was no longer ‘the world,’ scarcely even ‘a world’: it was a planet, a star, a waste place in the universe, millions of miles from the world of men. It was impossible to recall what he had felt about Hyoi, or Whin, or the *eldila*, or Oyarsa. It seemed fantastic to have thought he had duties to such hobgoblins — if they were not hallucinations — met in the wilds of space. He had nothing to do with them: he was a man. Why had Weston and Devine left him alone like this?

But all the time the old resolution, taken when he could still think, was driving him up the road. Often he forgot where he was going, and why. The movement became a mechanical rhythm — from weariness to stillness, from stillness to unbearable cold, from cold to motion again. He noticed that the *handramit* — now an insignificant part of the landscape — was full of a sort of haze. He had never seen a fog while he was living there. Perhaps that was what the air of the *handramit* looked like from above; certainly it was different air from this. There was something more wrong with his lungs and heart than even the cold and the exertion accounted for. And though there was no snow, there was an extraordinary brightness. The light was increasing, sharpening and growing whiter; and the sky was a much darker blue than he had ever seen on Malacandra. Indeed, it was darker than blue; it was almost black, and the jagged spires of rock standing against it were like his mental picture of a lunar landscape. Some stars were visible.

Suddenly he realized the meaning of these phenomena. There was very little air above him: he was near the end of it. The Malacandrian atmosphere lay chiefly in the *handramits*; the real surface of the planet was naked or thinly clad. The stabbing sunlight and the black sky above him were that ‘heaven’ out of which he had dropped into the Malacandrian world, already showing through the last thin veil of air. If the top were more than a

hundred feet away, it would be where no man could breathe at all. He wondered whether the *hrossa* had different lungs and had sent him by a road that meant death for man. But even while he thought of this he took note that those jagged peaks blazing in sunlight against an almost black sky were level with him. He was no longer ascending. The road ran on before him in a kind of shallow ravine bounded on his left by the tops of the highest rock pinnacles and on his right by a smooth ascending swell of stone that ran up to the true *harandra*. And where he was he could still breathe, though gasping, dizzy and in pain. The blaze in his eyes was worse. The sun was setting. The *hrossa* must have foreseen this; they could not live, any more than he, on the *harandra* by night. Still staggering forward, he looked about him for any sign of Augray's tower, whatever Augray might be.

Doubtless he exaggerated the time during which he thus wandered and watched the shadows from the rocks lengthening towards him. It cannot really have been long before he saw a light ahead — a light which showed how dark the surrounding landscape had become. He tried to run but his body would not respond. Stumbling in haste and weakness, he made for the light; thought he had reached it and found that it was far farther off than he had supposed; almost despaired; staggered on again, and came at last to what seemed a cavern mouth. The light within was an unsteady one and a delicious wave of warmth smote on his face. It was firelight. He came into the mouth of the cave and then, unsteadily, round the fire and into the interior, and stood still blinking in the light. When at last he could see, he discerned a smooth chamber of green rock, very lofty. There were two things in it. One of them, dancing on the wall and roof, was the huge, angular shadow of a *sorn*: the other, crouched beneath it, was the *sorn* himself.

FIFTEEN

‘Come in, Small One,’ boomed the *sorn*. ‘Come in and let me look at you.’

Now that he stood face to face with the spectre that had haunted him ever since he set foot on Malacandra, Ransom felt a surprising indifference. He had no idea what might be coming next, but he was determined to carry out his programme; and in the meantime the warmth and more breathable air were a heaven in themselves. He came in, well in past the fire, and answered the *sorn*. His own voice sounded to him a shrill treble.

‘The *hrossa* have sent me to look for Oyarsa,’ he said.

The *sorn* peered at him. ‘You are not from this world,’ it said suddenly.

‘No,’ replied Ransom, and sat down. He was too tired to explain.

‘I think you are from Thulcandra, Small One,’ said the *sorn*.

‘Why?’ said Ransom.

‘You are small and thick and that is how the animals ought to be made in a heavier world. You cannot come from Glundandra, for it is so heavy that if any animals could live there they would be flat like plates — even you, Small One, would break if you stood up on that world. I do not think you are from Parelandra, for it must be very hot; if any came from there they would not live when they arrived here. So I conclude you are from Thulcandra.’

‘The world I come from is called Earth by those who live there,’ said Ransom. ‘And it is much warmer than this. Before I came into your cave I was nearly dead with cold and thin air.’

The *sorn* made a sudden movement with one of its long fore-limbs. Ransom stiffened (though he did not allow himself to retreat), for the creature might be going to grab him. In fact, its intentions were kindly. Stretching back into the cave, it took from the wall what looked like a cup. Then Ransom saw that it was attached to a length of flexible tube. The *sorn* put it into his hands.

‘Smell on this,’ it said. ‘The *hrossa* also need it when they pass this way.’

Ransom inhaled and was instantly refreshed. His painful shortness of breath was eased and the tension of chest and temples was relaxed. The *sorn* and the lighted cavern, hitherto vague and dream-like to his eyes, took on a new reality.

‘Oxygen?’ he asked; but naturally the English word meant nothing to the *sorn*.

‘Are you called Augray?’ he asked.

‘Yes,’ said the *sorn*. ‘What are you called?’

‘The animal I am is called Man, and therefore the *hrossa* call me *Hmān*. But my own name is Ransom.’

‘Man — Ren-soom,’ said the *sorn*. He noticed that it spoke differently from the *hrossa*, without any suggestion of their persistent initial H.

It was sitting on its long, wedge-shaped buttocks with its feet drawn close up to it. A man in the same posture would have rested his chin on his knees, but the *sorn’s* legs were too long for that. Its knees rose high above its shoulders on each side of its head — grotesquely suggestive of huge ears — and the head, down between them, rested its chin on the protruding breast. The creature seemed to have either a double chin or a beard; Ransom could not make out which in the firelight. It was mainly white or cream in colour and seemed to be clothed down to the ankles in some soft substance that reflected the light. On the long fragile shanks, where the creature was closest to him, he saw that this was some natural kind of coat. It was not like fur but more like feathers. In fact it was almost exactly like feathers. The whole animal, seen at close quarters, was less terrifying than he had expected, and even a little smaller. The face, it was true, took a good deal of getting used to — it was too long, too solemn and too colourless, and it was much more unpleasantly like a human face than any inhuman creature’s face ought to be. Its eyes, like those of all very large creatures, seemed too small for it. But it was more grotesque than horrible. A new conception of the *sorns* began to arise in his mind: the ideas of ‘giant’ and ‘ghost’ receded behind those of ‘goblin’ and ‘gawk.’

‘Perhaps you are hungry, Small One,’ it said.

Ransom was. The *sorn* rose with strange spidery movements and began going to and fro about the cave, attended by its thin goblin shadow. It brought him the usual vegetable foods of Malacandra, and strong drink, with the very welcome addition of a smooth brown substance which revealed itself to nose, eye and palate, in defiance of all probability, as cheese. Ransom asked what it was.

The *sorn* began to explain painfully how the female of some animals secreted a fluid for the nourishment of its young, and would have gone on

to describe the whole process of milking and cheesemaking, if Ransom had not interrupted it.

‘Yes, yes,’ he said. ‘We do the same on Earth. What is the beast you use?’

‘It is a yellow beast with a long neck. It feeds on the forests that grow in the *handramit*. The young ones of our people who are not yet fit for much else drive the beasts down there in the mornings and follow them while they feed; then before night they drive them back and put them in the caves.’

For a moment Ransom found something reassuring in the thought that the *sorns* were shepherds. Then he remembered that the Cyclops in Homer plied the same trade.

‘I think I have seen one of your people at this very work,’ he said. ‘But the *hrossa* — they let you tear up their forests?’

‘Why should they not?’

‘Do you rule the *hrossa*?’

‘Oyarsa rules them.’

‘And who rules you?’

‘Oyarsa.’

‘But you know more than the *hrossa*?’

‘The *hrossa* know nothing except about poems and fish and making things grow out of the ground.’

‘And Oyarsa — is he a *sorn*?’

‘No, no, Small One. I have told you he rules all *nau*’ (so he pronounced *hnau*), ‘and everything in Malacandra.’

‘I do not understand this Oyarsa,’ said Ransom. ‘Tell me more.’

‘Oyarsa does not die,’ said the *sorn*. ‘And he does not breed. He is the one of his kind who was put into Malacandra to rule it when Malacandra was made. His body is not like ours, nor yours; it is hard to see and the light goes through it.’

‘Like an *eldil*?’

‘Yes, he is the greatest of *eldila* who ever come to a *handra*.’

‘What are these *eldila*?’

‘Do you tell me, Small One, that there are no *eldila* in your world?’

‘Not that I know of. But what are *eldila*, and why can I not see them? Have they no bodies?’

‘Of course they have bodies. There are a great many bodies you cannot see. Every animal’s eyes see some things but not others. Do you not know

of many kinds of body in Thulcandra?’

Ransom tried to give the *sorn* some idea of the terrestrial terminology of solids, liquids and gases. It listened with great attention.

‘That is not the way to say it,’ it replied. ‘Body is movement. If it is at one speed, you smell something; if at another, you hear a sound; if at another, you see a sight; if at another, you neither see nor hear nor smell, nor know the body in any way. But mark this, Small One, that the two ends meet.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘If movement is faster, then that which moves is more nearly in two places at once.’

‘That is true.’

‘But if the movement were faster still — it is difficult, for you do not know many words — you see that if you made it faster and faster, in the end the moving thing would be in all places at once, Small One.’

‘I think I see that.’

‘Well, then, that is the thing at the top of all bodies — so fast that it is at rest, so truly body that it has ceased being body at all. But we will not talk of that. Start from where we are, Small One. The swiftest thing that touches our senses is light. We do not truly see light, we only see slower things lit by it, so that for us light is on the edge — the last thing we know before things become too swift for us. But the body of an *eldil* is a movement swift as light; you may say its body is made of light, but not of that which is light for the *eldil*. His “light” is a swifter movement which for us is nothing at all; and what we call light is for him a thing like water, a visible thing, a thing he can touch and bathe in — even a dark thing when not illumined by the swifter. And what we call firm things — flesh and earth — seem to him thinner, and harder to see, than our light, and more like clouds, and nearly nothing. To us the *eldil* is a thin, half-real body that can go through walls and rocks: to himself he goes through them because he is solid and firm and they are like cloud. And what is true light to him and fills the heaven, so that he will plunge into the rays of the sun to refresh himself from it, is to us the black nothing in the sky at night. These things are not strange, Small One, though they are beyond our senses. But it is strange that the *eldila* never visit Thulcandra.’

‘Of that I am not certain,’ said Ransom. It had dawned on him that the recurrent human tradition of bright, elusive people sometimes appearing on

the Earth — *albs*, *devas* and the like — might after all have another explanation than the anthropologists had yet given. True, it would turn the universe rather oddly inside out; but his experiences in the space-ship had prepared him for some such operation.

‘Why does Oyarsa send for me?’ he asked.

‘Oyarsa has not told me,’ said the *sorn*. ‘But doubtless he would want to see any stranger from another *handra*.’

‘We have no Oyarsa in my world,’ said Ransom.

‘That is another proof,’ said the *sorn*, ‘that you come from Thulcandra, the silent planet.’

‘What has that to do with it?’

The *sorn* seemed surprised. ‘It is not very likely if you had an Oyarsa that he would never speak to ours.’

‘Speak to yours? But how could he — it is millions of miles away.’

‘Oyarsa would not think of it like that.’

‘Do you mean that he ordinarily receives messages from other planets?’

‘Once again, he would not say it that way. Oyarsa would not say that he lives on Malacandra and that another Oyarsa lives on another earth. For him Malacandra is only a place in the heavens; it is in the heavens that he and the others live. Of course they talk together. . . .’

Ransom’s mind shied away from the problem; he was getting sleepy and thought he must be misunderstanding the *sorn*.

‘I think I must sleep, Augray,’ he said. ‘And I do not know what you are saying. Perhaps, too, I do not come from what you call Thulcandra.’

‘We will both sleep presently,’ said the *sorn*. ‘But first I will show you Thulcandra.’

It rose and Ransom followed it into the back of the cave. Here he found a little recess and running up within it a winding stair. The steps, hewn for *sorns*, were too high for a man to climb with any comfort, but using hands and knees he managed to hobble up. The *sorn* preceded him. Ransom did not understand the light, which seemed to come from some small round object which the creature held in its hand. They went up a long way, almost as if they were climbing up the inside of a hollow mountain. At last, breathless, he found himself in a dark but warm chamber of rock, and heard the *sorn* saying:

‘She is still well above the southern horizon.’ It directed his attention to something like a small window. Whatever it was, it did not appear to work

like an earthly telescope, Ransom thought; though an attempt, made next day, to explain the principles of the telescope to the *sorn* threw grave doubts on his own ability to discern the difference. He leaned forward with his elbows on the sill of the aperture and looked. He saw perfect blackness and, floating in the centre of it, seemingly an arm's length away, a bright disk about the size of a half-crown. Most of its surface was featureless, shining silver; towards the bottom markings appeared, and below them a white cap, just as he had seen the polar caps in astronomical photographs of Mars. He wondered for a moment if it was Mars he was looking at; then, as his eyes took in the markings better, he recognized what they were — Northern Europe and a piece of North America. They were upside down with the North Pole at the bottom of the picture and this somehow shocked him. But it was Earth he was seeing — even, perhaps, England, though the picture shook a little and his eyes were quickly getting tired, and he could not be certain that he was not imagining it. It was all there in that little disk — London, Athens, Jerusalem, Shakespeare. There everyone had lived and everything had happened; and there, presumably, his pack was still lying in the porch of an empty house near Sterk.

'Yes,' he said dully to the *sorn*. 'That is my world.' It was the bleakest moment in all his travels.

SIXTEEN

Ransom awoke next morning with the vague feeling that a great weight had been taken off his mind. Then he remembered that he was the guest of a *sorn* and that the creature he had been avoiding ever since he landed had turned out to be as amicable as the *hrossa*, though he was far from feeling the same affection for it. Nothing then remained to be afraid of in Malacandra except Oyarsa . . . 'The last fence,' thought Ransom.

Augray gave him food and drink.

'And now,' said Ransom, 'how shall I find my way to Oyarsa?'

'I will carry you,' said the *sorn*. 'You are too small a one to make the journey yourself and I will gladly go to Meldilorn. The *hrossa* should not have sent you this way. They do not seem to know from looking at an animal what sort of lungs it has and what it can do. It is just like a *hross*. If you died on the *harandra* they would have made a poem about the gallant hmān and how the sky grew black and the cold stars shone and he journeyed on and journeyed on; and they would have put in a fine speech for you to say as you were dying . . . and all this would seem to them just as good as if they had used a little forethought and saved your life by sending you the easier way round.'

'I like the *hrossa*,' said Ransom a little stiffly. 'And I think the way they talk about death is the right way.'

'They are right not to fear it, Ren-soom, but they do not seem to look at it reasonably as part of the very nature of our bodies — and therefore often avoidable at times when they would never see how to avoid it. For example, this has saved the life of many a *hross*, but a *hross* would not have thought of it.'

He showed Ransom a flask with a tube attached to it, and, at the end of the tube a cup, obviously an apparatus for administering oxygen to oneself.

'Smell on it as you have need, Small One,' said the *sorn*. 'And close it up when you do not.'

Augray fastened the thing on his back and gave the tube over his shoulder into his hand. Ransom could not restrain a shudder at the touch of the *sorn's* hands upon his body; they were fan-shaped, seven-fingered, mere skin over bone like a bird's leg, and quite cold. To divert his mind from

such reactions he asked where the apparatus was made, for he had as yet seen nothing remotely like a factory or a laboratory.

‘We thought it,’ said the *sorn*, ‘and the *pfifltriggi* made it.’

‘Why do they make them?’ said Ransom. He was trying once more, with his insufficient vocabulary, to find out the political and economic framework of Malacandrian life.

‘They like making things,’ said Augray. ‘It is true they like best the making of things that are only good to look at and of no use. But sometimes when they are tired of that they will make things for us, things we have thought, provided they are difficult enough. They have not patience to make easy things however useful they would be. But let us begin our journey. You shall sit on my shoulder.’

The proposal was unexpected and alarming, but seeing that the *sorn* had already crouched down, Ransom felt obliged to climb on to the plume-like surface of its shoulder, to seat himself beside the long, pale face, casting his right arm as far as it would go round the huge neck, and to compose himself as well as he could for this precarious mode of travel. The giant rose cautiously to a standing position and he found himself looking down on the landscape from a height of about eighteen feet.

‘Is all well, Small One?’ it asked.

‘Very well,’ Ransom answered, and the journey began.

Its gait was perhaps the least human thing about it. It lifted its feet very high and set them down very gently. Ransom was reminded alternately of a cat stalking, a strutting barn-door fowl, and a high-stepping carriage horse; but the movement was not really like that of any terrestrial animal. For the passenger it was surprisingly comfortable. In a few minutes he had lost all sense of what was dizzying or unnatural in his position. Instead, ludicrous and even tender associations came crowding into his mind. It was like riding an elephant at the zoo in boyhood — like riding on his father’s back at a still earlier age. It was fun. They seemed to be doing between six and seven miles an hour. The cold, though severe, was endurable; and thanks to the oxygen he had little difficulty with his breathing.

The landscape which he saw from his high, swaying post of observation was a solemn one. The *handramit* was nowhere to be seen. On each side of the shallow gully in which they were walking, a world of naked, faintly greenish rock, interrupted with wide patches of red, extended to the horizon. The heaven, darkest blue where the rock met it, was almost black at the

zenith, and looking in any direction where sunlight did not blind him, he could see the stars. He learned from the *sorn* that he was right in thinking they were near the limits of the breathable. Already on the mountain fringe that borders the *harandra* and walls the *handramit*, or in the narrow depression along which their road led them, the air is of Himalayan rarity, ill breathing for a *hross*, and a few hundred feet higher, on the *harandra* proper, the true surface of the planet, it admits no life. Hence the brightness through which they walked was almost that of heaven — celestial light hardly at all tempered with an atmospheric veil.

The shadow of the *sorn*, with Ransom's shadow on its shoulder, moved over the uneven rock unnaturally distinct like the shadow of a tree before the headlights of a car; and the rock beyond the shadow hurt his eyes. The remote horizon seemed but an arm's length away. The fissures and moulding of distant slopes were clear as the background of a primitive picture made before men learned perspective. He was on the very frontier of that heaven he had known in the space-ship, and rays that the air-enveloped worlds cannot taste were once more at work upon his body. He felt the old lift of the heart, the soaring solemnity, the sense, at once sober and ecstatic, of life and power offered in unasked and unmeasured abundance. If there had been air enough in his lungs he would have laughed aloud. And now, even in the immediate landscape, beauty was drawing near. Over the edge of the valley, as if it had frothed down from the true *harandra*, came great curves of the rose-tinted, cumular stuff which he had seen so often from a distance. Now on a nearer view they appeared hard as stone in substance, but puffed above and stalked beneath like vegetation. His original simile of giant cauliflower turned out to be surprisingly correct — stone cauliflowers the size of cathedrals and the colour of pale rose. He asked the *sorn* what it was.

'It is the old forests of Malacandra,' said Augray. 'Once there was air on the *harandra* and it was warm. To this day, if you could get up there and live, you would see it all covered with the bones of ancient creatures; it was once full of life and noise. It was then these forests grew, and in and out among their stalks went a people that have vanished from the world these many thousand years. They were covered not with fur but with a coat like mine. They did not go in the water swimming or on the ground walking; they glided in the air on broad flat limbs which kept them up. It is said they were great singers, and in those days the red forests echoed with their

music. Now the forests have become stone and only *eldila* can go among them.'

'We still have such creatures in our world,' said Ransom. 'We call them birds. Where was Oyarsa when all this happened to the *harandra*?'

'Where he is now.'

'And he could not prevent it?'

'I do not know. But a world is not made to last for ever, much less a race; that is not Maleldil's way.'

As they proceeded the petrified forests grew more numerous, and often for half an hour at a time the whole horizon of the lifeless, almost airless, waste blushed like an English garden in summer. They passed many caves where, as Augray told him, *sorns* lived; sometimes a high cliff would be perforated with countless holes to the very top and unidentifiable noises came hollowly from within. 'Work' was in progress, said the *sorn*, but of what kind it could not make him understand. Its vocabulary was very different from that of the *hrossa*. Nowhere did he see anything like a village or city of *sorns*, who were apparently solitary not social creatures. Once or twice a long pallid face would show from a cavern mouth and exchange a horn-like greeting with the travellers, but for the most part the long valley, the rock-street of the silent people, was still and empty as the *harandra* itself.

Only towards afternoon, as they were about to descend into a dip of the road, they met three *sorns* together coming towards them down the opposite slope. They seemed to Ransom to be rather skating than walking. The lightness of their world and the perfect poise of their bodies allowed them to lean forward at right angles to the slope, and they came swiftly down like full-rigged ships before a fair wind. The grace of their movement, their lofty stature, and the softened glancing of the sunlight on their feathery sides, effected a final transformation in Ransom's feelings towards their race. 'Ogres' he had called them when they first met his eyes as he struggled in the grip of Weston and Devine; 'Titans' or 'Angels' he now thought would have been a better word. Even the faces, it seemed to him, he had not then seen aright. He had thought them spectral when they were only august, and his first human reaction to their lengthened severity of line and profound stillness of expression now appeared to him not so much cowardly as vulgar. So might Parmenides or Confucius look to the eyes of a Cockney

schoolboy! The great white creatures sailed towards Ransom and Augray and dipped like trees and passed.

In spite of the cold — which made him often dismount and take a spell on foot — he did not wish for the end of the journey; but Augray had his own plans and halted for the night long before sundown at the home of an older *sorn*. Ransom saw well enough that he was brought there to be shown to a great scientist. The cave, or, to speak more correctly, the system of excavations, was large and many-chambered, and contained a multitude of things that he did not understand. He was specially interested in a collection of rolls, seemingly of skin, covered with characters, which were clearly books; but he gathered that books were few in Malacandra.

'It is better to remember,' said the *sorns*.

When Ransom asked if valuable secrets might not thus be lost, they replied that Oyarsa always remembered them and would bring them to light if he thought fit.

'The *hrossa* used to have many books of poetry,' they added. 'But now they have fewer. They say that the writing of books destroys poetry.'

Their host in these caverns was attended by a number of other *sorns* who seemed to be in some way subordinate to him; Ransom thought at first that they were servants but decided later that they were pupils or assistants.

The evening's conversation was not such as would interest a terrestrial reader, for the *sorns* had determined that Ransom should not ask, but answer, questions. Their questioning was very different from the rambling, imaginative inquiries of the *hrossa*. They worked systematically from the geology of Earth to its present geography, and thence in turn to flora, fauna, human history, languages, politics and arts. When they found that Ransom could tell them no more on a given subject — and this happened pretty soon in most of their inquiries — they dropped it at once and went on to the next. Often they drew out of him indirectly much more knowledge than he consciously possessed, apparently working from a wide background of general science. A casual remark about trees when Ransom was trying to explain the manufacture of paper would fill up for them a gap in his sketchy answers to their botanical questions; his account of terrestrial navigation might illuminate mineralogy; and his description of the steam-engine gave them a better knowledge of terrestrial air and water than Ransom had ever had. He had decided from the outset that he would be quite frank, for he now felt that it would be not *hnau*, and also that it would be unavailing, to

do otherwise. They were astonished at what he had to tell them of human history — of war, slavery and prostitution.

‘It is because they have no Oyarsa,’ said one of the pupils.

‘It is because every one of them wants to be a little Oyarsa himself,’ said Augray.

‘They cannot help it,’ said the old *sorn*. ‘There must be rule, yet how can creatures rule themselves? Beasts must be ruled by *hnau* and *hnau* by *eldila* and *eldila* by Maleldil. These creatures have no *eldila*. They are like one trying to lift himself by his own hair — or one trying to see over a whole country when he is on a level with it — like a female trying to beget young on herself.’

Two things about our world particularly stuck in their minds. One was the extraordinary degree to which problems of lifting and carrying things absorbed our energy. The other was the fact that we had only one kind of *hnau*: they thought this must have far-reaching effects in the narrowing of sympathies and even of thought.

‘Your thought must be at the mercy of your blood,’ said the old *sorn*. ‘For you cannot compare it with thought that floats on a different blood.’

It was a tiring and very disagreeable conversation for Ransom. But when at last he lay down to sleep it was not of the human nakedness nor of his own ignorance that he was thinking. He thought only of the old forests of Malacandra and of what it might mean to grow up seeing always so few miles away a land of colour that could never be reached and had once been inhabited.

SEVENTEEN

Early next day Ransom again took his seat on Augray's shoulder. For more than an hour they travelled through the same bright wilderness. Far to the north the sky was luminous with a cloud-like mass of dull red or ochre; it was very large and drove furiously westward about ten miles above the waste. Ransom, who had yet seen no cloud in the Malacandrian sky, asked what it was. The *sorn* told him it was sand caught up from the great northern deserts by the winds of that terrible country. It was often thus carried, sometimes at a height of seventeen miles, to fall again, perhaps in a *handramit*, as a choking and blinding dust-storm. The sight of it moving with menace in the naked sky served to remind Ransom that they were indeed on the *outside* of Malacandra — no longer dwelling in a world but crawling the surface of a strange planet. At last the cloud seemed to drop and burst far on the western horizon, where a glow, not unlike that of a conflagration, remained visible until a turn of the valley hid all that region from his view.

The same turn opened a new prospect to his eyes. What lay before him looked at first strangely like an earthly landscape — a landscape of grey downland ridges rising and falling like waves of the sea. Far beyond, cliffs and spires of the familiar green rock rose against the dark blue sky. A moment later he saw that what he had taken for downlands was but the ridged and furrowed surface of a blue-grey valley mist — a mist which would not appear a mist at all when they descended into the *handramit*. And already, as their road began descending, it was less visible and the many-coloured pattern of the low country showed vaguely through it. The descent grew quickly steeper; like the jagged teeth of a giant — a giant with very bad teeth — the topmost peaks of the mountain wall down which they must pass loomed up over the edge of their gully. The look of the sky and the quality of the light were infinitesimally changed. A moment later they stood on the edge of such a slope as by earthly standards would rather be called a precipice; down and down this face, to where it vanished in a purple blush of vegetation, ran their road. Ransom refused absolutely to make the descent on Augray's shoulder. The *sorn*, though it did not fully understand his objection, stooped for him to dismount, and proceeded, with that same

skating and forward-sloping motion, to go down before him. Ransom followed, using gladly but stiffly his numb legs.

The beauty of this new *handramit* as it opened before him took his breath away. It was wider than that in which he had hitherto lived and right below him lay an almost circular lake — a sapphire twelve miles in diameter set in a border of purple forest. Amidst the lake there rose like a low and gently sloping pyramid, or like a woman's breast, an island of pale red, smooth to the summit, and on the summit a grove of such trees as man had never seen. Their smooth columns had the gentle swell of the noblest beech-trees: but these were taller than a cathedral spire on earth, and at their tops, they broke rather into flower than foliage; into golden flower bright as tulip, still as rock, and huge as summer cloud. Flowers indeed they were, not trees, and far down among their roots he caught a pale hint of slab-like architecture. He knew before his guide told him that this was Meldilorn. He did not know what he had expected. The old dreams which he had brought from earth of some more than American complexity of offices or some engineers' paradise of vast machines had indeed been long laid aside. But he had not looked for anything quite so classic, so virginal, as this bright grove — lying so still, so secret, in its coloured valley, soaring with inimitable grace so many hundred feet into the wintry sunlight. At every step of his descent the comparative warmth of the valley came up to him more deliciously. He looked above — the sky was turning to a paler blue. He looked below — and sweet and faint the thin fragrance of the giant blooms came up to him. Distant crags were growing less sharp in outline, and surfaces less bright. Depth, dimness, softness and perspective were returning to the landscape. The lip or edge of rock from which they had started their descent was already far overhead; it seemed unlikely that they had really come from there. He was breathing freely. His toes, so long benumbed, could move delightfully inside his boots. He lifted the ear-flaps of his cap and found his ears instantly filled with the sound of falling water. And now he was treading on soft ground-weed over level earth and the forest roof was above his head. They had conquered the *harandra* and were on the threshold of Meldilorn.

A short walk brought them into a kind of forest 'ride' — a broad avenue running straight as an arrow through the purple stems to where the vivid blue of the lake danced at the end of it. There they found a gong and hammer hung on a pillar of stone. These objects were all richly decorated,

and the gong and hammer were of a greenish blue metal which Ransom did not recognize. Augray struck the gong. An excitement was rising in Ransom's mind which almost prevented him from examining as coolly as he wished the ornamentation of the stone. It was partly pictorial, partly pure decoration. What chiefly struck him was a certain balance of packed and empty surfaces. Pure line drawings, as bare as the prehistoric pictures of reindeer on Earth, alternated with patches of design as close and intricate as Norse or Celtic jewellery; and then, as you looked at it, these empty and crowded areas turned out to be themselves arranged in larger designs. He was struck by the fact that the pictorial work was not confined to the emptier spaces; quite often large arabesques included as a subordinate detail intricate pictures. Elsewhere the opposite plan had been followed — and this alternation, too, had a rhythmical or patterned element in it. He was just beginning to find out that the pictures, though stylized, were obviously intended to tell a story, when Augray interrupted him. A ship had put out from the island shore of Meldilorn.

As it came towards them Ransom's heart warmed to see that it was paddled by a *hross*. The creature brought its boat up to the shore where they were waiting, stared at Ransom and then looked inquiringly at Augray.

'You may well wonder at this *nau*, Hrinha,' said the *sorn*, 'for you have never seen anything like it. It is called Ren-soom and has come through heaven from Thulcandra.'

'It is welcome, Augray,' said the *hross* politely. 'Is it coming to Oyarsa?'

'He has sent for it.'

'And for you also, Augray?'

'Oyarsa has not called me. If you will take Ren-soom over the water, I will go back to my tower.'

The *hross* indicated that Ransom should enter the boat. He attempted to express his thanks to the *sorn* and after a moment's consideration unstrapped his wrist-watch and offered it to him; it was the only thing he had which seemed a suitable present for a *sorn*. He had no difficulty in making Augray understand its purpose; but after examining it the giant gave it back to him, a little reluctantly, and said:

'This gift ought to be given to a *pfifltrigg*. It rejoices my heart, but they would make more of it. You are likely to meet some of the busy people in Meldilorn: give it to them. As for its use, do your people not know except by looking at this thing how much of the day has worn?'

‘I believe there are beasts that have a sort of knowledge of that,’ said Ransom, ‘but our *hnau* have lost it.’

After this, his farewells to the *sorn* were made and he embarked. To be once more in a boat and with a *hross*, to feel the warmth of water on his face and to see a blue sky above him, was almost like coming home. He took off his cap and leaned back luxuriously in the bows, plying his escort with questions. He learned that the *hrossa* were not specially concerned with the service of Oyarsa, as he had surmised from finding a *hross* in charge of the ferry: all three species of *hnau* served him in their various capacities, and the ferry was naturally entrusted to those who understood boats. He learned that his own procedure on arriving in Meldilorn must be to go where he liked and do what he pleased until Oyarsa called for him. It might be an hour or several days before this happened. He would find huts near the landing-place where he could sleep if necessary and where food would be given him. In return he related as much as he could make intelligible of his own world and his journey from it; and he warned the *hross* of the dangerous bent men who had brought him and who were still at large on Malacandra. As he did so, it occurred to him that he had not made this sufficiently clear to Augray; but he consoled himself with the reflection that Weston and Devine seemed to have already some liaison with the *sorns* and that they would not be likely to molest things so large and so comparatively man-like. At any rate, not yet. About Devine’s ultimate designs he had no illusions; all he could do was to make a clean breast of them to Oyarsa. And now the ship touched land.

Ransom rose, while the *hross* was making fast, and looked about him. Close to the little harbour which they had entered, and to the left, were low buildings of stone — the first he had seen in Malacandra — and fires were burning. There, the *hross* told him, he could find food and shelter. For the rest the island seemed desolate, and its smooth slopes empty up to the grove that crowned them, where, again, he saw stonework. But this appeared to be neither temple nor house in the human sense, but a broad avenue of monoliths — a much larger Stonehenge, stately, empty and vanishing over the crest of the hill into the pale shadow of the flower-trunks. All was solitude; but as he gazed upon it he seemed to hear, against the background of morning silence, a faint, continual agitation of silvery sound — hardly a sound at all, if you attended to it, and yet impossible to ignore.

‘The island is all full of *eldila*,’ said the *hross* in a hushed voice.

He went ashore. As though half expecting some obstacle, he took a few hesitant paces forward and stopped, and then went on again in the same fashion.

Though the ground-weed was unusually soft and rich and his feet made no noise upon it, he felt an impulse to walk on tiptoes. All his movements became gentle and sedate. The width of water about this island made the air warmer than any he had yet breathed in Malacandra; the climate was almost that of a warm earthly day in late September — a day that is warm but with a hint of frost to come. The sense of awe which was increasing upon him deterred him from approaching the crown of the hill, the grove and the avenue of standing stones.

He ceased ascending about half-way up the hill and began walking to his right, keeping a constant distance from the shore. He said to himself that he was having a look at the island, but his feeling was rather that the island was having a look at him. This was greatly increased by a discovery he made after he had been walking for about an hour, and which he ever afterwards found great difficulty in describing. In the most abstract terms it might be summed up by saying that the surface of the island was subject to tiny variations of light and shade which no change in the sky accounted for. If the air had not been calm and the ground-weed too short and firm to move in the wind, he would have said that a faint breeze was playing with it, and working such slight alterations in the shading as it does in a corn-field on the Earth. Like the silvery noises in the air, these footsteps of light were shy of observation. Where he looked hardest they were least to be seen: on the edges of his field of vision they came crowding as though a complex arrangement of them were there in progress. To attend to any one of them was to make it invisible, and the minute brightness seemed often to have just left the spot where his eyes fell. He had no doubt that he was ‘seeing’ — as much as he ever would see — the *eldila*. The sensation it produced in him was curious. It was not exactly uncanny, not as if he were surrounded by ghosts. It was not even as if he were being spied upon; he had rather the sense of being looked at by things that had a right to look. His feeling was less than fear; it had in it something of embarrassment, something of shyness, something of submission, and it was profoundly uneasy.

He felt tired and thought that in this favoured land it would be warm enough to rest out of doors. He sat down. The softness of the weed, the

warmth and the sweet smell which pervaded the whole island, reminded him of Earth and gardens in summer. He closed his eyes for a moment; then he opened them again and noticed buildings below him, and over the lake he saw a boat approaching. Recognition suddenly came to him. That was the ferry, and these buildings were the guest-house beside the harbour; he had walked all round the island. A certain disappointment succeeded this discovery. He was beginning to feel hungry. Perhaps it would be a good plan to go down and ask for some food; at any rate it would pass the time.

But he did not do so. When he rose and looked more closely at the guest-house he saw a considerable stir of creatures about it, and while he watched he saw that a full load of passengers was landing from the ferry-boat. In the lake he saw some moving objects which he did not at first identify but which turned out to be *sorns* up to their middles in the water and obviously wading to Meldilorn from the mainland. There were about ten of them. For some reason or other the island was receiving an influx of visitors. He no longer supposed that any harm would be done to him if he went down and mixed in the crowd, but he felt a reluctance to do so. The situation brought vividly back to his mind his experience as a new boy at school — new boys came a day early — hanging about and watching the arrival of the old hands. In the end he decided not to go down. He cut and ate some of the ground-weed and dozed for a little.

In the afternoon, when it grew colder, he resumed his walking. Other *hnau* were roaming about the island by this time. He saw *sorns* chiefly, but this was because their height made them conspicuous. There was hardly any noise. His reluctance to meet these fellow-wanderers, who seemed to confine themselves to the coast of the island, drove him half consciously upwards and inwards. He found himself at last on the fringes of the grove and looking straight up the monolithic avenue. He had intended, for no very clearly defined reason, not to enter it, but he fell to studying the stone nearest to him, which was richly sculptured on all its four sides, and after that curiosity led him on from stone to stone.

The pictures were very puzzling. Side by side with representations of *sorns* and *hrossa* and what he supposed to be *pfifltriggi* there occurred again and again an upright wavy figure with only the suggestion of a face, and with wings. The wings were perfectly recognizable, and this puzzled him very much. Could it be that the traditions of Malacandrian art went back to that earlier geological and biological era when, as Augray had told him,

there was life, including bird-life, on the *harandra*? The answer of the stones seemed to be Yes. He saw pictures of the old red forests with unmistakable birds flying among them, and many other creatures that he did not know. On another stone many of these were represented lying dead, and a fantastic *hnakra*-like figure, presumably symbolizing the cold, was depicted in the sky above them shooting at them with darts. Creatures still alive were crowding round the winged, wavy figure, which he took to be Oyarsa, pictured as a winged flame. On the next stone Oyarsa appeared, followed by many creatures, and apparently making a furrow with some pointed instrument. Another picture showed the furrow being enlarged by *pfifltriggi* with digging tools. *Sorns* were piling the earth up in pinnacles on each side, and *hrossa* seemed to be making water channels. Ransom wondered whether this were a mythical account of the making of *handramits* or whether they were conceivably artificial in fact.

Many of the pictures he could make nothing of. One that particularly puzzled him showed at the bottom a segment of a circle, behind and above which rose three-quarters of a disk divided into concentric rings. He thought it was a picture of the sun rising behind a hill; certainly the segment at the bottom was full of Malacandrian scenes — Oyarsa in Meldilorn, *sorns* on the mountain edge of the *harandra*, and many other things both familiar to him and strange. He turned from it to examine the disk which rose behind it. It was not the sun. The sun was there, unmistakably, at the centre of the disk: round this the concentric circles revolved. In the first and smallest of these was pictured a little ball, on which rode a winged figure something like Oyarsa, but holding what appeared to be a trumpet. In the next, a similar ball carried another of the flaming figures. This one, instead of even the suggested face, had two bulges which after long inspection he decided were meant to be the udders or breasts of a female mammal. By this time he was quite sure that he was looking at a picture of the solar system. The first ball was Mercury, the second Venus— ‘And what an extraordinary coincidence,’ thought Ransom, ‘that their mythology, like ours, associates some idea of the female with Venus.’ The problem would have occupied him longer if a natural curiosity had not drawn his eyes on to the next ball which must represent the Earth. When he saw it, his whole mind stood still for a moment. The ball was there, but where the flame-like figure should have been, a deep depression of irregular shape had been cut as if to erase it. Once, then — but his speculations faltered and became silent before a

series of unknowns. He looked at the next circle. Here there was no ball. Instead, the bottom of this circle touched the top of the big segment filled with Malacandrian scenes, so that Malacandra at this point touched the solar system and came out of it in perspective towards the spectator. Now that his mind had grasped the design, he was astonished at the vividness of it all. He stood back and drew a deep breath preparatory to tackling some of the mysteries in which he was engulfed. Malacandra, then, was Mars. The Earth — but at this point a sound of tapping or hammering, which had been going on for some time without gaining admission to his consciousness, became too insistent to be ignored. Some creature, and certainly not an *eldil*, was at work, close to him. A little startled — for he had been deep in thought — he turned round. There was nothing to be seen. He shouted out, idiotically, in English:

'Who's there?'

The tapping instantly stopped and a remarkable face appeared from behind a neighbouring monolith.

It was hairless like a man's or a *sorn's*. It was long and pointed like a shrew's, yellow and shabby-looking, and so low in the forehead that but for the heavy development of the head at the back and behind the ears (like a bag-wig) it could not have been that of an intelligent creature. A moment later the whole of the thing came into view with a startling jump. Ransom guessed that it was a *pfifltrigg* — and was glad that he had not met one of this third race on his first arrival in Malacandra. It was much more insect-like or reptilian than anything he had yet seen. Its build was distinctly that of a frog, and at first Ransom thought it was resting, frog-like, on its 'hands.' Then he noticed that that part of its fore-limbs on which it was supported was really, in human terms, rather an elbow than a hand. It was broad and padded and clearly made to be walked on; but upwards from it, at an angle of about forty-five degrees, went the true fore-arms — thin, strong forearms, ending in enormous, sensitive, many-fingered hands. He realized that for all manual work from mining to cutting cameos this creature had the advantage of being able to work with its full strength from a supported elbow. The insect-like effect was due to the speed and jerkiness of its movements and to the fact that it could swivel its head almost all the way round like a mantis; and it was increased by a kind of dry, rasping, jingling quality in the noise of its moving. It was rather like a grasshopper, rather

like one of Arthur Rackham’s dwarfs, rather like a frog, and rather like a little, old taxidermist whom Ransom knew in London.

‘I come from another world,’ began Ransom.

‘I know, I know,’ said the creature in a quick, twittering, rather impatient voice. ‘Come here, behind the stone. This way, this way. Oyarsa’s orders. Very busy. Must begin at once. Stand there.’

Ransom found himself on the other side of the monolith, staring at a picture which was still in process of completion. The ground was liberally strewn with chips and the air was full of dust.

‘There,’ said the creature. ‘Stand still. Don’t look at me. Look over there.’

For a moment Ransom did not quite understand what was expected of him; then, as he saw the *pfifltrigg* glancing to and fro at him and at the stone with the unmistakable glance of artist from model to work which is the same in all worlds, he realized and almost laughed. He was standing for his portrait! From his position he could see that the creature was cutting the stone as if it were cheese and the swiftness of its movements almost baffled his eyes, but he could get no impression of the work done, though he could study the *pfifltrigg*. He saw that the jingling and metallic noise was due to the number of small instruments which it carried about its body. Sometimes, with an exclamation of annoyance, it would throw down the tool it was working with and select one of these; but the majority of those in immediate use it kept in its mouth. He realized also that this was an animal artificially clothed like himself, in some bright scaly substance which appeared richly decorated though coated in dust. It had folds of furry clothing about its throat like a comforter, and its eyes were protected by dark bulging goggles. Rings and chains of a bright metal — not gold, he thought — adorned its limbs and neck. All the time it was working it kept up a sort of hissing whisper to itself; and when it was excited — which it usually was — the end of its nose wrinkled like a rabbit’s. At last it gave another startling leap, landed about ten yards away from its work, and said:

‘Yes, yes. Not so good as I hoped. Do better another time. Leave it now. Come and see yourself.’

Ransom obeyed. He saw a picture of the planets, not now arranged to make a map of the solar system, but advancing in a single procession towards the spectator, and all, save one, bearing its fiery charioteer. Below lay Malacandra and there, to his surprise, was a very tolerable picture of the

space-ship. Beside it stood three figures for all of which Ransom had apparently been the model. He recoiled from them in disgust. Even allowing for the strangeness of the subject from a Malacandrian point of view and for the stylization of their art, still, he thought, the creature might have made a better attempt at the human form than these stock-like dummies, almost as thick as they were tall, and sprouting about the head and neck into something that looked like fungus.

He hedged. ‘I expect it is like me as I look to your people,’ he said. ‘It is not how they would draw me in my own world.’

‘No,’ said the *pfifltrigg*. ‘I do not mean it to be too like. Too like, and they will not believe it — those who are born after.’ He added a good deal more which was difficult to understand; but while he was speaking it dawned upon Ransom that the odious figures were intended as an *idealization* of humanity. Conversation languished for a little. To change the subject Ransom asked a question which had been in his mind for some time.

‘I cannot understand,’ he said, ‘how you and the *sorns* and the *hrossa* all come to speak the same speech. For your tongues and teeth and throats must be very different.’

‘You are right,’ said the creature. ‘Once we all had different speeches and we still have at home. But everyone has learned the speech of the *hrossa*.’

‘Why is that?’ said Ransom, still thinking in terms of terrestrial history. ‘Did the *hrossa* once rule the others?’

‘I do not understand. They are our great speakers and singers. They have more words and better. No one learns the speech of my people, for what we have to say is said in stone and suns’ blood and stars’ milk and all can see them. No one learns the *sorns*’ speech, for you can change their knowledge into any words and it is still the same. You cannot do that with the songs of the *hrossa*. Their tongue goes all over Malacandra. I speak it to you because you are a stranger. I would speak it to a *sorn*. But we have our old tongues at home. You can see it in the names. The *sorns* have big-sounding names like Augray and Arkal and Belmo and Falmay. The *hrossa* have furry names like Hnoh and Hnihi and Hyoi and Hlithnahi.’

‘The best poetry, then, comes in the roughest speech?’

‘Perhaps,’ said the *pfifltrigg*. ‘As the best pictures are made in the hardest stone. But my people have names like Kalakaperi and Parakataru and Tafalakeruf. I am called Kanakaberaka.’

Ransom told it his name.

‘In our country,’ said Kanakaberaka, ‘it is not like this. We are not pinched in a narrow *handramit*. There are the true forests, the green shadows, the deep mines. It is warm. It does not blaze with light like this, and it is not silent like this. I could put you in a place there in the forests where you could see a hundred fires at once and hear a hundred hammers. I wish you had come to our country. We do not live in holes like the *sorns* nor in bundles of weed like the *hrossa*. I could show you houses with a hundred pillars, one of suns’ blood and the next of stars’ milk, all the way . . . and all the world painted on the walls.’

‘How do you rule yourselves?’ asked Ransom. ‘Those who are digging in the mines — do they like it as much as those who paint the walls?’

‘All keep the mines open; it is a work to be shared. But each digs for himself the thing he wants for his work. What else would he do?’

‘It is not so with us.’

‘Then you must make very bent work. How would a maker understand working in suns’ blood unless he went into the home of suns’ blood himself and knew one kind from another and lived with it for days out of the light of the sky till it was in his blood and his heart, as if he thought it and ate it and spat it?’

‘With us it lies very deep and hard to get and those who dig it must spend their whole lives on the skill.’

‘And they love it?’

‘I think not . . . I do not know. They are kept at it because they are given no food if they stop.’

Kanakaberaka wrinkled his nose. ‘Then there is not food in plenty on your world?’

‘I do not know,’ said Ransom. ‘I have often wished to know the answer to that question but no one can tell me. Does no one keep your people at their work, Kanakaberaka?’

‘Our females,’ said the *pfifltrigg* with a piping noise which was apparently his equivalent for a laugh.

‘Are your females of more account among you than those of the other *hnau* among them?’

‘Very greatly. The *sorns* make least account of females and we make most.’

EIGHTEEN

That night Ransom slept in the guest-house, which was a real house built by *pfifltriggi* and richly decorated. His pleasure at finding himself, in this respect, under more human conditions was qualified by the discomfort which, despite his reason, he could not help feeling in the presence, at close quarters, of so many Malacandrian creatures. All three species were represented. They seemed to have no uneasy feelings towards each other, though there were some differences of the kind that occur in a railway carriage on earth — the *sorns* finding the house too hot and the *pfifltriggi* finding it too cold. He learned more of Malacandrian humour and of the noises that expressed it in this one night than he had learned during the whole of his life on the strange planet hitherto. Indeed, nearly all Malacandrian conversations in which he had yet taken part had been grave. Apparently the comic spirit arose chiefly from the meeting of the different kinds of *hnau*. The jokes of all three were equally incomprehensible to him. He thought he could see differences in kind — as that the *sorns* seldom got beyond irony, while the *hrossa* were extravagant and fantastic, and the *pfifltriggi* were sharp and excelled in abuse — but even when he understood all the words he could not see the points. He went early to bed.

It was at the time of early morning, when men on earth go out to milk the cows, that Ransom was wakened. At first he did not know what had roused him. The chamber in which he lay was silent, empty and nearly dark. He was preparing himself to sleep again when a high-pitched voice close beside him said, ‘Oyarsa sends for you.’ He sat up, staring about him. There was no one there, and the voice repeated, ‘Oyarsa sends for you.’ The confusion of sleep was now clearing in his head, and he recognized that there was an *eldil* in the room. He felt no conscious fear, but while he rose obediently and put on such of his clothes as he had laid aside he found that his heart was beating rather fast. He was thinking less of the invisible creature in the room than of the interview that lay before him. His old terrors of meeting some monster or idol had quite left him: he felt nervous as he remembered feeling on the morning of an examination when he was an undergraduate. More than anything in the world he would have liked a cup of good tea.

The guest-house was empty. He went out. The bluish smoke was rising from the lake and the sky was bright behind the jagged eastern wall of the canyon; it was a few minutes before sunrise. The air was still very cold, the ground-weed drenched with dew, and there was something puzzling about the whole scene which he presently identified with the silence. The *eldil* voices in the air had ceased and so had the shifting network of small lights and shades. Without being told, he knew that it was his business to go up to the crown of the island and the grove. As he approached them he saw with a certain sinking of heart that the monolithic avenue was full of Malacandrian creatures, and all silent. They were in two lines, one on each side, and all squatting or sitting in the various fashions suitable to their anatomies. He walked on slowly and doubtfully, not daring to stop, and ran the gauntlet of all those inhuman and unblinking eyes. When he had come to the very summit, at the middle of the avenue where the biggest of the stones rose, he stopped — he never could remember afterwards whether an *eldil* voice had told him to do so or whether it was an intuition of his own. He did not sit down, for the earth was too cold and wet and he was not sure if it would be decorous. He simply stood — motionless like a man on parade. All the creatures were looking at him and there was no noise anywhere.

He perceived, gradually, that the place was full of *eldila*. The lights, or suggestions of light, which yesterday had been scattered over the island, were now all congregated in this one spot, and were all stationary or very faintly moving. The sun had risen by now, and still no one spoke. As he looked up to see the first, pale sunlight upon the monoliths, he became conscious that the air above him was full of a far greater complexity of light than the sunrise could explain, and light of a different kind, *eldil*-light. The sky, no less than the earth, was full of them; the visible Malacandrians were but the smallest part of the silent consistory which surrounded him. He might, when the time came, be pleading his cause before thousands or before millions: rank behind rank about him, and rank above rank over his head, the creatures that had never yet seen man and whom man could not see, were waiting for his trial to begin. He licked his lips, which were quite dry, and wondered if he would be able to speak when speech was demanded of him. Then it occurred to him that perhaps this — this waiting and being looked at — *was* the trial; perhaps even now he was unconsciously telling them all they wished to know. But afterwards — a long time afterwards — there was a noise of movement. Every visible creature in the grove had

risen to its feet and was standing, more hushed than ever, with its head bowed; and Ransom saw (if it could be called seeing) that Oyarsa was coming up between the long lines of sculptured stones. Partly he knew it from the faces of the Malacandrians as their lord passed them; partly he saw — he could not deny that he saw — Oyarsa himself. He never could say what it was like. The merest whisper of light — no, less than that, the smallest diminution of shadow — was travelling along the uneven surface of the ground-weed; or rather some difference in the look of the ground, too slight to be named in the language of the five senses, moved slowly towards him. Like a silence spreading over a room full of people, like an infinitesimal coolness on a sultry day, like a passing memory of some long-forgotten sound or scent, like all that is stillest and smallest and most hard to seize in nature, Oyarsa passed between his subjects and drew near and came to rest, not ten yards away from Ransom in the centre of Meldilorn. Ransom felt a tingling of his blood and a pricking on his fingers as if lightning were near him; and his heart and body seemed to him to be made of water.

Oyarsa spoke — a more unhuman voice than Ransom had yet heard, sweet and seemingly remote; an unshaken voice; a voice, as one of the *hrossa* afterwards said to Ransom, 'with no blood in it. Light is instead of blood for them.' The words were not alarming.

'What are you so afraid of, Ransom of Thulcandra?' it said.

'Of you, Oyarsa, because you are unlike me and I cannot see you.'

'Those are not great reasons,' said the voice. 'You are also unlike me, and, though I see you, I see you very faintly. But do not think we are utterly unlike. We are both copies of Maleldil. These are not the real reasons.'

Ransom said nothing.

'You began to be afraid of me before you set foot in my world. And you have spent all your time since then in flying from me. My servants saw your fear when you were in your ship in heaven. They saw that your own kind treated you ill, though they could not understand their speech. Then to deliver you out of the hands of those two I stirred up a *hnakra* to try if you would come to me of your own will. But you hid among the *hrossa*, and though they told you to come to me, you would not. After that I sent my *eldil* to fetch you, but still you would not come. And in the end your own kind have chased you to me, and *hnau's* blood has been shed.'

‘I do not understand, Oyarsa. Do you mean that it was you who sent for me from Thulcandra?’

‘Yes. Did not the other two tell you this? And why did you come with them unless you meant to obey my call? My servants could not understand their talk to you when your ship was in heaven.’

‘Your servants . . . I cannot understand,’ said Ransom.

‘Ask freely,’ said the voice.

‘Have you servants out in the heavens?’

‘Where else? There is nowhere else.’

‘But you, Oyarsa, are here on Malacandra, as I am.’

‘But Malacandra, like all worlds, floats in heaven. And I am not “here” altogether as you are, Ransom of Thulcandra. Creatures of your kind must drop out of heaven into a world; for us the worlds are places in heaven. But do not try to understand this now. It is enough to know that I and my servants are even now in heaven; they were around you in the sky-ship no less than they are around you here.’

‘Then you knew of our journey before we left Thulcandra?’

‘No. Thulcandra is the world we do not know. It alone is outside the heaven, and no message comes from it.’

Ransom was silent, but Oyarsa answered his unspoken questions.

‘It was not always so. Once we knew the Oyarsa of your world — he was brighter and greater than I — and then we did not call it Thulcandra. It is the longest of all stories and the bitterest. He became bent. That was before any life came on your world. Those were the Bent Years of which we still speak in the heavens, when he was not yet bound to Thulcandra but free like us. It was in his mind to spoil other worlds besides his own. He smote your moon with his left hand and with his right he brought the cold death on my *harandra* before its time; if by my arm Maleldil had not opened the *handramits* and let out the hot springs, my world would have been unpeopled. We did not leave him so at large for long. There was great war, and we drove him back out of the heavens and bound him in the air of his own world as Maleldil taught us. There doubtless he lies to this hour, and we know no more of that planet: it is silent. We think that Maleldil would not give it up utterly to the Bent One, and there are stories among us that He has taken strange counsel and dared terrible things, wrestling with the Bent One in Thulcandra. But of this we know less than you; it is a thing we desire to look into.’

It was some time before Ransom spoke again and Oyarsa respected his silence. When he had collected himself he said:

‘After this story, Oyarsa, I may tell you that our world is very bent. The two who brought me knew nothing of you, but only that the *sorns* had asked for me. They thought you were a false *eldil*, I think. There are false *eldila* in the wild parts of our world; men kill other men before them — they think the *eldil* drinks blood. They thought the *sorns* wanted me for this or for some other evil. They brought me by force. I was in terrible fear. The tellers of tales in our world make us think that if there is any life beyond our own air, it is evil.’

‘I understand,’ said the voice. ‘And this explains things that I have wondered at. As soon as your journey had passed your own air and entered heaven, my servants told me that you seemed to be coming unwillingly and that the others had secrets from you. I did not think any creature could be so bent as to bring another of its own kind here by force.’

‘They did not know what you wanted me for, Oyarsa. Nor do I know yet.’

‘I will tell you. Two years ago — and that is about four of your years — this ship entered the heavens from your world. We followed its journey all the way hither and *eldila* were with it as it sailed over the *harandra*, and when at last it came to rest in the *handramit* more than half my servants were standing round it to see the strangers come out. All beasts we kept back from the place, and no *hnau* yet knew of it. When the strangers had walked to and fro on Malacandra and made themselves a hut and their fear of a new world ought to have worn off, I sent certain *sorns* to show themselves and to teach the strangers our language. I chose *sorns* because they are most like your people in form. The Thulcandrians feared the *sorns* and were very unteachable. The *sorns* went to them many times and taught them a little. They reported to me that the Thulcandrians were taking suns’ blood wherever they could find it in the streams. When I could make nothing of them by report, I told the *sorns* to bring them to me, not by force but courteously. They would not come. I asked for one of them, but not even one of them would come. It would have been easy to take them; but though we saw they were stupid we did not know yet how bent they were, and I did not wish to stretch my authority beyond the creatures of my own world. I told the *sorns* to treat them like cubs, to tell them that they would be allowed to pick up no more of the suns’ blood until one of their race

came to me. When they were told this they stuffed as much as they could into the sky-ship and went back to their own world. We wondered at this, but now it is plain. They thought I wanted one of your race to eat and went to fetch one. If they had come a few miles to see me I would have received them honourably; now they have twice gone a voyage of millions of miles for nothing and will appear before me none the less. And you also, Ransom of Thulcandra, you have taken many vain troubles to avoid standing where you stand now.'

'That is true, Oyarsa. Bent creatures are full of fears. But I am here now and ready to know your will with me.'

'Two things I wanted to ask of your race. First I must know why you come here — so much is my duty to my world. And secondly I wish to hear of Thulcandra and of Maleldil's strange wars there with the Bent One; for that, as I have said, is a thing we desire to look into.'

'For the first question, Oyarsa, I have come here because I was brought. Of the others, one cares for nothing but the suns' blood, because in our world he can exchange it for many pleasures and powers. But the other means evil to you. I think he would destroy all your people to make room for our people; and then he would do the same with other worlds again. He wants our race to last for always, I think, and he hopes they will leap from world to world . . . always going to a new sun when an old one dies . . . or something like that.'

'Is he wounded in his brain?'

'I do not know. Perhaps I do not describe his thoughts right. He is more learned than I.'

'Does he think he could go to the great worlds? Does he think Maleldil wants a race to live for ever?'

'He does not know there is any Maleldil. But what is certain, Oyarsa, is that he means evil to your world. Our kind must not be allowed to come here again. If you can prevent it only by killing all three of us, I am content.'

'If you were my own people I would kill them now, Ransom, and you soon; for they are bent beyond hope, and you, when you have grown a little braver, will be ready to go to Maleldil. But my authority is over my own world. It is a terrible thing to kill someone else's *hnau*. It will not be necessary.'

‘They are strong, Oyarsa, and they can throw death many miles and can blow killing airs at their enemies.’

‘The least of my servants could touch their ship before it reached Malacandra, while it was in the heaven, and make it a body of different movements — for you, no body at all. Be sure that no one of your race will come into my world again unless I call him. But enough of this. Now tell me of Thulcandra. Tell me all. We know nothing since the day when the Bent One sank out of heaven into the air of your world, wounded in the very light of his light. But why have you become afraid again?’

‘I am afraid of the lengths of time, Oyarsa . . . or perhaps I do not understand. Did you not say this happened before there was life on Thulcandra?’

‘Yes.’

‘And you, Oyarsa? You have lived . . . and that picture on the stone where the cold is killing them on the *harandra*? Is that a picture of something that was before my world began?’

‘I see you are *hnau* after all,’ said the voice. ‘Doubtless no stone that faced the air then would be a stone now. The picture has begun to crumble away and been copied again more times than there are *eldila* in the air above us. But it was copied right. In that way you are seeing a picture that was finished when your world was still half-made. But do not think of these things. My people have a law never to speak much of sizes or numbers to you others, not even to *sorns*. You do not understand, and it makes you do reverence to nothings and pass by what is really great. Rather tell me what Maleldil has done in Thulcandra.’

‘According to our traditions — —’ Ransom was beginning, when an unexpected disturbance broke in upon the solemn stillness of the assembly. A large party, almost a procession, was approaching the grove from the direction of the ferry. It consisted entirely, so far as he could see, of *hrossa*, and they appeared to be carrying something.

NINETEEN

As the procession drew nearer Ransom saw that the foremost *hrossa* were supporting three long and narrow burdens. They carried them on their heads, four *hrossa* to each. After these came a number of others armed with harpoons and apparently guarding two creatures which he did not recognize. The light was behind them as they entered between the two farthest monoliths. They were much shorter than any animal he had yet seen on Malacandra, and he gathered that they were bipeds, though the lower limbs were so thick and sausage-like that he hesitated to call them legs. The bodies were a little narrower at the top than at the bottom so as to be very slightly pear-shaped, and the heads were neither round like those of *hrossa* nor long like those of *sorns*, but almost square. They stumped along on narrow, heavy-looking feet which they seemed to press into the ground with unnecessary violence. And now their faces were becoming visible as masses of lumped and puckered flesh of variegated colour fringed in some bristly, dark substance. . . . Suddenly, with an indescribable change of feeling, he realized that he was looking at men. The two prisoners were Weston and Devine and he, for one privileged moment, had seen the human form with almost Malacandrian eyes.

The leaders of the procession had now advanced to within a few yards of Oyarsa and laid down their burdens. These, he now saw, were three dead *hrossa* laid on biers of some unknown metal; they were on their backs and their eyes, not closed as we close the eyes of human dead, stared disconcertingly up at the far-off golden canopy of the grove. One of them he took to be Hyoi, and it was certainly Hyoi's brother, Hyahi, who now came forward, and after an obeisance to Oyarsa began to speak.

Ransom at first did not hear what he was saying, for his attention was concentrated on Weston and Devine. They were weaponless and vigilantly guarded by the armed *hrossa* about them. Both of them, like Ransom himself, had let their beards grow ever since they landed on Malacandra, and both were pale and travel-stained. Weston was standing with folded arms, and his face wore a fixed, even an elaborate, expression of desperation. Devine, with his hands in his pockets, seemed to be in a state of furious sulks. Both clearly thought that they had good reason to fear, though neither was by any means lacking in courage. Surrounded by their

guards as they were, and intent on the scene before them, they had not noticed Ransom.

He became aware of what Hyoi's brother was saying.

'For the death of these two, Oyarsa, I do not so much complain, for when we fell upon the *hmāna* by night they were in terror. You may say it was as a hunt and these two were killed as they might have been by a *hnakra*. But Hyoi they hit from afar with a coward's weapon when he had done nothing to frighten them. And now he lies there (and I do not say it because he was my brother, but all the *handramit* knows it) and he was a *hnakrapunt* and a great poet and the loss of him is heavy.'

The voice of Oyarsa spoke for the first time to the two men.

'Why have you killed my *hnau*?' it said.

Weston and Devine looked anxiously about them to identify the speaker.

'God!' exclaimed Devine in English. 'Don't tell me they've got a loud-speaker.'

'Ventriloquism,' replied Weston in a husky whisper. 'Quite common among savages. The witch-doctor or medicine-man pretends to go into a trance and he does it. The thing to do is to identify the medicine-man and address your remarks to *him* wherever the voice seems to come from; it shatters his nerve and shows you've seen through him. Do you see any of the brutes in a trance? By Jove — I've spotted him.'

Due credit must be given to Weston for his powers of observation: he had picked out the only creature in the assembly which was not standing in an attitude of reverence and attention. This was an elderly *hross* close beside him. It was squatting; and its eyes were shut. Taking a step towards it, he struck a defiant attitude and exclaimed in a loud voice (his knowledge of the language was elementary):

'Why you take our puff-bangs away? We very angry with you. We not afraid.'

On Weston's hypothesis his action ought to have been impressive. Unfortunately for him, no one else shared his theory of the elderly *hross's* behaviour. The *hross* — who was well known to all of them, including Ransom — had not come with the funeral procession. It had been in its place since dawn. Doubtless it intended no disrespect to Oyarsa; but it must be confessed that it had yielded, at a much earlier stage in the proceedings, to an infirmity which attacks elderly *hnau* of all species, and was by this

time enjoying a profound and refreshing slumber. One of its whiskers twitched a little as Weston shouted in its face, but its eyes remained shut.

The voice of Oyarsa spoke again. ‘Why do you speak to him?’ it said. ‘It is I who ask you, Why have you killed my *hnau*?’

‘You let us go, then we talkee-talkee,’ bellowed Weston at the sleeping *hross*. ‘You think we no power, think you do all you like. You no can. Great big head-man in sky he send us. You no do what I say, he come, blow you all up — Pouff! Bang!’

‘I do not know what *bang* means,’ said the voice. ‘But why have you killed my *hnau*?’

‘Say it was an accident,’ muttered Devine to Weston in English.

‘I’ve told you before,’ replied Weston in the same language. ‘You don’t understand how to deal with natives. One sign of yielding and they’ll be at our throats. The only thing is to intimidate them.’

‘All right! Do your stuff, then,’ growled Devine. He was obviously losing faith in his partner.

Weston cleared his throat and again rounded on the elderly *hross*.

‘We kill him,’ he shouted. ‘Show what we can do. Every one who no do all we say — pouff! bang! — kill him same as that one. You do all we say and we give you much pretty things. See! See!’ To Ransom’s intense discomfort, Weston at this point whipped out of his pocket a brightly coloured necklace of beads, the undoubted work of Mr. Woolworth, and began dangling it in front of the faces of his guards, turning slowly round and round and repeating, ‘Pretty, pretty! See! See!’

The result of this manœuvre was more striking than Weston himself had anticipated. Such a roar of sounds as human ears had never heard before — baying of *hrossa*, piping of *pfifltriggi*, booming of *sorns* — burst out and rent the silence of that august place, waking echoes from the distant mountain walls. Even in the air above them there was a faint ringing of the *eldil* voices. It is greatly to Weston’s credit that though he paled at this he did not lose his nerve.

‘You no roar at me,’ he thundered. ‘No try make me afraid. Me no afraid of you.’

‘You must forgive my people,’ said the voice of Oyarsa — and even it was subtly changed— ‘but they are not roaring at you. They are only laughing.’

But Weston did not know the Malacandrian word for *laugh*: indeed, it was not a word he understood very well in any language. He looked about him with a puzzled expression. Ransom, biting his lips with mortification, almost prayed that one experiment with the beads would satisfy the scientist; but that was because he did not know Weston. The latter saw that the clamour had subsided. He knew that he was following the most orthodox rules for frightening and then conciliating primitive races; and he was not the man to be deterred by one or two failures. The roar that went up from the throats of all spectators as he again began revolving like a slow-motion picture of a humming-top, occasionally mopping his brow with his left hand and conscientiously jerking the necklace up and down with his right, completely drowned anything he might be attempting to say; but Ransom saw his lips moving and had little doubt that he was working away at 'Pretty, pretty!' Then suddenly the sound of laughter almost redoubled its volume. The stars in their courses were fighting against Weston. Some hazy memory of efforts made long since to entertain an infant niece had begun to penetrate his highly trained mind. He was bobbing up and down from the knees and holding his head on one side; he was almost dancing; and he was by now very hot indeed. For all Ransom knew he was saying 'Diddle, diddle, diddle.'

It was sheer exhaustion which ended the great physicist's performance — the most successful of its kind ever given on Malacandra — and with it the sonorous raptures of his audience. As silence returned Ransom heard Devine's voice in English:

'For God's sake stop making a buffoon of yourself, Weston,' it said. 'Can't you see it won't work?'

'It *doesn't* seem to be working,' admitted Weston, 'and I'm inclined to think they have even less intelligence than we supposed. Do you think, perhaps, if I tried it just once again — or would you like to try this time?'

'Oh, Hell!' said Devine, and, turning his back on his partner, sat down abruptly on the ground, produced his cigarette-case and began to smoke.

'I'll give it to the witch-doctor,' said Weston during the moment of silence which Devine's action had produced among the mystified spectators; and before anyone could stop him he took a step forward and attempted to drop the string of beads round the elderly *hross's* neck. The *hross's* head was, however, too large for this operation and the necklace merely settled on its forehead like a crown, slightly over one eye. It shifted

its head a little, like a dog worried with flies, snorted gently, and resumed its sleep.

Oyarsa's voice now addressed Ransom. 'Are your fellow-creatures hurt in their brains, Ransom of Thulcandra?' it said. 'Or are they too much afraid to answer my questions?'

'I think, Oyarsa,' said Ransom, 'that they do not believe you are there. And they believe that all these *hnau* are — are like very young cubs. The thicker *hmān* is trying to frighten them and then to please them with gifts.'

At the sound of Ransom's voice the two prisoners turned sharply around. Weston was about to speak when Ransom interrupted him hastily in English:

'Listen, Weston. It is not a trick. There really is a creature there in the middle — there where you can see a kind of light, or a kind of something, if you look hard. And it is at least as intelligent as a man — they seem to live an enormous time. Stop treating it like a child and answer its questions. And if you take my advice, you'll speak the truth and not bluster.'

'The brutes seem to have intelligence enough to take you in, anyway,' growled Weston; but it was in a somewhat modified voice that he turned once more to the sleeping *hross* — the desire to wake up the supposed witch-doctor was becoming an obsession — and addressed it.

'We sorry we kill him,' he said, pointing to Hyoi. 'No go to kill him. *Sorns* tell us bring man, give him your big head. We go away back into sky. *He* come (here he indicated Ransom) with us. He very bent man, run away, no do what *sorns* say like us. We run after him, get him back for *sorns*, want to do what we say and *sorns* tell us, see? He not let us. Run away, run, run. We run after. See big black one, think he kill us, we kill him — pouff! bang! All for bent man. He no run away, he be good, we no run after, no kill big black one, see? You have bent man — bent man make all trouble — you plenty keep him, let us go. He afraid of you, we no afraid. Listen — —'

At this moment Weston's continual bellowing in the face of the *hross* at last produced the effect he had striven for so long. The creature opened its eyes and stared mildly at him in some perplexity. Then, gradually realizing the impropriety of which it had been guilty, it rose slowly to its standing position, bowed respectfully to Oyarsa, and finally waddled out of the assembly still carrying the necklace draped over its right ear and eye. Weston, his mouth still open, followed the retreating figure with his gaze till it vanished among the stems of the grove.

It was Oyarsa who broke the silence. ‘We have had mirth enough,’ he said, ‘and it is time to hear true answers to our questions. Something is wrong in your head, *hnau* from Thulcandra. There is too much blood in it. Is Firikitekila here?’

‘Here, Oyarsa,’ said a *pfifltrigg*.

‘Have you in your cisterns water that has been made cold?’

‘Yes, Oyarsa.’

‘Then let this thick *hnau* be taken to the guesthouse and let them bathe his head in cold water. Much water and many times. Then bring him again. Meanwhile I will provide for my killed *hrossa*.’

Weston did not clearly understand what the voice said — indeed, he was still too busy trying to find out where it came from — but terror smote him as he found himself wrapped in the strong arms of the surrounding *hrossa* and forced away from his place. Ransom would gladly have shouted out some reassurance, but Weston himself was shouting too loud to hear him. He was mixing English and Malacandrian now, and the last that was heard was a rising scream of ‘Pay for this — pouff! bang! — Ransom, for God’s sake — Ransom! Ransom!’

‘And now,’ said Oyarsa, when silence was restored, ‘let us honour my dead *hnau*.’

At his words ten of the *hrossa* grouped themselves about the biers. Lifting their heads, and with no signal given as far as Ransom could see, they began to sing.

To every man, in his acquaintance with a new art, there comes a moment when that which before was meaningless first lifts, as it were, one corner of the curtain that hides its mystery, and reveals, in a burst of delight which later and fuller understanding can hardly ever equal, one glimpse of the indefinite possibilities within. For Ransom, this moment had now come in his understanding of Malacandrian song. Now first he saw that its rhythms were based on a different blood from ours, on a heart that beat more quickly, and a fiercer internal heat. Through his knowledge of the creatures and his love for them he began, ever so little, to hear it with their ears. A sense of great masses moving at visionary speeds, of giants dancing, of eternal sorrows eternally consoled, of he knew not what and yet what he had always known, awoke in him with the very first bars of the deep-mouthed dirge, and bowed down his spirit as if the gate of heaven had opened before him.

‘Let it go hence,’ they sang. ‘Let it go hence, dissolve and be no body. Drop it, release it, drop it gently, as a stone is loosed from fingers drooping over a still pool. Let it go down, sink, fall away. Once below the surface there are no divisions, no layers in the water yielding all the way down; all one and all unwounded is that element. Send it voyaging it will not come again. Let it go down; the *hnau* rises from it. This is the second life, the other beginning. Open, oh coloured world, without weight, without shore. You are second and better; this was first and feeble. Once the worlds were hot within and brought forth life, but only the pale plants, the dark plants. We see their children when they grow to-day, out of the sun’s light in the sad places. After, the heaven made grow another kind on worlds: the high climbers, the bright-haired forests, cheeks of flowers. First were the darker, then the brighter. First was the worlds’ brood, then the suns’ brood.’

This was as much of it as he contrived later to remember and could translate. As the song ended Oyarsa said:

‘Let us scatter the movements which were their bodies. So will Maleldil scatter all worlds when the first and feeble is worn.’

He made a sign to one of the *pfifltriggi*, who instantly arose and approached the corpses. The *hrossa*, now singing again but very softly, drew back at least ten paces. The *pfifltrigg* touched each of the three dead in turn with some small object that appeared to be made of glass or crystal — and then jumped away with one of his frog-like leaps. Ransom closed his eyes to protect them from a blinding light and felt something like a very strong wind blowing in his face, for a fraction of a second. Then all was calm again, and the three biers were empty.

‘God! That would be a trick worth knowing on earth,’ said Devine to Ransom. ‘Solves the murderers’ problem about the disposal of the body, eh?’

But Ransom, who was thinking of Hyoi, did not answer him; and before he spoke again everyone’s attention was diverted by the return of the unhappy Weston among his guards.

TWENTY

The *hross* who headed this procession was a conscientious creature and began at once explaining itself in a rather troubled voice.

‘I hope we have done right, Oyarsa,’ it said. ‘But we do not know. We dipped his head in the cold water seven times, but the seventh time something fell off it. We had thought it was the top of his head, but now we saw it was a covering made of the skin of some other creature. Then some said we had done your will with the seven dips, and others said not. In the end we dipped it seven times more. We hope that was right. The creature talked a lot between the dips, and most between the second seven, but we could not understand it.’

‘You have done very well, Hnoo,’ said Oyarsa. ‘Stand away that I may see it, for now I will speak to it.’

The guards fell away on each side. Weston’s usually pale face, under the bracing influence of the cold water, had assumed the colour of a ripe tomato, and his hair, which had naturally not been cut since he reached Malacandra, was plastered in straight, lank masses across his forehead. A good deal of water was still dripping over his nose and ears. His expression — unfortunately wasted on an audience ignorant of terrestrial physiognomy — was that of a brave man suffering in a great cause, and rather eager than reluctant to face the worst or even to provoke it. In explanation of his conduct it is only fair to remember that he had already that morning endured all the terrors of an expected martyrdom and all the anticlimax of fourteen compulsory cold douches. Devine, who knew his man, shouted out to Weston in English:

‘Steady, Weston. These devils can split the atom or something pretty like it. Be careful what you say to them and don’t let’s have any of your bloody nonsense.’

‘Huh!’ said Weston. ‘So you’ve gone native too?’

‘Be silent,’ said the voice of Oyarsa. ‘You, thick one, have told me nothing of yourself, so I will tell it to you. In your own world you have attained great wisdom concerning bodies and by this you have been able to make a ship that can cross the heaven; but in all other things you have the mind of an animal. When first you came here, I sent for you, meaning you nothing but honour. The darkness in your own mind filled you with fear.

Because you thought I meant evil to you, you went as a beast goes against a beast of some other kind, and snared this Ransom. You would give him up to the evil you feared. To-day, seeing him here, to save your own life, you would have given him to me a second time, still thinking I meant him hurt. These are your dealings with your own kind. And what you intend to my people, I know. Already you have killed some. And you have come here to kill them all. To you it is nothing whether a creature is *hnau* or not. At first I thought this was because you cared only whether a creature had a body like your own; but Ransom has that and you would kill him as lightly as any of my *hnau*. I did not know that the Bent One had done so much in your world and still I do not understand it. If you were mine, I would unbody you even now. Do not think follies; by my hand Maleldil does greater things than this, and I can unmake you even on the borders of your own world's air. But I do not yet resolve to do this. It is for you to speak. Let me see if there is anything in your mind besides fear and death and desire.'

Weston turned to Ransom. 'I see,' he said, 'that you have chosen the most momentous crisis in the history of the human race to betray it.' Then he turned in the direction of the voice.

'I know you kill us,' he said. 'Me not afraid. Others come, make it our world — —'

But Devine had jumped to his feet, and interrupted him.

'No, no, Oyarsa,' he shouted. 'You no listen him. He very foolish man, he have dreams. We little people, only want pretty sun-bloods. You give us plenty sun-bloods, we go back into sky, you never see us no more. All done, see?'

'Silence,' said Oyarsa. There was an almost imperceptible change in the light, if it could be called light, out of which the voice came, and Devine crumpled up and fell back on the ground. When he resumed his sitting position he was white and panting.

'Speak on,' said Oyarsa to Weston.

'Me no . . . no,' began Weston in Malacandrian and then broke off. 'I can't say what I want in their accursed language,' he said in English.

'Speak to Ransom and he shall turn it into our speech,' said Oyarsa.

Weston accepted the arrangement at once. He believed that the hour of his death was come and he was determined to utter the thing — almost the only thing outside his own science — which he had to say. He cleared his throat, almost he struck a gesture, and began:

‘To you I may seem a vulgar robber, but I bear on my shoulders the destiny of the human race. Your tribal life with its stone-age weapons and beehive huts, its primitive coracles and elementary social structure, has nothing to compare with our civilization — with our science, medicine and law, our armies, our architecture, our commerce, and our transport system which is rapidly annihilating space and time. Our right to supersede you is the right of the higher over the lower. Life — —’

‘Half a moment,’ said Ransom in English. ‘That’s about as much as I can manage at one go.’ Then, turning to Oyarsa, he began translating as well as he could. The process was difficult and the result — which he felt to be rather unsatisfactory — was something like this:

‘Among us, Oyarsa, there is a kind of *hnau* who will take other *hnaus’* food and — and things, when they are not looking. He says he is not an ordinary one of that kind. He says what he does now will make very different things happen to those of our people who are not yet born. He says that, among you, *hnau* of one kindred all live together and the *hrossa* have spears like those we used a very long time ago and your huts are small and round and your boats small and light and like our old ones, and you have only one ruler. He says it is different with us. He says we know much. There is a thing happens in our world when the body of a living creature feels pains and becomes weak, and he says we sometimes know how to stop it. He says we have many bent people and we kill them or shut them in huts and that we have people for settling quarrels between the bent *hnau* about their huts and mates and things. He says we have many ways for the *hnau* of one land to kill those of another and some are trained to do it. He says we build very big and strong huts of stones and other things — like the *pfifltriggi*. And he says we exchange many things among ourselves and can carry heavy weights very quickly a long way. Because of all this, he says it would not be the act of a bent *hnau* if our people killed all your people.’

As soon as Ransom had finished, Weston continued.

‘Life is greater than any system of morality; her claims are absolute. It is not by tribal taboos and copy-book maxims that she has pursued her relentless march from the amœba to man and from man to civilization.’

‘He says,’ began Ransom, ‘that living creatures are stronger than the question whether an act is bent or good — no, that cannot be right — he says it is better to be alive and bent than to be dead — no — he says, he says — I cannot say what he says, Oyarsa, in your language. But he goes on

to say that the only good thing is that there should be very many creatures alive. He says there were many other animals before the first men and the later ones were better than the earlier ones; but he says the animals were not born because of what is said to the young about bent and good action by their elders. And he says these animals did not feel any pity.'

'She — —' began Weston.

'I'm sorry,' interrupted Ransom, 'but I've forgotten who She is.'

'Life, of course,' snapped Weston. 'She has ruthlessly broken down all obstacles and liquidated all failures and to-day in her highest form — civilized man — and in me as his representative, she presses forward to that interplanetary leap which will, perhaps, place her for ever beyond the reach of death.'

'He says,' resumed Ransom, 'that these animals learned to do many difficult things, except those who could not; and those ones died and the other animals did not pity them. And he says the best animal now is the kind of man who makes the big huts and carries the heavy weights and does all the other things I told you about; and he is one of these and he says that if the others all knew what he was doing they would be pleased. He says that if he could kill you all and bring our people to live in Malacandra, then they might be able to go on living here after something had gone wrong with our world. And then if something went wrong with Malacandra they might go and kill all the *hnau* in another world. And then another — and so they would never die out.'

'It is in her right,' said Weston, 'the right, or, if you will, the might of Life herself, that I am prepared without flinching to plant the flag of man on the soil of Malacandra: to march on, step by step, superseding, where necessary, the lower forms of life that we find, claiming planet after planet, system after system, till our posterity — whatever strange form and yet unguessed mentality they have assumed — dwell in the universe wherever the universe is habitable.'

'He says,' translated Ransom, 'that because of this it would *not* be a bent action — or else, he says, it *would* be a possible action — for him to kill you all and bring us here. He says he would feel no pity. He is saying again that perhaps they would be able to keep moving from one world to another and wherever they came they would kill everyone. I think he is now talking about worlds that go round other suns. He wants the creatures born from us

to be in as many places as they can. He says he does not know what kind of creatures they will be.'

'I may fall,' said Weston. 'But while I live I will not, with such a key in my hand, consent to close the gates of the future on my race. What lies in that future, beyond our present ken, passes imagination to conceive: it is enough for me that there is a Beyond.'

'He is saying,' Ransom translated, 'that he will not stop trying to do all this unless you kill him. And he says that though he doesn't know what will happen to the creatures sprung from us, he wants it to happen very much.'

Weston, who had now finished his statement, looked round instinctively for a chair to sink into. On Earth he usually sank into a chair as the applause began. Finding none — he was not the kind of man to sit on the ground like Devine — he folded his arms and stared with a certain dignity about him.

'It is well that I have heard you,' said Oyarsa. 'For though your mind is feebler, your will is less bent than I thought. It is not for yourself that you would do all this.'

'No,' said Weston proudly in Malacandrian. 'Me die. Man live.'

'Yet you know that these creatures would have to be made quite unlike you before they lived on other worlds.'

'Yes, yes. All new. No one know yet. Strange! Big!'

'Then it is not the shape of body that you love?'

'No. Me no care how they shaped.'

'One would think, then, that it is for the mind you care. But that cannot be, or you would love *hnau* wherever you met it.'

'No care for *hnau*. Care for man.'

'But if it is neither man's mind, which is as the mind of all other *hnau* — is not Maleldil maker of them all? — nor his body, which will change — if you care for neither of these, what do you mean by man?'

This had to be translated to Weston. When he understood it, he replied:

'Me care for man — care for our race — what man begets — —' He had to ask Ransom the words for *race* and *beget*.

'Strange!' said Oyarsa. 'You do not love any one of your race — you would have let me kill Ransom. You do not love the mind of your race, nor the body. Any kind of creature will please you if only it is begotten by your kind as they now are. It seems to me, Thick One, that what you really love is no completed creature but the very seed itself: for that is all that is left.'

‘Tell him,’ said Weston when he had been made to understand this, ‘that I don’t pretend to be a metaphysician. I have not come here to chop logic. If he cannot understand — as apparently you can’t either — anything so fundamental as a man’s loyalty to humanity, I can’t make him understand it.’

But Ransom was unable to translate this and the voice of Oyarsa continued:

‘I see now how the lord of the silent world has bent you. There are laws that all *hnau* know, of pity and straight dealing and shame and the like, and one of these is the love of kindred. He has taught you to break all of them except this one, which is not one of the greatest laws; this one he has bent till it becomes folly and has set it up, thus bent, to be a little, blind Oyarsa in your brain. And now you can do nothing but obey it, though if we ask you why it is a law you can give no other reason for it than for all the other and greater laws which it drives you to disobey. Do you know why he has done this?’

‘Me think no such person — me wise, new man — no believe all that old talk.’

‘I will tell you. He has left you this one because a bent *hnau* can do more evil than a broken one. He has only bent you; but this Thin One who sits on the ground he has broken, for he has left him nothing but greed. He is now only a talking animal and in my world he could do no more evil than an animal. If he were mine I would unmake his body, for the *hnau* in it is already dead. But if you were mine I would try to cure you. Tell me, Thick One, why did you come here?’

‘Me tell you. Make man live all the time.’

‘But are your wise men so ignorant as not to know that Malacandra is older than your own world and nearer its death? Most of it is dead already. My people live only in the *handramits*; the heat and the water have been more and will be less. Soon now, very soon, I will end my world and give back my people to Maleldil.’

‘Me know all that plenty. This only first try. Soon they go on another world.’

‘But do you not know that all worlds will die?’

‘Men go jump off each before it deads — on and on, see?’

‘And when all are dead?’

Weston was silent. After a time Oyarsa spoke again.

‘Do you not ask why my people, whose world is old, have not rather come to yours and taken it long ago.’

‘Ho! Ho!’ said Weston. ‘You not know how.’

‘You are wrong,’ said Oyarsa. ‘Many thousands of thousand years before this, when nothing yet lived on your world, the cold death was coming on my *harandra*. Then I was in deep trouble, not chiefly for the death of my *hnau* — Maleldil does not make them long-livers — but for the things which the lord of your world, who was not yet bound, put into their minds. He would have made them as your people are now — wise enough to see the death of their kind approaching but not wise enough to endure it. Bent counsels would soon have risen among them. They were well able to have made sky-ships. By me Maleldil stopped them. Some I cured, some I unbodied — —’

‘And see what come!’ interrupted Weston, ‘you now very few — shut up in *handramits* — soon all die.’

‘Yes,’ said Oyarsa, ‘but one thing we left behind us on the *harandra*: fear. And with fear, murder and rebellion. The weakest of my people does not fear death. It is the Bent One, the lord of your world, who wastes your lives and befouls them with flying from what you know will overtake you in the end. If you were subjects of Maleldil you would have peace.’

Weston writhed in the exasperation born of his desire to speak and his ignorance of the language.

‘Trash! Defeatist trash!’ he shouted at Oyarsa in English; then, drawing himself up to his full height, he added in Malacandrian, ‘You say your Maleldil let all go dead. Other one, Bent One, he fight, jump, live — not all talkee-talkee. Me no care Maleldil. Like Bent One better: me on his side.’

‘But do you not see that he never will nor can,’ began Oyarsa, and then broke off, as if recollecting himself. ‘But I must learn more of your world from Ransom, and for that I need till night. I will not kill you, not even the Thin One, for you are out of my world. To-morrow you shall go hence again in your ship.’

Devine’s face suddenly fell. He began talking rapidly in English.

‘For God’s sake, Weston, make him understand. We’ve been here for months — the Earth is not in opposition now. Tell him it can’t be done. He might as well kill us at once.’

‘How long will your journey be to Thulcandra?’ asked Oyarsa.

Weston, using Ransom as his interpreter, explained that the journey, in the present position of the two planets, was almost impossible. The distance had increased by millions of miles. The angle of their course to the solar rays would be totally different from that which he had counted upon. Even if by a hundredth chance they could hit the Earth, it was almost certain that their supply of oxygen would be exhausted long before they arrived.

'Tell him to kill us now,' he added.

'All this I know,' said Oyarsa. 'And if you stay in my world I must kill you: no such creature will I suffer in Malacandra. I know there is small chance of your reaching your world; but small is not the same as none. Between now and the next noon choose which you will take. In the meantime, tell me this. If you reach it at all, what is the most time you will need?'

After a prolonged calculation, Weston, in a shaken voice, replied that if they had not made it in ninety days they would never make it, and they would, moreover, be dead of suffocation.

'Ninety days you shall have,' said Oyarsa. 'My *sorns* and *pfifltriggi* will give you air (we also have that art) and food for ninety days. But they will do something else to your ship. I am not minded that it should return into the heaven if once it reaches Thulcandra. You, Thick One, were not here when I unmade my dead *hrossa* whom you killed: the Thin One will tell you. This I can do, as Maleldil has taught me, over a gap of time or a gap of place. Before your sky-ship rises, my *sorns* will have so dealt with it that on the ninetieth day it will unbody, it will become what you call nothing. If that day finds it in heaven your death will be no bitterer because of this; but do not tarry in your ship if once you touch Thulcandra. Now lead these two away, and do you, my children, go where you will. But I must talk with Ransom.'

TWENTY-ONE

All that afternoon Ransom remained alone answering Oyarsa's questions. I am not allowed to record this conversation, beyond saying that the voice concluded it with the words:

'You have shown me more wonders than are known in the whole of heaven.'

After that they discussed Ransom's own future. He was given full liberty to remain in Malacandra or to attempt the desperate voyage to Earth. The problem was agonizing to him. In the end he decided to throw in his lot with Weston and Devine.

'Love of our own kind,' he said, 'is not the greatest of laws, but you, Oyarsa, have said it is a law. If I cannot live in Thulcandra, it is better for me not to live at all.'

'You have chosen rightly,' said Oyarsa. 'And I will tell you two things. My people will take all the strange weapons out of the ship, but they will give one to you. And the *eldila* of deep heaven will be about your ship till it reaches the air of Thulcandra, and often in it. They will not let the other two kill you.'

It had not occurred to Ransom before that his own murder might be one of the first expedients for economizing food and oxygen which would occur to Weston and Devine. He was now astonished at his obtuseness, and thanked Oyarsa for his protective measures. Then the great *eldil* dismissed him with these words:

'You are guilty of no evil, Ransom of Thulcandra, except a little fearfulness. For that, the journey you go on is your pain, and perhaps your cure: for you must be either mad or brave before it is ended. But I lay also a command on you; you must watch this Weston and this Devine in Thulcandra if ever you arrive there. They may yet do much evil in, and beyond, your world. From what you have told me, I begin to see that there are *eldila* who go down into your air, into the very stronghold of the Bent One; your world is not so fast shut as was thought in these parts of heaven. Watch those two bent ones. Be courageous. Fight them. And when you have need, some of our people will help. Maleldil will show them to you. It may even be that you and I shall meet again while you are still in the body; for it is not without the wisdom of Maleldil that we have met now and I have

learned so much of your world. It seems to me that this is the beginning of more comings and goings between the heavens and the worlds and between one world and another — though not such as the Thick One hoped. I am allowed to tell you this. The year we are now in — but heavenly years are not as yours — has long been prophesied as a year of stirrings and high changes and the siege of Thulcandra may be near its end. Great things are on foot. If Maleldil does not forbid me, I will not hold aloof from them. And now, farewell.'

It was through vast crowds of all the Malacandrian species that the three human beings embarked next day on their terrible journey. Weston was pale and haggard from a night of calculations intricate enough to tax any mathematician even if his life did not hang on them. Devine was noisy, reckless and a little hysterical. His whole view of Malacandra had been altered overnight by the discovery that the 'natives' had an alcoholic drink, and he had even been trying to teach them to smoke. Only the *pfifltriggi* had made much of it. He was now consoling himself for an acute headache and the prospect of a lingering death by tormenting Weston. Neither partner was pleased to find that all weapons had been removed from the space-ship, but in other respects everything was as they wished it. At about an hour after noon Ransom took a last, long look at the blue waters, purple forest and remote green walls of the familiar *handramit*, and followed the other two through the manhole. Before it was closed Weston warned them that they must economize air by absolute stillness. No unnecessary movement must be made during their voyage; even talking must be prohibited.

'I shall speak only in an emergency,' he said.

'Thank God for that, anyway,' was Devine's last shot. Then they screwed themselves in.

Ransom went at once to the lower side of the sphere, into the chamber which was now most completely upside down, and stretched himself on what would later become its skylight. He was surprised to find that they were already thousands of feet up. The *handramit* was only a straight purple line across the rose-red surface of the *harandra*. They were above the junction of two *handramits*. One of them was doubtless that in which he had lived, the other that which contained Meldilorn. The gully by which he had cut off the corner between the two, on Augray's shoulders, was quite invisible.

Each minute more *handramits* came into view — long straight lines, some parallel, some intersecting, some building triangles. The landscape became increasingly geometrical. The waste between the purple lines appeared perfectly flat. The rosy colour of the petrified forests accounted for its tint immediately below him; but to the north and east the great sand deserts of which the *sorns* had told him were now appearing as illimitable stretches of yellow and ochre. To the west a huge discoloration began to show. It was an irregular patch of greenish blue that looked as if it were sunk below the level of the surrounding *harandra*. He concluded it was the forest low-land of the *Pfifltriggi* — or rather one of their forest lowlands, for now similar patches were appearing in all directions, some of them mere blobs at the intersection of *handramits*, some of vast extent. He became vividly conscious that his knowledge of Malacandra was minute, local, parochial. It was as if a *sorn* had journeyed forty million miles to the Earth and spent his stay there between Worthing and Brighton. He reflected that he would have very little to show for his amazing voyage if he survived it: a smattering of the language, a few landscapes, some half-understood physics — but where were the statistics, the history, the broad survey of extraterrestrial conditions, which such a traveller ought to bring back? Those *handramits*, for example. Seen from the height which the space-ship had now attained, in all their unmistakable geometry, they put to shame his original impression that they were natural valleys. They were gigantic feats of engineering, about which he had learned nothing; feats accomplished, if all were true, before human history began . . . before animal history began. Or was that only mythology? He knew it would seem like mythology when he got back to Earth (if he ever got back), but the presence of Oyarsa was still too fresh a memory to allow him any real doubts. It even occurred to him that the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth.

The thought baffled him, and he turned again to the landscape below — the landscape which became every moment less of a landscape and more of a diagram. By this time, to the east, a much larger and darker patch of discoloration than he had yet seen was pushing its way into the reddish ochre of the Malacandrian world — a curiously shaped patch with long arms or horns extended on each side and a sort of bay between them, like the concave side of a crescent. It grew and grew. The wide dark arms seemed to be spread out to engulf the whole planet. Suddenly he saw a

bright point of light in the middle of this dark patch and realized that it was not a patch on the surface of the planet at all, but the black sky showing behind her. The smooth curve was the edge of her disk. At this, for the first time since their embarkation, fear took hold of him. Slowly, yet not too slowly for him to see, the dark arms spread farther and ever farther round the lighted surface till at last they met. The whole disk, framed in blackness, was before him. The faint percussions of the meteorites had long been audible; the window through which he was gazing was no longer definitely beneath him. His limbs, though already very light, were almost too stiff to move, and he was very hungry. He looked at his watch. He had been at his post, spell-bound, for nearly eight hours.

He made his way with difficulty to the sunward side of the ship and reeled back almost blinded with the glory of the light. Groping, he found his darkened glasses in his old cabin and got himself food and water: Weston had rationed them strictly in both. He opened the door of the control-room and looked in. Both the partners, their faces drawn with anxiety, were seated before a kind of metal table; it was covered with delicate, gently vibrating instruments in which crystal and fine wire were the predominant materials. Both ignored his presence. For the rest of the silent journey he was free of the whole ship.

When he returned to the dark side, the world they were leaving hung in the star-strewn sky not much bigger than our earthly moon. Its colours were still visible — a reddish-yellow disk blotched with greenish-blue and capped with white at the poles. He saw the two tiny Malacandrian moons — their movement quite perceptible — and reflected that they were among the thousand things he had not noticed during his sojourn there. He slept, and woke, and saw the disk still hanging in the sky. It was smaller than the Moon now. Its colours were gone except for a faint, uniform tinge of redness in its light; even the light was not now incomparably stronger than that of the countless stars which surrounded it. It had ceased to be Malacandra; it was only Mars.

He soon fell back into his old routine of sleeping and basking, punctuated with the making of some scribbled notes for his Malacandrian dictionary. He knew that there was very little chance of his being able to communicate his new knowledge to man, that unrecorded death in the depth of space would almost certainly be the end of their adventure. But already it had become impossible to think of it as ‘space.’ Some moments of cold fear

he had; but each time they were shorter and more quickly swallowed up in a sense of awe which made his personal fate seem wholly insignificant. He could not feel that they were an island of life journeying through an abyss of death. He felt almost the opposite — that life was waiting outside the little iron egg-shell in which they rode, ready at any moment to break in, and that, if it killed them, it would kill them by excess of its vitality. He hoped passionately that if they were to perish they would perish by the ‘unbodying’ of the space-ship and not by suffocation within it. To be let out, to be set free, to dissolve into the ocean of eternal noon, seemed to him at certain moments a consummation even more desirable than their return to Earth. And if he had felt some such lift of the heart when first he passed through heaven on their outward journey, he felt it now tenfold, for now he was convinced that the abyss was full of life in the most literal sense, full of living creatures.

His confidence in Oyarsa’s words about the *eldila* increased rather than diminished as they went on. He saw none of them; the intensity of light in which the ship swam allowed none of the fugitive variations which would have betrayed their presence. But he heard, or thought he heard, all kinds of delicate sound, or vibrations akin to sound, mixed with the tinkling rain of meteorites, and often the sense of unseen presences even within the space-ship became irresistible. It was this, more than anything else, that made his own chances of life seem so unimportant. He and all his race showed small and ephemeral against a background of such immeasurable fullness. His brain reeled at the thought of the true population of the universe, the three-dimensional infinitude of their territory, and the unchronicled æons of their past; but his heart became steadier than it had ever been.

It was well for him that he had reached this frame of mind before the real hardships of their journey began. Ever since their departure from Malacandra, the thermometer had steadily risen; now it was higher than it had stood at any time on their outward journey. And still it rose. The light also increased. Under his glasses he kept his eyes habitually tight shut, opening them only for the shortest time for necessary movements. He knew that if he reached Earth it would be with permanently damaged sight. But all this was nothing to the torment of heat. All three of them were awake for twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four, enduring with dilated eyeballs, blackened lips and froth-flecked cheeks the agony of thirst. It would be

madness to increase their scanty rations of water: madness even to consume air in discussing the question.

He saw well enough what was happening. In his last bid for life Weston was venturing inside the Earth's orbit, leading them nearer the Sun than man, perhaps than life, had ever been. Presumably this was unavoidable; one could not follow a retreating Earth round the rim of its own wheeling course. They must be trying to meet it — to cut across . . . it was madness! But the question did not much occupy his mind; it was not possible for long to think of anything but thirst. One thought of water; then one thought of thirst; then one thought of thinking of thirst; then of water again. And still the thermometer rose. The walls of the ship were too hot to touch. It was obvious that a crisis was approaching. In the next few hours it must kill them or get less.

It got less. There came a time when they lay exhausted and shivering in what seemed the cold, though it was still hotter than any terrestrial climate. Weston had so far succeeded; he had risked the highest temperature at which human life could theoretically survive, and they had lived through it. But they were not the same men. Hitherto Weston had slept very little even in his watches off; always, after an hour or so of uneasy rest, he had returned to his charts and to his endless, almost despairing, calculations. You could see him fighting the despair — pinning his terrified brain down, and again down, to the figures. Now he never looked at them. He even seemed careless in the control-room. Devine moved and looked like a somnambulist. Ransom lived increasingly on the dark side and for long hours he thought of nothing. Although the first great danger was past, none of them, at this time, had any serious hope of a successful issue to their journey. They had now been fifty days, without speech, in their steel shell, and the air was already very bad.

Weston was so unlike his old self that he even allowed Ransom to take his share in the navigation. Mainly by signs, but with the help of a few whispered words, he taught him all that was necessary at this stage of the journey. Apparently they were racing home — but with little chance of reaching it in time — before some sort of cosmic 'trade-wind.' A few rules of thumb enabled Ransom to keep the star which Weston pointed out to him in its position at the centre of the skylight, but always with his left hand on the bell to Weston's cabin.

This star was not the Earth. The days — the purely theoretical ‘days’ which bore such a desperately practical meaning for the travellers — mounted to fifty-eight before Weston changed course, and a different luminary was in the centre. Sixty days, and it was visibly a planet. Sixty-six, and it was like a planet seen through field-glasses. Seventy and it was like nothing that Ransom had ever seen — a little dazzling disk too large for a planet and far too small for the Moon. Now that he was navigating, his celestial mood was shattered. Wild, animal thirst for life, mixed with homesick longing for the free airs and the sights and smells of earth — for grass and meat and beer and tea and the human voice — awoke in him. At first his chief difficulty on watch had been to resist drowsiness; now, though the air was worse, feverish excitement kept him vigilant. Often when he came off duty he found his right arm stiff and sore; for hours he had been pressing it unconsciously against the control-board as if his puny thrust could spur the space-ship to yet greater speed.

Now they had twenty days to go. Nineteen — eighteen — and on the white terrestrial disk, now a little larger than a sixpence, he thought he could make out Australia and the south-east corner of Asia. Hour after hour, though the markings moved slowly across the disk with the earth’s diurnal revolution, the disk itself refused to grow larger. ‘Get on! Get on!’ Ransom muttered to the ship. Now ten days were left and it was like the Moon and so bright that they could not look steadily at it. The air in their little sphere was ominously bad, but Ransom and Devine risked a whisper as they changed watches.

‘We’ll do it,’ they said. ‘We’ll do it yet.’

On the eighty-seventh day, when Ransom relieved Devine, he thought there was something wrong with the Earth. Before his watch was done, he was sure. It was no longer a true circle, but bulging a little on one side; it was almost pear-shaped. When Weston came on duty he gave one glance at the sky-light, rang furiously on the bell for Devine, thrust Ransom aside, and took the navigating seat. His face was the colour of putty. He seemed to be about to so something to the controls, but as Devine entered the room he looked up and shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of despair. Then he buried his face in his hands and laid his head down on the control-board.

Ransom and Devine exchanged glances. They bundled Weston out of the seat — he was crying like a child — and Devine took his place. And now at last Ransom understood the mystery of the bulging Earth. What had

appeared as a bulge on one side of her disk was becoming increasingly distinct as a second disk, a disk almost as large in appearance as her own. It was covering more than half of the Earth. It was the Moon — between them and the Earth, and two hundred and forty thousand miles nearer. Ransom did not know what fate this might mean for the space-ship. Devine obviously did, and never had he appeared so admirable. His face was as pale as Weston's, but his eyes were clear and preternaturally bright; he sat crouched over the controls like an animal about to spring and he was whistling very softly between his teeth.

Hours later Ransom understood what was happening. The Moon's disk was now larger than the Earth's, and very gradually it became apparent to him that both disks were diminishing in size. The space-ship was no longer approaching either the Earth or the Moon; it was farther away from them than it had been half an hour ago, and that was the meaning of Devine's feverish activity with the controls. It was not merely that the Moon was crossing their path and cutting them off from the Earth; apparently for some reason — probably gravitational — it was dangerous to get too close to the Moon, and Devine was standing off into space. In sight of harbour they were being forced to turn back to the open sea. He glanced up at the chronometer. It was the morning of the eighty-eighth day. Two days to make the Earth, and they were moving away from her.

'I suppose this finishes us?' he whispered.

'Expect so,' whispered Devine, without looking round.

Weston presently recovered sufficiently to come back and stand beside Devine. There was nothing for Ransom to do. He was sure, now, that they were soon to die. With this realization, the agony of his suspense suddenly disappeared. Death, whether it came now or some thirty years later on earth, rose up and claimed his attention. There are preparations a man likes to make. He left the control-room and returned into one of the sunward chambers, into the indifference of the moveless light, the warmth, the silence and the sharp-cut shadows. Nothing was farther from his mind than sleep. It must have been the exhausted atmosphere which made him drowsy. He slept.

He awoke in almost complete darkness in the midst of a loud continuous noise, which he could not at first identify. It reminded him of something — something he seemed to have heard in a previous existence. It was a

prolonged drumming noise close above his head. Suddenly his heart gave a great leap.

‘Oh God,’ he sobbed. ‘Oh God! It’s *rain*.’

He was on Earth. The air was heavy and stale about him, but the choking sensations he had been suffering were gone. He realized that he was still in the space-ship. The others, in fear of its threatened ‘unbodying,’ had characteristically abandoned it the moment it touched Earth and left him to his fate. It was difficult in the dark, and under the crushing weight of terrestrial gravity, to find his way out. But he managed it. He found the manhole and slithered, drinking great draughts of air, down the outside of the sphere; slipped in mud, blessed the smell of it, and at last raised the unaccustomed weight of his body to its feet. He stood in pitch-black night under torrential rain. With every pore of his body he drank it in; with every desire of his heart he embraced the smell of the field about him — a patch of his native planet where grass grew, where cows moved, where presently he would come to hedges and a gate.

He had walked about half an hour when a vivid light behind him and a strong, momentary wind informed him that the space-ship was no more. He felt very little interest. He had seen dim lights, the lights of men, ahead. He contrived to get into a lane, then into a road, then into a village street. A lighted door was open. There were voices from within and they were speaking English. There was a familiar smell. He pushed his way in, regardless of the surprise he was creating, and walked to the bar.

‘A pint of bitter, please,’ said Ransom.

TWENTY-TWO

At this point, if I were guided by purely literary considerations, my story would end, but it is time to remove the mask and to acquaint the reader with the real and practical purpose for which this book has been written. At the same time he will learn how the writing of it became possible at all.

Dr. Ransom — and at this stage it will become obvious that that is not his real name — soon abandoned the idea of his Malacandrian dictionary and indeed all idea of communicating his story to the world. He was ill for several months, and when he recovered he found himself in considerable doubt as to whether what he remembered had really occurred. It looked very like a delusion produced by his illness, and most of his apparent adventures could, he saw, be explained psychoanalytically. He did not lean very heavily on this fact himself, for he had long since observed that a good many ‘real’ things in the fauna and flora of our own world could be accounted for in the same way if you started with the assumption that they were illusions. But he felt that if he himself half doubted his own story, the rest of the world would disbelieve it completely. He decided to hold his tongue, and there the matter would have rested but for a very curious coincidence.

This is where I come into the story. I had known Dr. Ransom slightly for several years and corresponded with him on literary and philological subjects, though we very seldom met. It was, therefore, quite in the usual order of things that I should write him a letter some months ago, of which I will quote the relevant paragraph. It ran like this:

‘I am now working at the Platonists of the twelfth century and incidentally discovering that they wrote damnably difficult Latin. In one of them, Bernardus Silvestris, there is a word I should particularly like your views on — the word *Oyarses*. It occurs in the description of a voyage through the heavens, and an *Oyarses* seems to be the “intelligence” or tutelary spirit of a heavenly sphere, i.e. in our language, of a planet. I asked C. J. about it and he says it ought to be *Ousiarches*. That, of course, would make sense, but I do not feel quite satisfied. Have you by any chance ever come across a word like *Oyarses*, or can you hazard any guess as to what language it may be?’

The immediate result of this letter was an invitation to spend a week-end with Dr. Ransom. He told me his whole story, and since then he and I have been almost continuously at work on the mystery. A good many facts, which I have no intention of publishing at present, have fallen into our hands; facts about planets in general and about Mars in particular, facts about mediæval Platonists, and (not least in importance) facts about the Professor to whom I am giving the fictitious name of Weston. A systematic report of these facts might, of course, be given to the civilized world: but that would almost certainly result in universal incredulity and in a libel action from 'Weston.' At the same time, we both feel that we cannot be silent. We are being daily confirmed in our belief that the *oyarses* of Mars was right when it said that the present 'celestial year' was to be a revolutionary one, that the long isolation of our own planet is nearing its end, and that great doings are on foot. We have found reason to believe that the mediæval Platonists were living in the same celestial year as ourselves — in fact, that it began in the twelfth century of our era — and that the occurrence of the name Oyarsa (Latinized as *oyarses*) in Bernardus Silvestris is not an accident. And we have also evidence — increasing almost daily — that 'Weston,' or the force or forces behind 'Weston,' will play a very important part in the events of the next few centuries, and, unless we prevent them, a very disastrous one. We do not mean that they are likely to invade Mars — our cry is not merely 'Hands off Malacandra.' The dangers to be feared are not planetary but cosmic, or at least solar, and they are not temporal but eternal. More than this it would be unwise to say.

It was Dr. Ransom who first saw that our only chance was to publish in the form of *fiction* what would certainly not be listened to as fact. He even thought — greatly overrating my literary powers — that this might have the incidental advantage of reaching a wider public, and that, certainly, it would reach a great many people sooner than 'Weston.' To my objection that if accepted as fiction, it would for that very reason be regarded as false, he replied that there would be indications enough in the narrative for the few readers — the very few — who *at present* were prepared to go further into the matter.

'And they,' he said, 'will easily find out you, or me, and will easily identify Weston. Anyway,' he continued, 'what we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief as a body of people familiarized with certain ideas. If we could even effect in one per cent. of our readers a change-over

from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven, we should have made a beginning.'

What neither of us foresaw was the rapid march of events which was to render the book out of date before it was published. These events have already made it rather a prologue to our story than the story itself. But we must let it go as it stands. For the later stages of the adventure — well, it was Aristotle, long before Kipling, who taught us the formula, 'That is another story.'

POSTSCRIPT

(*Being extracts from a letter written by the original of ‘Dr. Ransom’ to the author.*)

. . . I think you are right, and after the two or three corrections (marked in red) the MS. will have to stand. I won’t deny that I am disappointed, but then any attempt to tell such a story is bound to disappoint the man who has really been there. I am not now referring to the ruthless way in which you have cut down all the philological part, though, as it now stands, we are giving our readers a mere caricature of the Malacandrian language. I mean something more difficult — something which I couldn’t possibly express. How can one ‘get across’ the Malacandrian *smells*? Nothing comes back to me more vividly in my dreams . . . especially the early morning smell in those purple woods, where the very mention of ‘early morning’ and ‘woods’ is misleading because it must set you thinking of earth and moss and cobwebs and the smell of our own planet, but I’m thinking of something totally different. More ‘aromatic’ . . . yes, but then it is not hot or luxurious or exotic as that word suggests. Something aromatic, spicy, yet very cold, very thin, tingling at the back of the nose — something that did to the sense of smell what high, sharp violin notes do to the ear. And mixed with that I always hear the sound of the singing — great hollow hound-like music from enormous throats, deeper than Chaliapin, a ‘warm, dark noise.’ I am homesick for my old Malacandrian valley when I think of it; yet God knows when I heard it there I was homesick enough for the Earth.

Of course you are right; if we are to treat it as a story you *must* telescope the time I spent in the village during which ‘nothing happened.’ But I grudge it. Those quiet weeks, the mere living among the *hrossa*, are to me the main thing that happened. I *know* them, Lewis; that’s what you can’t get into a mere story. For instance, because I always take a thermometer with me on a holiday (it has saved many a one from being spoiled) I know that the normal temperature of a *hross* is 103°. I know — though I can’t remember learning it — that they live about 80 Martian years, or 160 earth years; that they marry at about 20 (= 40); that their droppings, like those of the horse, are not offensive to themselves, or to me, and are used for agriculture; that they don’t shed tears, or blink; that they do get (as you would say) ‘elevated’ but not drunk on a gaudy night — of which they have

many. But what can one do with these scraps of information? I merely analyse them out of a whole living memory that can never be put into words, and no one in this world will be able to build up from such scraps quite the right picture. For example, can I make even you understand how I know, beyond all question, why it is that the Malacandrians don't keep pets and, in general, don't feel about their 'lower animals' as we do about ours? Naturally it is the sort of thing they themselves could never have told me. One just sees why when one sees the three species together. Each of them is to the others *both* what a man is to us *and* what an animal is to us. They can talk to each other, they can co-operate, they have the same ethics; to that extent a *sorn* and a *hross* meet like two men. But then each finds the other different, funny, attractive as an animal is attractive. Some instinct starved in us, which we try to soothe by treating irrational creatures almost as if they were rational, is really satisfied in Malacandra. They don't need pets.

By the way, while we are on the subject of species, I am rather sorry that the exigencies of the story have been allowed to simplify the biology so much. Did I give you the impression that each of the three species was perfectly homogeneous? If so, I misled you. Take the *hrossa*; my friends were black *hrossa*, but there are also silver *hrossa*, and in some of the western *handramits* one finds the great crested *hross* — ten feet high, a dancer rather than a singer, and the noblest animal, after man, that I have ever seen. Only the males have the crest. I also saw a pure white *hross* at Meldilorn, but like a fool I never found out whether he represented a sub-species or was a mere freak like our terrestrial albino. There is also at least one other kind of *sorn* besides the kind I saw — the *soroborn* or red *sorn* of the desert, who lives in the sandy north. He's a corker by all accounts.

I agree, it is a pity I never saw the *pfifltriggi* at home. I know nearly enough about them to 'fake' a visit to them as an episode in the story, but I don't think we ought to introduce any mere fiction. 'True in substance' sounds all very well on earth, but I can't imagine myself explaining it to Oyarsa, and I have a shrewd suspicion (see my last letter) that I have not heard the end of *him*. Anyway, why should our 'readers' (you seem to know the devil of a lot about them!) who are so determined to hear nothing about the language, be so anxious to know more of the *pfifltriggi*? But if you can work it in, there is, of course, no harm in explaining that they are oviparous and matriarchal, and short-lived compared with the other species. It is pretty plain that the great depressions which they inhabit are the old ocean-beds of

Malacandra. *Hrossa*, who had visited them, described themselves as going down into deep forests over sand, ‘the bone-stones (fossils) of ancient wave-borers about them.’ No doubt these are the dark patches seen on the Martian disk from Earth. And that reminds me — the ‘maps’ of Mars which I have consulted since I got back are so inconsistent with one another that I have given up the attempt to identify my own *handramit*. If you want to try your hand, the desideratum is ‘a roughly north-east and south-west “canal” cutting a north and south “canal” not more than twenty miles from the equator.’ But astronomers differ very much as to what they can see.

Now as to your most annoying question: ‘Did Augray in describing the *eldila*, confuse the ideas of a subtler body and a superior being?’ No. The confusion is entirely your own. He said two things: that the *eldila* had bodies different from those of planetary animals, and that they were superior in intelligence. Neither he nor anyone else in Malacandra ever confused the one statement with the other or deduced the one from the other. In fact, I have reasons for thinking that there are also irrational animals with the *eldil* type of body (you remember Chaucer’s ‘airish beasts’?).

I wonder are you wise to say nothing about the problem of *eldil* speech? I agree that it would spoil the narrative to raise the question during the trial-scene at Meldilorn, but surely many readers will have enough sense to ask how the *eldila*, who obviously don’t breathe, can talk. It is true that we should have to admit we don’t know, but oughtn’t the readers to be told that? I suggested to J. — the only scientist here who is in my confidence — your theory that they might have instruments, or even organs, for manipulating the air around them and thus producing sounds indirectly, but he didn’t seem to think much of it. He thought it probable that they directly manipulated the ears of those they were ‘speaking’ to. That sounds pretty difficult . . . of course one must remember that we have really no knowledge of the shape or size of an *eldil*, or even of its relations to space (*our* space) in general. In fact, one wants to keep on insisting that we really know next to nothing about them. Like you, I can’t help trying to fix their relation to the things that appear in terrestrial tradition — gods, angels, fairies. But we haven’t the data. When I attempted to give Oyarsa some idea of our own Christian angelology, he certainly seemed to regard our ‘angels’ as different in some way from himself. But whether he meant that they were a different species, or only that they were some special military caste (since our poor

old earth turns out to be a kind of Ypres Salient in the universe), I don't know.

Why must you leave out my account of how the shutter jammed just before our landing on Malacandra? Without this, your description of our sufferings from excessive light on the return journey raises the very obvious question, 'Why didn't they close their shutters?' I don't believe your theory that 'readers never notice that sort of thing.' I'm sure I should.

There are two scenes that I wish you could have worked into the book; no matter — they are worked into me. One or other of them is always before me when I close my eyes.

In one of them I see the Malacandrian sky at morning; pale blue, so pale that now, when I have grown once more accustomed to terrestrial skies, I think of it as almost white. Against it the nearer tops of the giant weeds — the 'trees' as you call them — show black, but far away, across miles of that blinding blue water, the remoter woods are water-colour purple. The shadows all around me on the pale forest-floor are like shadows on snow. There are figures walking before me; slender yet gigantic forms, black and sleek as animated tall hats; their huge round heads, poised on their sinuous stalk-like bodies, give them the appearance of black tulips. They go down, singing, to the edge of the lake. The music fills the wood with its vibration, though it is so soft that I can hardly hear it: it is like dim organ music. Some of them embark, but most remain. It is done slowly; this is no ordinary embarkation, but some ceremony. It is, in fact, a *hross* funeral. Those three with the grey muzzles whom they have helped into the boat are going to Meldilorn to die. For in that world, except for some few whom the *hnakra* gets, no one dies before his time. All live out the full span allotted to their kind, and a death with them is as predictable as a birth with us. The whole village has known that those three will die this year, this month; it was an easy guess that they would die even this week. And now they are off, to receive the last counsel of Oyarsa, to die, and to be by him 'unbodied.' The corpses, as corpses, will exist only for a few minutes: there are no coffins in Malacandra, no sextons, churchyards, or undertakers. The valley is solemn at their departure, but I see no signs of passionate grief. They do not doubt their immortality, and friends of the same generation are not torn apart. You leave the world, as you entered it, with the 'men of your own year.' Death is not preceded by dread nor followed by corruption.

The other scene is a nocturne. I see myself bathing with Hyoi in the warm lake. He laughs at my clumsy swimming; accustomed to a heavier world, I can hardly get enough of me under water to make any headway. And then I see the night sky. The greater part of it is very like ours, though the depths are blacker and the stars brighter; but something that no terrestrial analogy will enable you fully to picture is happening in the west. Imagine the Milky Way magnified — the Milky Way seen through our largest telescope on the clearest night. And then imagine this, not painted across the zenith, but rising like a constellation behind the mountain-tops — a dazzling necklace of lights brilliant as planets, slowly heaving itself up till it fills a fifth of the sky and now leaves a belt of blackness between itself and the horizon. It is too bright to look at for long, but it is only a preparation. Something else is coming. There is a glow like moonrise on the *harandra*. *Ahihra*! cries Hyoi, and other baying voices answer him from the darkness all about us. And now the true king of night is up, and now he is threading his way through that strange western galaxy and making its lights dim by comparison with his own. I turn my eyes away, for the little disk is far brighter than the Moon in her greatest splendour. The whole *handramit* is bathed in colourless light; I could count the stems of the forest on the far side of the lake; I see that my fingernails are broken and dirty. And now I guess what it is that I have seen — Jupiter rising beyond the Asteroids and forty million miles nearer than he has ever been to earthly eyes. But the Malacandrians would say ‘within the Asteroids,’ for they have an odd habit, sometimes, of turning the solar system inside out. They call the Asteroids the ‘dancers before the threshold of the Great Worlds.’ The Great Worlds are the planets, as we should say, ‘beyond’ or ‘outside’ the Asteroids. Glundandra (Jupiter) is the greatest of these and has some importance in Malacandrian thought which I cannot fathom. He is ‘the centre,’ ‘great Meldilorn,’ ‘throne’ and ‘feast.’ They are, of course, well aware that he is uninhabitable, at least by animals of the planetary type; and they certainly have no pagan idea of giving a local habitation to Maleldil. But somebody or something of great importance is connected with Jupiter; as usual ‘The *séroni* would know.’ But they never told me. Perhaps the best comment is in the author whom I mentioned to you: ‘For as it was well said of the great Africanus that he was never less alone than when alone, so, in our philosophy, no parts of this universal frame are less to be called solitarie than those which the vulgar esteem most solitarie, since the withdrawing of

men and beasts signifieth but the greater frequency of more excellent creatures.’

More of this when you come. I am trying to read every old book on the subject that I can hear of. Now that ‘Weston’ has shut the door, the way to the planets lies through the past; if there is to be any more space-travelling, it will have to be time-travelling as well . . .!

THE END

PERELANDRA (1943)



OR, VOYAGE TO VENUS

The second book in Lewis' Space Trilogy first appeared in 1943 and features the philologist Elwin Ransom some years after his return from Mars. He receives a new mission from Oyarsa, the angelic ruler of Mars, and summons the narrator, Lewis, to his country home, explaining that he must travel to Perelandra (Venus), where he is to tackle an attack launched by Earth's Black Archon (Satan). Ransom is transported in a casket-like vessel seemingly made of ice, containing only himself. He asks Lewis to blindfold him so the sunlight will not blind him once he travels beyond the Earth's atmosphere. He does not wear any clothes on the journey as Oyarsa tells him clothes are unnecessary on Venus. He returns to Earth over a year later and is met by Lewis and another friend: the remainder of the story is told from Ransom's point of view, with Lewis acting as interlocutor and occasional commentator.

Perelandra was published a year after Lewis' *A Preface to Paradise Lost* and deals with many of the same issues: the value of hierarchy, the dullness of Satan and the nature of unfallen sexuality. To an extent, it can be viewed as a commentary on Milton's poem, though a commentary that is intelligible to a reader ignorant of the original.

Lewis' description of Perelandra's environment and rotation period is, of course, inconsistent with the actual conditions on Venus, but astronomical observation at the time of writing of the novel had not yet positively determined this to be the case. A Venus largely or wholly covered by a worldwide ocean was a common theme in science fiction works of the time — a logical, though eventually proven erroneous, inference from the planet's thick cloud cover.



The first edition

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AT

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PREFACE

This story can be read by itself but is also a sequel to *Out of the Silent Planet* in which some account was given of Ransom's adventures in Mars — or, as its inhabitants call it, *Malacandra*. All the human characters in this book are purely fictitious and none of them is allegorical.

C. S. L.

ONE

As I left the railway station at Worchester and set out on the three-mile walk to Ransom's cottage, I reflected that no one on that platform could possibly guess the truth about the man I was going to visit. The flat heath which spread out before me (for the village lies all behind and to the north of the station) looked an ordinary heath. The gloomy five-o'clock sky was such as you might see on any autumn afternoon. The few houses and the clumps of red or yellowish trees were in no way remarkable. Who could imagine that a little farther on in that quiet landscape I should meet and shake by the hand a man who had lived and eaten and drunk in a world forty million miles distant from London, who had seen this Earth from where it looks like a mere point of green fire, and who had spoken face to face with a creature whose life began before our own planet was inhabitable?

For Ransom had met other things in Mars besides the Martians. He had met the creatures called *eldila*, and specially that great eldil who is the ruler of Mars or, in their speech, the *Oyarsa* of *Malacandra*. The eldila are very different from any planetary creatures. Their physical organism, if organism it can be called, is quite unlike either the human or the Martian. They do not eat, breed, breathe, or suffer natural death, and to that extent resemble thinking minerals more than they resemble anything we should recognise as an animal. Though they appear on planets and may even seem to our senses to be sometimes resident in them, the precise spatial location of an eldil at any moment presents great problems. They themselves regard space (or "Deep Heaven") as their true habitat, and the planets are to them not closed worlds but merely moving points — perhaps even interruptions — in what we know as the Solar System and they as the Field of Arbol.

At present I was going to see Ransom in answer to a wire which had said "Come down Thursday if possible. Business." I guessed what sort of business he meant, and that was why I kept on telling myself that it would be perfectly delightful to spend a night with Ransom and also kept on feeling that I was not enjoying the prospect as much as I ought to. It was the eldila that were my trouble. I could just get used to the fact that Ransom had been to Mars . . . but to have met an eldil, to have spoken with something whose life appeared to be practically unending. . . . Even the journey to Mars was bad enough. A man who has been in another world does not come back unchanged. One can't put the difference into words. When the man is

a friend it may become painful: the old footing is not easy to recover. But much worse was my growing conviction that, since his return, the eldila were not leaving him alone. Little things in his conversation, little mannerisms, accidental allusions which he made and then drew back with an awkward apology, all suggested that he was keeping strange company; that there were — well, Visitors — at that cottage.

As I plodded along the empty, unfenced road which runs across the middle of Worchester Common I tried to dispel my growing sense of *malaise* by analysing it. What, after all, was I afraid of? The moment I had put this question I regretted it. I was shocked to find that I had mentally used the word "afraid." Up till then I had tried to pretend that I was feeling only distaste, or embarrassment, or even boredom. But the mere word *afraid* had let the cat out of the bag. I realised now that my emotion was neither more, nor less, nor other, than Fear. And I realised that I was afraid of two things — afraid that sooner or later I myself might meet an eldil, and afraid that I might get "drawn in." I suppose every one knows this fear of getting "drawn in" — the moment at which a man realises that what had seemed mere speculations are on the point of landing him in the Communist Party or the Christian Church — the sense that a door has just slammed and left him on the inside. The thing was such sheer bad luck. Ransom himself had been taken to Mars (or Malacandra) against his will and almost by accident, and I had become connected with his affair by another accident. Yet here we were both getting more and more involved in what I could only describe as inter-planetary politics. As to my intense wish never to come into contact with the eldila myself, I am not sure whether I can make you understand it. It was something more than a prudent desire to avoid creatures alien in kind, very powerful, and very intelligent. The truth was that all I heard about them served to connect two things which one's mind tends to keep separate, and that connecting gave one a sort of shock. We tend to think about non-human intelligences in two distinct categories which we label "scientific" and "supernatural" respectively. We think, in one mood, of Mr. Wells' Martians (very unlike the real Malacandrians, by the bye), or his Selenites. In quite a different mood we let our minds loose on the possibility of angels, ghosts, fairies, and the like. But the very moment we are compelled to recognise a creature in either class as *real* the distinction begins to get blurred: and when it is a creature like an eldil the distinction vanishes altogether. These things were not animals — to that

extent one had to classify them with the second group; but they had some kind of material vehicle whose presence could (in principle) be scientifically verified. To that extent they belonged to the first group. The distinction between natural and supernatural, in fact, broke down; and when it had done so, one realised how great a comfort it had been — how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us by dividing it into two halves and encouraging the mind never to think of both in the same context. What price we may have paid for this comfort in the way of false security and accepted confusion of thought is another matter.

"This is a long, dreary road," I thought to myself. "Thank goodness I haven't anything to carry." And then, with a start of realisation, I remembered that I ought to be carrying a pack, containing my things for the night. I swore to myself. I must have left the thing in the train. Will you believe me when I say that my immediate impulse was to turn back to the station and "do something about it"? Of course there was nothing to be done which could not equally well be done by ringing up from the cottage. That train, with my pack in it, must by this time be miles away.

I realise that now as clearly as you do. But at the moment it seemed perfectly obvious that I must retrace my steps, and I had indeed begun to do so before reason or conscience awoke and set me once more plodding forwards. In doing this I discovered more clearly than before how very little I wanted to do it. It was such hard work that I felt as if I were walking against a headwind; but in fact it was one of those still, dead evenings when no twig stirs, and beginning to be a little foggy.

The farther I went the more impossible I found it to think about anything except these eldila. What, after all, did Ransom really know about them? By his own account the sorts which he had met did not usually visit our own planet — or had only begun to do so since his return from Mars, We had eldila of our own, he said, Tellurian eldils, but they were of a different kind and mostly hostile to man. That, in fact, was why our world was cut off from communication with the other planets. He described us as being in a state of siege, as being, in fact, an enemy-occupied territory, held down by eldils who were at war both with us and with the eldils of "Deep Heaven," or "space." Like the bacteria on the microscopic level, so these co-inhabiting pests on the macroscopic permeate our whole life invisibly and are the real explanation of that fatal bent which is the main lesson of

history. If all this were true, then, of course, we should welcome the fact that eldila of a better kind had at last broken the frontier (it is, they say, at the Moon's orbit) and were beginning to visit us. Always assuming that Ransom's account was the correct one.

A nasty idea occurred to me. Why should not Ransom be a dupe? If something from outer space were trying to invade our planet, what better smoke-screen could it put up than this very story of Ransom's? Was there the slightest evidence, after all, for the existence of the supposed maleficent eldils on this earth? How if my friend were the unwitting bridge, the Trojan Horse, whereby some possible invader were effecting its landing on Tellus? And then once more, just as when I had discovered that I had no pack, the impulse to go no farther returned to me. "Go back, go back," it whispered to me, "send him a wire, tell him you were ill, say you'll come some other time — anything." The strength of the feeling astonished me. I stood still for a few moments telling myself not to be a fool, and when I finally resumed my walk I was wondering whether this might be the beginning of a nervous breakdown. No sooner had this idea occurred to me than it also became a new reason for not visiting Ransom. Obviously, I wasn't fit for any such jumpy "business" as his telegram almost certainly referred to. I wasn't even fit to spend an ordinary week-end away from home. My only sensible course was to turn back at once and get safe home, before I lost my memory or became hysterical, and to put myself in the hands of a doctor. It was sheer madness to go on.

I was now coming to the end of the heath and going down a small hill, with a copse on my left and some apparently deserted industrial buildings on my right. At the bottom the evening mist was partly thick. "They call it a Breakdown *at first*," I thought. Wasn't there some mental disease in which quite ordinary objects looked to the patient unbelievably ominous? . . . looked, in fact, just as that abandoned factory looks to me now? Great bulbous shapes of cement, strange brickwork bogeys, glowered at me over dry scrubby grass pock-marked with grey pools and intersected with the remains of a light railway. I was reminded of things which Ransom had seen in that other world: only there, they were people. Long spindle-like giants whom he called Sorns. What made it worse was that he regarded them as good people — very much nicer, in fact, than our own race. He was in league with them! How did I know he was even a dupe? He might be something worse . . . and again I came to a standstill.

The reader, not knowing Ransom, will not understand how contrary to all reason this idea was. The rational part of my mind, even at that moment, knew perfectly well that even if the whole universe were crazy and hostile, Ransom was sane and wholesome and honest. And this part of my mind in the end sent me forward — but with a reluctance and a difficulty I can hardly put into words. What enabled me to go on was the knowledge (deep down inside me) that I was getting nearer at every stride to the one friend: but I *felt* that I was getting nearer to the one enemy — the traitor, the sorcerer, the man in league with "them" . . . walking into the trap with my eyes open, like a fool. "They call it a breakdown at first," said my mind, "and send you to a nursing home; later on they move you to an asylum."

I was past the dead factory now, down in the fog, where it was very cold. Then came a moment — the first one — of absolute terror and I had to bite my lip to keep myself from screaming. It was only a cat that had run across the road, but I found myself completely unnerved. "Soon you will really be screaming," said my inner tormentor, "running round and round, screaming, and you won't be able to stop it."

There was a little empty house by the side of the road, with most of the windows boarded up and one staring like the eye of a dead fish. Please understand that at ordinary times the idea of a "haunted house" means no more to me than it does to you. No more; but also, no less. At that moment it was nothing so definite as the thought of a ghost that came to me. It was just the *word* "haunted." "Haunted" . . . "haunting" . . . what a quality there is in that first syllable! Would not a child who had never heard the word before and did not know its meaning shudder at the mere sound if, as the day was closing in, it heard one of its elders say to another "This house is haunted"?

At last I came to the cross-roads by the little Wesleyan chapel where I had to turn to the left under the beech trees. I ought to be seeing the lights from Ransom's windows by now — or was it past black-out time? My watch had stopped, and I didn't know. It was dark enough but that might be due to the fog and the trees. It wasn't the dark I was afraid of, you understand. We have all known times when inanimate objects seemed to have almost a facial expression, and it was the expression of this bit of road which I did not like. "It's not true," said my mind, "that people who are really going mad never think they're going mad." Suppose that real insanity had chosen this place in which to begin? In that case, of course, the black

enmity of those dripping trees — their horrible expectancy — would be a hallucination. But that did not make it any better. To think that the spectre you see is an illusion does not rob him of his terrors: it simply adds the further terror of madness itself — and then on top of that the horrible surmise that those whom the rest call mad have, all along, been the only people who see the world as it really is.

This was upon me now. I staggered on into the cold and the darkness, already half convinced that I must be entering what is called Madness. But each moment my opinion about sanity changed. Had it ever been more than a convention — a comfortable set of blinkers, an agreed mode of wishful thinking, which excluded from our view the full strangeness and malevolence of the universe we are compelled to inhabit? The things I had begun to know during the last few months of my acquaintance with Ransom already amounted to more than "sanity" would admit; but I had come much too far to dismiss them as unreal. I doubted his interpretation, or his good faith. I did not doubt the existence of the things he had met in Mars — the Pfifltriggi, the Hrossa, and the Sorns — nor of these interplanetary eldila. I did not even doubt the reality of that mysterious being whom the eldila call Maleldil and to whom they appear to give a total obedience such as no Tellurian dictator can command. I knew what Ransom supposed Maleldil to be.

Surely that was the cottage. It was very well blacked-out. A childish, whining thought arose on my mind: why was he not out at the gate to welcome me? An even more childish thought followed it. Perhaps he *was* in the garden waiting for me, hiding. Perhaps he would jump on me from behind. Perhaps I should see a figure that looked like Ransom standing with its back to me and when I spoke to it, it would turn round and show a face that was not human at all. . . .

I have naturally no wish to enlarge on this phase of my story. The state of mind I was in was one which I look back on with humiliation. I would have passed it over if I did not think that some account of it was necessary for a full understanding of what follows — and, perhaps, of some other things as well. At all events, I *can't* really describe how I reached the front door of the cottage. Somehow or other, despite the loathing and dismay that pulled me back and a sort of invisible wall of resistance that met me in the face, fighting for each step, and almost shrieking as a harmless spray of the hedge touched my face, I managed to get through the gate and up the little path.

And there I was, drumming on the door and wringing the handle and shouting to him to let me in as if my life depended on it.

There was no reply — not a sound except the echo of the sounds I had been making myself. There was only something white fluttering on the knocker. I guessed, of course, that it was a note. In striking a match to read it by, I discovered how very shaky my hands had become; and when the match went out I realised how dark the evening had grown. After several attempts I read the thing. “Sorry. Had to go up to Cambridge. Shan’t be back till the late train. Eatables in larder and bed made up in your usual room. Don’t wait supper for me unless you feel like it — E. R.” And immediately the impulse to retreat, which had already assailed me several times, leaped upon me with a sort of demoniac violence. Here was my retreat left open, positively inviting me. Now was my chance. If anyone expected me to go into that house and sit there alone for several hours, they were mistaken! But then, as the thought of the return journey began to take shape in my mind, I faltered. The idea of setting out to traverse the avenue of beech trees again (it was really dark now) with this house behind me (one had the absurd feeling that it could follow one) was not attractive. And then, I hope, something better came into my mind — some rag of sanity and some reluctance to let Ransom down. At least I could try the door to see if it were really unlocked. I did. And it was. Next moment, I hardly know how, I found myself inside and let it slam behind me.

It was quite dark, and warm. I groped a few paces forward, hit my shin violently against something, and fell. I sat still for a few seconds nursing my leg. I thought I knew the layout of Ransom’s hall-sitting-room pretty well and couldn’t imagine what I had blundered into. Presently I groped in my pocket, got out my matches, and tried to strike a light. The head of the match flew off. I stamped on it and sniffed to make sure it was not smouldering on the carpet. As soon as I sniffed I became aware of a strange smell in the room. I could not for the life of me make out what it was. It had an unlikeness to ordinary domestic smells as great as that of some chemicals, but it was not a chemical kind of smell at all. Then I struck another match. It flickered and went out almost at once — not unnaturally, since I was sitting on the door-mat and there are few front doors even in better built houses than Ransom’s country cottage which do not admit a draught. I had seen nothing by it except the palm of my own hand hollowed in an attempt to guard the flame. Obviously I must get away from the door.

I rose gingerly and felt my way forward. I came at once to an obstacle — something smooth and very cold that rose a little higher than my knees. As I touched it I realised that it was the source of the smell. I groped my way along this to the left and finally came to the end of it. It seemed to present several surfaces and I couldn't picture the shape. It was not a table, for it had no top. One's hand groped along the rim of a kind of low wall — the thumb on the outside and the fingers down inside the enclosed space. If it had felt like wood I should have supposed it to be a large packing-case. But it was not wood. I thought for a moment that it was wet, but soon decided that I was mistaking coldness for moisture. When I reached the end of it I struck my third match.

I saw something white and semi-transparent — rather like ice. A great big thing, very long: a kind of box, an open box: and of a disquieting shape which I did not immediately recognise. It was big enough to put a man into. Then I took a step back, lifting the lighted match higher to get a more comprehensive view, and instantly tripped over something behind me. I found myself sprawling in darkness, not on the carpet, but on more of the cold substance with the odd smell. How many of the infernal things were there?

I was just preparing to rise again and hunt systematically round the room for a candle when I heard Ransom's name pronounced; and almost, but not quite, simultaneously I saw the thing I had feared so long to see. I heard Ransom's name pronounced: but I should not like to say I heard a voice pronounce it. The sound was quite astonishingly unlike a voice. It was perfectly articulate: it was even, I suppose, rather beautiful. But it was, if you understand me, inorganic. We feel the difference between animal voices (including those of the human animal) and all other noises pretty clearly, I fancy, though it is hard to define. Blood and lungs and the warm, moist cavity of the mouth are somehow indicated in every Voice. Here they were not. The two syllables sounded more as if they were played on an instrument than as if they were spoken: and yet they did not sound mechanical either. A machine is something we make out of natural materials; this was more as if rock or crystal or light had spoken of itself. And it went through me from chest to groin like the thrill that goes through you when you think you have lost your hold while climbing a cliff.

That was what I heard. What I saw was simply a very faint rod or pillar of light. I don't think it made a circle of light either on the floor or the

ceiling, but I am not sure of this. It certainly had very little power of illuminating its surroundings. So far, all is plain sailing. But it had two other characteristics which are less easy to grasp. One was its colour. Since I saw the thing I must obviously have seen it either white or coloured; but no efforts of my memory can conjure up the faintest image of what that colour was. I try blue, and gold, and violet, and red, but none of them will fit. How it is possible to have a visual experience which immediately and ever after becomes impossible to remember, I do not attempt to explain. The other was its angle. It was not at right angles to the floor. But as soon as I have said this, I hasten to add that this way of putting it is a later reconstruction. What one actually felt at the moment was that the column of light was vertical but the floor was not horizontal — the whole room seemed to have heeled over as if it were on board ship. The impression, however produced, was that this creature had reference to some horizontal, to some whole system of directions, based outside the Earth, and that its mere presence imposed that alien system on me and abolished the terrestrial horizontal.

I had no doubt at all that I was seeing an eldil, and little doubt that I was seeing the archon of Mars, the Oyarsa of Malacandra. And now that the thing had happened I was no longer in a condition of abject panic. My sensations were, it is true, in some ways very unpleasant. The fact that it was quite obviously not organic — the knowledge that intelligence was somehow located in this homogeneous cylinder of light but not related to it as our consciousness is related to our brains and nerves — was profoundly disturbing. It would not fit into our categories. The response which we ordinarily make to a living creature and that which we make to an inanimate object were here both equally inappropriate. On the other hand, all those doubts which I had felt before I entered the cottage as to whether these creatures were friend or foe, and whether Ransom were a pioneer or a dupe, had for the moment vanished. My fear was now of another kind. I felt sure that the creature was what we call “good,” but I wasn’t sure whether I liked “goodness” so much as I had supposed. This is a very terrible experience. As long as what you are afraid of is something evil, you may still hope that the good may come to your rescue. But suppose you struggle through to the good and find that it also is dreadful? How if food itself turns out to be the very thing you can’t eat, and home the very place you can’t live, and your very comforter the person who makes you uncomfortable? Then, indeed, there is no rescue possible: the last card has been played. For a second or

two I was nearly in that condition. Here at last was a bit of that world from beyond the world, which I had always supposed that I loved and desired, breaking through and appearing to my senses: and I didn't like it, I wanted it to go away. I wanted every possible distance, gulf, curtain, blanket, and barrier to be placed between it and me. But I did not fall quite into the gulf. Oddly enough my very sense of helplessness saved me and steadied me. For now I was quite obviously "drawn in." The struggle was over. The next decision did not lie with me.

Then, like a noise from a different world, came the opening of the door and the sound of boots on the doormat, and I saw, silhouetted against the greyness of the night in the open doorway, a figure which I recognised as Ransom. The speaking which was not a voice came again out of the rod of light: and Ransom, instead of moving, stood still and answered it. Both speeches were in a strange polysyllabic language which I had not heard before. I make no attempt to excuse the feelings which awoke in me when I heard the unhuman sound addressing my friend and my friend answering it in the unhuman language. They are, in fact, inexcusable; but if you think they are improbable at such a juncture, I must tell you plainly that you have read neither history nor your own heart to much effect. They were feelings of resentment, horror, and jealousy. It was in my mind to shout out, "Leave your familiar alone, you damned magician, and attend to Me."

What I actually said was, "Oh, Ransom. Thank God you've come."

[Footnote 1] In the text I naturally keep to what I thought and felt at the time, since this alone is first-hand evidence: but there is obviously room for much further speculation about the form in which *eldila* appear to our senses. The only serious considerations of the problem so far are to be sought in the early seventeenth century. As a starting point for future investigation I recommend the following from Natvilcius (*De Aethereo et aerio Corpore*, Basel. 1627, II. xii.); *liquet simplicem flammam sensibus nostris subjectam non esse corpus proprie dictum angeli vel daemonis, sed potius aut illius corporis sensorium aut superficiem corporis in coelesti dispositione locorum supra cogitationes humanas existentis* ("It appears that the homogeneous flame perceived by our senses is not the body, properly so called, of an angel or daemon, but rather either the sensorium of that body or the surface of a body which exists after a manner beyond our conception in the celestial frame of spatial references"). By the "celestial frame of references" I take him to mean what we should now call "multi-

dimensional space.” Not, of course, that Natvilcius knew anything about multi-dimensional geometry, but that he had reached empirically what mathematics has since reached on theoretical grounds.

TWO

The door was slammed (for the second time that night) and after a moment's groping Ransom had found and lit a candle. I glanced quickly round and could see no one but ourselves. The most noticeable thing in the room was the big white object. I recognised the shape well enough this time. It was a large coffin-shaped casket, open. On the floor beside it lay its lid, and it was doubtless this that I had tripped over. Both were made of the same white material, like ice, but more cloudy and less shining.

"By Jove, I'm glad to see you," said Ransom, advancing and shaking hands with me. "I'd hoped to be able to meet you at the station, but everything has had to be arranged in such a hurry and I found at the last moment that I'd got to go up to Cambridge. I never intended to leave you to make *that* journey alone." Then, seeing, I suppose, that I was still staring at him rather stupidly, he added, "I say — you're *all right*, aren't you? You got through the barrage without any damage?"

"The barrage? — I don't understand."

"I was thinking you would have met some difficulties in getting here."

"Oh, *that*!" said I. "You mean it wasn't just my nerves? There really was something in the way?"

"Yes. They didn't want you to get here. I was afraid something of the sort might happen but there was no time to do anything about it. I was pretty sure you'd get through somehow."

"By *they* you mean the others — our own eldila?"

"Of course. They've got wind of what's on hand. . . ."

I interrupted him. "To tell you the truth, Ransom," I said, "I'm getting more worried every day about the whole business. It came into my head as I was on my way here — —"

"Oh, they'll put all sorts of things into your head if you let them," said Ransom lightly. "The best plan is to take no notice and keep straight on. Don't try to answer them. They like drawing you into an interminable argument."

"But, look here," said I. "This isn't child's play. Are you quite certain that this Dark Lord, this depraved Oyarsa of Tellus, really exists? Do you know for certain either that there are two sides, or which side is ours?"

He fixed me suddenly with one of his mild, but strangely formidable, glances.

"You are in *real* doubt about either, are you?" he asked.

"No," said I, after a pause, and felt rather ashamed.

"That's all right, then," said Ransom cheerfully. "Now let's get some supper and I'll explain as we go along."

"What's that coffin affair?" I asked as we moved into the kitchen.

"That is what I'm to travel in."

"Ransom!" I exclaimed. "He — it — the eldil — is not going to take you back to Malacandra?"

"Don't!" said he. "Oh, Lewis, you don't understand. Take me back to Malacandra? If only he would! I'd give anything I possess . . . just to look down one of those gorges again and see the blue, blue water winding in and out among the woods. Or to be up on top — to see a Sorn go gliding along the slopes. Or to be back there of an evening when Jupiter was rising, too bright to look at, and all the asteroids like a Milky Way, with each star in it as bright as Venus looks from Earth! And the smells! It is hardly ever out of my mind. You'd expect it to be worse at night when Malacandra is up and I can actually see it. But it isn't then that I get the real twinge. It's on hot summer days — looking up at the deep blue and that thinking that *in there*, millions of miles deep where I can never, never get back to it, there's a place I know, and flowers at that very moment growing over Meldilorn, and friends of mine, going about their business, who would welcome me back. No. No such luck. It's not Malacandra I'm being sent to. It's Perelandra."

"That's what we call Venus, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And you say you're being sent."

"Yes. If you remember, before I left Malacandra the Oyarsa hinted to me that my going there at all might be the beginning of a whole new phase in the life of the Solar System — the Field of Arbol. It might mean, he said, that the isolation of our world, the siege, was beginning to draw to an end."

"Yes. I remember."

"Well, it really does look as if something of the sort were afoot. For one thing, the two sides, as you call them, have begun to appear much more clearly, much less mixed, here on Earth, in our own human affairs — to show in something a little more like their true colours."

"I see that all right."

“The other thing is this. The black archon — our own bent Oyarsa — is meditating some sort of attack on Perelandra.”

“But is he at large like that in the Solar System? Can he get there?”

“That’s just the point. He can’t get there in his own person, in his own photosome or whatever we should call it. As you know, he was driven back within these bounds centuries before any human life existed on our planet. If he ventured to show himself outside the Moon’s orbit he’d be driven back again — by main force. That would be a different kind of war. You or I could contribute no more to it than a flea could contribute to the defence of Moscow. No. He must be attempting Perelandra in some different way.”

“And where do you come in?”

“Well — simply I’ve been ordered there.”

“By the — by Oyarsa, you mean?”

“No. The order comes from much higher up. They all do, you know, in the long run.”

“And what have you got to do when you get there?”

“I haven’t been told.”

“You are just part of the Oyarsa’s *entourage*?”

“Oh no. He isn’t going to be there. He is to transport me to Venus — to deliver me there. After that, as far as I know, I shall be alone.”

“But, look here, Ransom — I mean . . .” my voice trailed away.

“I know!” said he with one of his singularly disarming smiles. “You are feeling the absurdity of it. Dr. Elwin Ransom setting out single-handed to combat powers and principalities. You may even be wondering if I’ve got megalomania.”

“I didn’t mean that quite,” said I.

“Oh, but I think you did. At any rate that is what I have been feeling myself ever since the thing was sprung on me. But when you come to think of it, is it odder than what all of us have to do every day? When the Bible used that very expression about fighting with principalities and powers and depraved hyper-somatic beings at great heights (our translation is very misleading at that point, by the way) it meant that quite ordinary people were to do the fighting.”

“Oh, I dare say,” said I. “But that’s rather different. That refers to a moral conflict.”

Ransom threw back his head and laughed. “Oh, Lewis, Lewis,” he said, “you are inimitable, simply inimitable!”

“Say what you like, Ransom, there *is* a difference.”

“Yes. There is. But not a difference that makes it megalomania to think that any of us might have to fight either way. I’ll tell you how I look at it. Haven’t you noticed how in our own little war here on earth, there are different phases, and while any one phase is going on people get into the habit of thinking and behaving as if it was going to be permanent? But really the thing is changing under your hands all the time, and neither your assets nor your dangers this year are the same as the year before. Now your idea that ordinary people will never have to meet the Dark Eldila in any form except a psychological or moral form — as temptations or the like — is simply an idea that held good for a certain phase of the cosmic war: the phase of the great siege, the phase which gave to our planet its name of Thulcandra, the *silent* planet. But supposing that phase is passing? In the next phase it may be anyone’s job to meet them . . . well, in some quite different mode.”

“I see.”

“Don’t imagine I’ve been selected to go to Perelandra because I’m anyone in particular. One never can see, or not till long afterwards, why *any* one was selected for *any* job. And when one does, it is usually some reason that leaves no room for vanity. Certainly, it is never for what the man himself would have regarded as his chief qualifications. I rather fancy I am being sent because those two blackguards who kidnapped me and took me to Malacandra, did something which they never intended: namely, gave a human being a chance to learn that language.”

“What language do you mean?”

“*Hressa-Hlab*, of course. The language I learned in Malacandra.”

“But surely you don’t imagine they will speak the same language on Venus?”

“Didn’t I tell you about that?” said Ransom, leaning forward. We were now at table and had nearly finished our cold meat and beer and tea. “I’m surprised I didn’t, for I found out two or three months ago, and scientifically it is one of the most interesting things about the whole affair. It appears we were quite mistaken in thinking *Hressa-Hlab* the peculiar speech of Mars. It is really what may be called Old Solar, *Hlab-Eribol-ef-Cordi*.”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“I mean that there was originally a common speech for all rational creatures inhabiting the planets of our system: those that were ever

inhabited, I mean — what the eldils call the Low Worlds. Most of them, of course, have never been inhabited and never will be. At least not what we'd call inhabited. That original speech was lost on Thulcandra, our own world, when our whole tragedy took place. No human language now known in the world is descended from it."

"But what about the other two languages on Mars?"

"I admit I don't understand about them. One thing I do know, and I believe I could prove it on purely philological grounds. They are incomparably less ancient than *Hressa-Hlab*, specially *Surnibur*, the speech of the Sorns. I believe it could be shown that *Surnibur* is, by Malacandrian standards, quite a modern development. I doubt if its birth can be put further back than a date which would fall within our Cambrian Period."

"And you think you will find *Hressa-Hlab*, or Old Solar, spoken on Venus?"

"Yes. I shall arrive knowing the language. It saves a lot of trouble — though, as a philologist I find it rather disappointing."

"But you've no idea what you are to do, or what conditions you will find?"

"No idea at all what I'm to do. There are jobs, you know, where it is essential that one should *not* know too much beforehand . . . things one might have to say which one couldn't say effectively if one had prepared them. As to conditions, well, I don't know much. It will be warm: I'm to go naked. Our astronomers don't know anything about the surface of Perelandra at all. The outer layer of her atmosphere is too thick. The main problem, apparently, is whether she revolves on her own axis or not, and at what speed. There are two schools of thought. There's a man called Schiaparelli who thinks she revolves once on herself in the same time it takes her to go once round Arbol — I mean, the Sun. The other people think she revolves on her own axis once in every twenty-three hours. That's one of the things I shall find out."

"If Schiaparelli is right there'd be perpetual day on one side of her and perpetual night on the other?"

He nodded, musing. "It'd be a funny frontier," he said presently. "Just think of it. You'd come to a county of eternal twilight, getting colder and darker every mile you went. And then presently you wouldn't be able to go further because there'd be no more air. I wonder can you stand in the day, just on the right side of the frontier, and look *into* the night which you can

never reach? And perhaps see a star or two — the only place you *could* see them, for of course in the Day-Lands they would never be visible. . . . Of course if they have a scientific civilisation they may have diving-suits or things like submarines on wheels for going into the Night."

His eyes sparkled, and even I, who had been mainly thinking of how I should miss him and wondering what chances there were of my ever seeing him again, felt a vicarious thrill of wonder and of longing to know. Presently he spoke again.

"You haven't yet asked me where *you* come in," he said.

"Do you mean I'm to go too?" said I, with a thrill of exactly the opposite kind.

"Not at all. I mean you are to pack me up, and to stand by to unpack me when I return — if all goes well."

"Pack you? Oh, I'd forgotten about that coffin affair. Ransom, how on earth are you going to travel in that thing? What's the motive power? What about air — and food — and water? There's only just room for you to lie in it."

"The Oyarsa of Malacandra himself will be the motive power. He will simply move it to Venus. Don't ask me how. I have no idea what organs or instruments they use. But a creature who has kept a planet in its orbit for several billions of years will be able to manage a packing-case!"

"But what will you eat? How will you breathe?"

"He tells me I shall need to do neither. I shall be in some state of suspended animation, as far as I can make out. I can't understand him when he tries to describe it. But that's his affair."

"Do you feel quite happy about it?" said I, for a sort of horror was beginning once more to creep over me.

"If you mean, Does my reason accept the view that he will (accidents apart) deliver me safe on the surface of Perelandra? — the answer is Yes," said Ransom. "If you mean, Do my nerves and my imagination respond to this view? — I'm afraid the answer is No. One can believe in anæsthetics and yet feel in a panic when they actually put the mask over your face. I think I feel as a man who believes in the future life feels when he is taken out to face a firing party. Perhaps it's good practice."

"And I'm to pack you into that accursed thing?" said I.

"Yes," said Ransom. "That's the first step. We must get out into the garden as soon as the sun is up and point it so that there are no trees or

buildings in the way. Across the cabbage bed will do. Then I get in — with a bandage across my eyes, for those walls won't keep out all the sunlight once I'm beyond the air — and you screw me down. After that, I think you'll just see it glide off."

"And then?"

"Well, then comes the difficult part. You must hold yourself in readiness to come down here again the moment you are summoned, to take off the lid and let me out when I return."

"When do you expect to return?"

"Nobody can say. Six months — a year — twenty years. That's the trouble. I'm afraid I'm laying a pretty heavy burden on you."

"I might be dead."

"I know. I'm afraid part of your burden is to select a successor: at once, too. There are four or five people whom we can trust."

"What will the summons be?"

"Oyarsa will give it. It won't be mistakable for anything else. You needn't bother about that side of it. One other point. I've no particular reason to suppose I shall come back wounded. But just in case — if you can find a doctor whom we can let into the secret, it might be just as well to bring him with you when you come down to let me out."

"Would Humphrey do?"

"The very man. And now for some more personal matters. I've had to leave you out of my will, and I'd like you to know why."

"My dear chap, I never thought about your will till this moment."

"Of course not. But I'd like to have left you something. The reason I haven't, is this. I'm going to disappear. It is possible I may not come back. It's just conceivable there might be a murder trial, and if so one can't be too careful. I mean, for your sake. And now for one or two other private arrangements."

We laid our heads together and for a long time we talked about those matters which one usually discusses with relatives and not with friends. I got to know a lot more about Ransom than I had known before, and from the number of odd people whom he recommended to my care, "If ever I happened to be able to do anything," I came to realise the extent and intimacy of his charities. With every sentence the shadow of approaching separation and a kind of graveyard gloom began to settle more emphatically upon us. I found myself noticing and loving all sorts of little mannerisms

and expressions in him such as we notice always in a woman we love, but notice in a man only as the last hours of his leave run out or the date of the probably fatal operation draws near. I felt our nature's incurable incredulity; and could hardly believe that what was now so close, so tangible and (in a sense) so much at my command, would in a few hours be wholly inaccessible, an image — soon, even an elusive image — in my memory. And finally a sort of shyness fell between us because each knew what the other was feeling. It had got very cold.

"We must be going soon," said Ransom.

"Not till he — the Oyarsa — comes back," said I — though, indeed, now that the thing was so near I wished it to be over.

"He has never left us," said Ransom, "he has been in the cottage all the time."

"You mean he has been waiting in the next room all these hours?"

"Not waiting. They never have that experience. You and I are conscious of waiting, because we have a body that grows tired or restless, and therefore a sense of cumulative duration. Also we can distinguish duties and spare time and therefore have a conception of leisure. It is not like that with him. He has been here all this time, but you can no more call it *waiting* than you can call the whole of his existence *waiting*. You might as well say that a tree in a wood was waiting, or the sunlight waiting on the side of a hill." Ransom yawned. "I'm tired," he said, "and so are you. I shall sleep well in that coffin of mine. Come. Let us lug it out."

We went into the next room and I was made to stand before the featureless flame which did not wait but just was, and there, with Ransom as our interpreter, I was in some fashion presented and with my own tongue sworn in to this great business. Then we took down the black-out and let in the grey, comfortless morning. Between us we carried out the casket and the lid, so cold they seemed to burn our fingers. There was a heavy dew on the grass and my feet were soaked through at once. The eldil was with us, outside there, on the little lawn; hardly visible to my eyes at all in the daylight. Ransom showed me the clasps of the lid and how it was to be fastened on, and then there was some miserable hanging about, and then the final moment when he went back into the house and reappeared, naked; a tall, white, shivering, weary scarecrow of a man at that pale, raw hour. When he had got into the hideous box he made me tie a thick black bandage round his eyes and head. Then he lay down. I had no thoughts of the planet

Venus now and no real belief that I should see him again. If I had dared I would have gone back on the whole scheme: but the other thing — the creature that did not wait — was there, and the fear of it was upon me. With feelings that have since often returned to me in nightmare I fastened the cold lid down on top of the living man and stood back. Next moment I was alone. I didn't see how it went. I went back indoors and was sick. A few hours later I shut up the cottage and returned to Oxford.

Then the months went past and grew to a year and a little more than a year, and we had raids and bad news and hopes deferred and all the earth became full of darkness and cruel habitations, till the night when Oyarsa came to me again. After that there was a journey in haste for Humphrey and me, standings in crowded corridors and waitings at small hours on windy platforms, and finally the moment when we stood in clear early sunlight in the little wilderness of deep weeds which Ransom's garden had now become and saw a black speck against the sunrise and then, almost silently, the casket had glided down between us. We flung ourselves upon it and had the lid off in about a minute and a half.

"Good God! All smashed to bits," I cried at my first glance of the interior.

"Wait a moment," said Humphrey. And as he spoke the figure in the coffin began to stir and then sat up, shaking off as it did so a mass of red things which had covered its head and shoulders and which I had momentarily mistaken for ruin and blood. As they streamed off him and were caught in the wind I perceived them to be flowers. He blinked for a second or so, then called us by our names, gave each of us a hand, and stepped out on the grass.

"How are you both?" he said. "You're looking rather knocked up."

I was silent for a moment, astonished at the form which had risen from that narrow house — almost a new Ransom, glowing with health and rounded with muscle and seemingly ten years younger. In the old days he had been beginning to show a few grey hairs; but now the beard which swept his chest was pure gold.

"Hullo, you've cut your foot," said Humphrey: and I saw now that Ransom was bleeding from the heel.

"Ugh, it's cold down here," said Ransom. "I hope you've got the boiler going and some hot water — and some clothes."

“Yes,” said I, as we followed him into the house. “Humphrey thought of all that. I’m afraid I shouldn’t have.”

Ransom was now in the bathroom, with the door open, veiled in clouds of steam, and Humphrey and I were talking to him from the landing. Our questions were more numerous than he could answer.

“That idea of Schiaparelli’s is all wrong,” he shouted. “They have an ordinary day and night there,” and “No, my heel doesn’t hurt — or, at least, it’s only just begun to,” and “Thanks, any old clothes. Leave them on the chair” and “No thanks. I don’t somehow feel like bacon or eggs or anything of that kind. No fruit, you say? Oh well, no matter. Bread or porridge or something” and “I’ll be down in five minutes now.”

He kept on asking if we were really all right and seemed to think we looked ill. I went down to get the breakfast, and Humphrey said he would stay and examine and dress the cut on Ransom’s heel. When he rejoined me I was looking at one of the red petals which had come in the casket.

“That’s rather a beautiful flower,” said I, handing it to him.

“Yes,” said Humphrey, studying it with the hands and eyes of a scientist. “What extraordinary delicacy! It makes an English violet seem like a coarse weed.”

“Let’s put some of them in water.”

“Not much good. Look — it’s withered already.”

“How do you think he is?”

“Tip-top in general. But I don’t quite like that heel. He says the hæmorrhage has been going on for a long time.”

Ransom joined us, fully dressed, and I poured out the tea. And all that day and far into the night he told us the story that follows.

THREE

What it is like to travel in a celestial coffin was a thing that Ransom never described. He said he couldn't. But odd hints about that journey have come out at one time or another when he was talking of quite different matters.

According to his own account he was not what we call conscious, and yet at the same time the experience was a very positive one with a quality of its own. On one occasion, someone had been talking about "seeing life" in the popular sense of knocking about the world and getting to know people, and B. who was present (and who is an Anthroposophist) said something I can't quite remember about "seeing life" in a very different sense. I think he was referring to some system of meditation which claimed to make "the form of Life itself" visible to the inner eye. At any rate Ransom let himself in for a long cross-examination by failing to conceal the fact that he attached some very definite idea to this. He even went so far — under extreme pressure — as to say that life appeared to him, in that condition, as a "coloured shape." Asked "what colour," he gave a curious look and could only say "what colours! yes, what colours!" But then he spoiled it all by adding, "of course it wasn't colour at all really. I mean, not what we'd call colour," and shutting up completely for the rest of the evening. Another hint came out when a sceptical friend of ours called McPhee was arguing against the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the human body. I was his victim at the moment and he was pressing on me in his Scots way with such questions as "So you think you're going to have guts and palate for ever in a world where there'll be no eating, and genital organs in a world without copulation? Man, ye'll have a grand time of it!" when Ransom suddenly burst out with great excitement, "Oh, don't you see, you ass, that there's a difference between a trans-sensuous life and a non-sensuous life?" That, of course, directed McPhee's fire to him. What emerged was that in Ransom's opinion the present functions and appetites of the body would disappear, not because they were atrophied but because they were, as he said "engulfed." He used the word "trans-sexual" I remember and began to hunt about for some similar words to apply to eating (after rejecting "trans-gastronomic"), and since he was not the only philologist present, that diverted the conversation into different channels. But I am pretty sure he was thinking of something he had experienced on his voyage to Venus. But perhaps the

most mysterious thing he ever said about it was this. I was questioning him on the subject — which he doesn't often allow — and had incautiously said, "Of course I realise it's all rather too vague for you to put into words," when he took me up rather sharply, for such a patient man, by saying, "On the contrary, it is words that are vague. The reason why the thing can't be expressed is that it's too *definite* for language." And that is about all I can tell you of his journey. One thing is certain, that he came back from Venus even more changed than he had come back from Mars. But of course that may have been because of what happened to him after his landing.

To that landing, as Ransom narrated it to me, I will now proceed. He seems to have been awakened (if that is the right word) from his indescribable celestial state by the sensation of falling — in other words, when he was near enough to Venus to feel Venus as something in the downward direction. The next thing he noticed was that he was very warm on one side and very cold on the other, though neither sensation was so extreme as to be really painful. Anyway, both were soon swallowed up in the prodigious white light from below which began to penetrate through the semi-opaque walls of the casket. This steadily increased and became distressing in spite of the fact that his eyes were protected. There is no doubt this was the *albedo*, the outer veil of very dense atmosphere with which Venus is surrounded and which reflects the sun's rays with intense power. For some obscure reason he was not conscious, as he had been on his approach to Mars, of his own rapidly increasing weight. When the white light was just about to become unbearable, it disappeared altogether, and very soon after the cold on his left side and the heat on his right began to decrease and to be replaced by an equable warmth. I take it he was now in the outer layer of the Perelandrian atmosphere — at first in a pale, and later in a tinted, twilight. The prevailing colour, as far as he could see through the sides of the casket, was golden or coppery. By this time he must have been very near the surface of the planet, with the length of the casket at right angles to that surface — falling feet downwards like a man in a lift. The sensation of falling — helpless as he was and unable to move his arms — became frightening. Then suddenly there came a great green darkness, an unidentifiable noise — the first message from the new world — and a marked drop in temperature. He seemed now to have assumed a horizontal position and also, to his great surprise, to be moving not downwards but upwards; though, at the moment, he judged this to be an illusion. All this

time he must have been making faint, unconscious efforts to move his limbs, for now he suddenly found that the sides of his prison-house yielded to pressure. He *was* moving his limbs, encumbered with some viscous substance. Where was the casket? His sensations were very confused. Sometimes he seemed to be falling, sometimes to be soaring upwards, and then again to be moving in the horizontal plane. The viscous substance was white. There seemed to be less of it every moment . . . white, cloudy stuff just like the casket, only not solid. With a horrible shock he realised that it *was* the casket, the casket melting, dissolving away, giving place to an indescribable confusion of colour — a rich, varied world in which nothing, for the moment, seemed palpable. There was no casket now. He was turned out — deposited — solitary. He was in Perelandra.

His first impression was of nothing more definite than of something slanted — as though he were looking at a photograph which had been taken when the camera was not held level. And even this lasted only for an instant. The slant was replaced by a different slant; then two slants rushed together and made a peak, and the peak flattened suddenly into a horizontal line, and the horizontal line tilted and became the edge of a vast gleaming slope which rushed furiously towards him. At the same moment he felt that he was being lifted. Up and up he soared till it seemed as if he must reach the burning dome of gold that hung above him instead of a sky. Then he was at a summit; but almost before his glance had taken in a huge valley that yawned beneath him — shining green like glass and marbled with streaks of scummy white — he was rushing down into that valley at perhaps thirty miles an hour. And now he realised that there was a delicious coolness over every part of him except his head, that his feet rested on nothing, and that he had for some time been performing unconsciously the actions of a swimmer. He was riding the foamless swell of an ocean, fresh and cool after the fierce temperatures of Heaven, but warm by earthly standards — as warm as a shallow bay with sandy bottom in a sub-tropical climate. As he rushed smoothly up the great convex hillside of the next wave he got a mouthful of the water. It was hardly at all flavoured with salt; it was drinkable — like fresh water and only, by an infinitesimal degree, less insipid. Though he had not been aware of thirst till now, his drink gave him a quite astonishing pleasure. It was almost like meeting Pleasure itself for the first time. He buried his flushed face in the green translucence, and when he withdrew it, found himself once more on the top of a wave.

There was no land in sight. The sky was pure, flat gold like the background of a medieval picture. It looked very distant — as far off as a cirrhus cloud looks from earth. The ocean was gold too, in the offing, flecked with innumerable shadows. The nearer waves, though golden where their summits caught the light, were green on their slopes: first emerald, and lower down a lustrous bottle green, deepening to blue where they passed beneath the shadow of other waves.

All this he saw in a flash; then he was speeding down once more into the trough. He had somehow turned on his back. He saw the golden roof of that world quivering with a rapid variation of paler lights as a ceiling quivers at the reflected sunlight from the bath-water when you step into your bath on a summer morning. He guessed that this was the reflection of the waves wherein he swam. It is a phenomenon observable three days out of five in the planet of love. The queen of those seas views herself continually in a celestial mirror.

Up again to the crest, and still no sight of land. Something that looked like clouds — or could it be ships? — far away on his left. Then down, down, down — he thought he would never reach the end of it . . . this time he noticed how dim the light was. Such tepid revelry in water — such glorious bathing, as one would have called it on earth, suggested as its natural accompaniment a blazing sun. But here there was no such thing. The water gleamed, the sky burned with gold, but all was rich and dim, and his eyes fed upon it undazzled and unaching. The very names of green and gold, which he used perforce in describing the scene, are too harsh for the tenderness, the muted iridescence, of that warm, maternal, delicately gorgeous world. It was mild to look upon as evening, warm like summer noon, gentle and winning like early dawn. It was altogether pleasurable. He sighed.

There was a wave ahead of him now so high that it was dreadful. We speak idly in our own world of seas mountain high when they are not much more than mast high. But this was the real thing. If the huge shape had been a hill of land and not of water he might have spent a whole forenoon or longer walking the slope before he reached the summit. It gathered him into itself and hurled him up to that elevation in a matter of seconds. But before he reached the top, he almost cried out in terror. For this wave had not a smooth top like the others. A horrible crest appeared; jagged and billowy and fantastic shapes, unnatural, even unliquid, in appearance, sprouted from

the ridge. Rocks? Foam? Beasts? The question hardly had time to flash through his mind before the thing was upon him. Involuntarily he shut his eyes. Then he found himself once more rushing downhill. Whatever it was, it had gone past him. But it had been something. He had been struck in the face. Dabbing with his hands he found no blood. He had been struck by something soft which did him no harm but merely stung like a lash because of the speed at which he met it. He turned round on his back again — already, as he did so, soaring thousands of feet aloft to the high water of the next ridge. Far down below him in a vast, momentary valley he saw the thing that had missed him. It was an irregularly shaped object with many curves and re-entrants. It was variegated in colour like a patch-work quilt — flame-colour, ultramarine, crimson, orange, gamboge, and violet. He could not say more about it for the whole glimpse lasted so short a time. Whatever the thing was, it was floating, for it rushed up the slope of the opposite wave and over the summit and out of sight. It sat to the water like a skin, curving as the water curved. It took the wave's shape at the top, so that for a moment half of it was already out of sight beyond the ridge and the other half still lying on the hither slope. It behaved rather like a mat of weeds on a river — a mat of weeds that takes on every contour of the little ripples you make by rowing past it — but on a very different scale. This thing might have been thirty acres or more in area.

Words are slow. You must not lose sight of the fact that his whole life on Venus up till now had lasted less than five minutes. He was not in the least tired, and not yet seriously alarmed as to his power of surviving in such a world. He had confidence in those who had sent him there, and for the meantime the coolness of the water and the freedom of his limbs were still a novelty and a delight; but more than all these was something else at which I have already hinted and which can hardly be put into words — the strange sense of excessive pleasure which seemed somehow to be communicated to him through all his senses at once. I use the word "excessive" because Ransom himself could only describe it by saying that for his first few days on Perelandra he was haunted, not by a feeling of guilt, but by surprise that he had no such feeling. There was an exuberance or prodigality of sweetness about the mere act of living which our race finds it difficult not to associate with forbidden and extravagant actions. Yet it is a violent world too. Hardly had he lost sight of the floating object when his eyes were stabbed by an unendurable light. A grading, blue-to-violet illumination

made the golden sky seem dark by comparison and in a moment of time revealed more of the new planet than he had yet seen. He saw the waste of waves spread illimitably before him, and far, far away, at the very end of the world, against the sky, a single smooth column of ghastly green standing up, the one thing fixed and vertical in this universe of shifting slopes. Then the rich twilight rushed back (now seeming almost darkness) and he heard thunder. But it has a different *timbre* from terrestrial thunder, more resonance, and even, when distant, a kind of tinkling. It is the laugh, rather than the roar, of heaven. Another flash followed, and another, and then the storm was all about him. Enormous purple clouds came driving between him and the golden sky, and with no preliminary drops a rain such as he had never experienced began to fall. There were no lines in it; the water above him seemed only less continuous than the sea, and he found it difficult to breathe. The flashes were incessant. In between them, when he looked in any direction except that of the clouds, he saw a completely changed world. It was like being at the centre of a rainbow, or in a cloud of multi-coloured steam. The water which now filled the air was turning sea and sky into a bedlam of flaming and writhing transparencies. He was dazzled and now for the first time a little frightened. In the flashes he saw, as before, only the endless sea and the still green column at the end of the world. No land anywhere — not the suggestion of a shore from one horizon to the other.

The thunder was ear-splitting and it was difficult to get enough air. All sorts of things seemed to be coming down in the rain — living things apparently. They looked like preternaturally airy and graceful frogs — sublimated frogs — and had the colour of dragon-flies, but he was in no plight to make careful observations. He was beginning to feel the first symptoms of exhaustion and was completely confused by the riot of colours in the atmosphere. How long this state of affairs lasted he could not say, but the next thing that he remembers noticing with any accuracy was that the swell was decreasing. He got the impression of being near the end of a range of water-mountains and looking down into lower country. For a long time he never reached this lower country; what had seemed, by comparison with the seas which he had met on his first arrival, to be calm water, always turned out to be only slightly smaller waves when he rushed down into them. There seemed to be a good many of the big floating objects about. And these, again, from some distance looked like an archipelago, but always, as he drew nearer and found the roughness of the water they were

riding, they became more like a fleet. But in the end there was no doubt that the swell was subsiding. The rain stopped. The waves were merely of Atlantic height. The rainbow colours grew fainter and more transparent and the golden sky first showed timidly through them and then established itself again from horizon to horizon. The waves grew smaller still. He began to breathe freely. But he was now really tired, and beginning to find leisure to be afraid.

One of the great patches of floating stuff was sidling down a wave not more than a few hundred yards away. He eyed it eagerly, wondering whether he could climb on to one of these things for rest. He strongly suspected that they would prove mere mats of weed, or the topmost branches of submarine forests, incapable of supporting him. But while he thought this, the particular one on which his eyes were fixed crept up a wave and came between him and the sky. It was not flat. From its tawny surface a whole series of feathery and billowy shapes arose, very unequal in height; they looked darkish against the dim glow of the golden roof. Then they all tilted one way as the thing which carried them curled over the crown of the water and dipped out of sight. But here was another, not thirty yards away and bearing down on him. He struck out towards it, noticing as he did so how sore and feeble his arms were and feeling his first thrill of true fear. As he approached it he saw that it ended in a fringe of undoubtedly vegetable matter; it trailed, in fact, a dark red skirt of tubes and strings and bladders. He grabbed at them and found he was not yet near enough. He began swimming desperately, for the thing was gliding past him at some ten miles an hour. He grabbed again and got a handful of whip-like red strings, but they pulled out of his hand and almost cut him. Then he thrust himself right in among them, snatching wildly straight before him. For one second he was in a kind of vegetable broth of gurgling tubes and exploding bladders; next moment his hands caught something firmer ahead, something almost like very soft wood. Then, with the breath nearly knocked out of him and a bruised knee, he found himself lying face downward on a resistant surface. He pulled himself an inch or so further. Yes — there was no doubt now; one did not go through; it was something one could lie on.

It seems that he must have remained lying on his face, doing nothing and thinking nothing for a very long time. When he next began to take any notice of his surroundings he was, at all events, well rested. His first discovery was that he lay on a dry surface, which on examination turned out

to consist of something very like heather, except for the colour which was coppery. Burrowing idly with his fingers he found something friable like dry soil, but very little of it, for almost at once he came upon a base of tough interlocked fibres. Then he rolled round on his back, and in doing so discovered the extreme resilience of the surface on which he lay. It was something much more than the pliancy of the heather-like vegetation, and felt more as if the whole floating island beneath that vegetation were a kind of mattress. He turned and looked "inland" — if that is the right word — and for one instant what he saw looked very like a country. He was looking up a long lonely valley with a copper-coloured floor bordered on each side by gentle slopes clothed in a kind of many-coloured forest. But even as he took this in, it became a long copper-coloured ridge with the forest sloping *down* on each side of it. Of course he ought to have been prepared for this, but he says that it gave him an almost sickening shock. The thing had looked, in that first glance, so like a real country that he had forgotten it was floating — an island if you like, with hills and valleys, but hills and valleys which changed places every minute so that only a cinematograph could make a contour map of it. And that is the nature of the floating islands of Perelandra. A photograph, omitting the colours and the perpetual variation of shape, would make them look deceptively like landscapes in our own world, but the reality is very different; for they are dry and fruitful like land but their only shape is the inconstant shape of the water beneath them. Yet the land-like appearance proved hard to resist. Although he had now grasped with his brain what was happening, Ransom had not yet grasped it with his muscles and nerves. He rose to take a few paces inland — and downhill, as it was at the moment of his rising — and immediately found himself flung down on his face, unhurt because of the softness of the weed. He scrambled to his feet — saw that he now had a steep slope to ascend — and fell a second time. A blessed relaxation of the strain in which he had been living since his arrival dissolved him into weak laughter. He rolled to and fro on the soft fragrant surface in a real schoolboy fit of the giggles.

This passed. And then for the next hour or two he was teaching himself to walk. It was much harder than getting your sea-legs on a ship, for whatever the sea is doing the deck of the ship remains a plane. But this was like learning to walk on water itself. It took him several hours to get a hundred yards away from the edge, or coast, of the floating island; and he was proud when he could go five paces without a fall, arms outstretched,

knees bent in readiness for sudden change of balance, his whole body swaying and tense like that of one who is learning to walk the tight-rope. Perhaps he would have learned more quickly if his falls had not been so soft, if it had not been so pleasant, having fallen, to lie still and gaze at the golden roof and hear the endless soothing noise of the water and breathe in the curiously delightful smell of the herbage. And then, too, it was so strange, after rolling head over heels down into some little dell, to open his eyes and find himself seated on the central mountain peak of the whole island looking down like Robinson Crusoe on field and forest to the shores in every direction, that a man could hardly help sitting there a few minutes longer — and then being detained again because, even as he made to rise, mountain and valley alike had been obliterated and the whole island had become a level plain.

At long last he reached the wooded part. There was an undergrowth of feathery vegetation, about the height of gooseberry bushes, coloured like sea anemones. Above this were the taller growths — strange trees with tube-like trunks of grey and purple spreading rich canopies above his head, in which orange, silver, and blue were the predominant colours. Here, with the aid of the tree trunks, he could keep his feet more easily. The smells in the forest were beyond all that he had ever conceived. To say that they made him feel hungry and thirsty would be misleading; almost, they created a new kind of hunger and thirst, a longing that seemed to flow over from the body into the soul and which was a heaven to feel. Again and again he stood still, clinging to some branch to steady himself, and breathed it all in, as if breathing had become a kind of ritual. And at the same time the forest landscape furnished what would have been a dozen landscapes on earth — now level wood with trees as vertical as towers, now a deep bottom where it was surprising not to find a stream, now a wood growing on a hillside, and now again, a hilltop whence one looked down through slanted boles at the distant sea. Save for the inorganic sound of waves there was utter silence about him. The sense of his solitude became intense without becoming at all painful — only adding, as it were, a last touch of wildness to the unearthly pleasures that surrounded him. If he had any fear now, it was a faint apprehension that his reason might be in danger. There was something in Perelandra that might overload a human brain.

Now he had come to a part of the wood where great globes of yellow fruit hung from the trees — clustered as toy-balloons are clustered on the

back of the balloon-man and about the same size. He picked one of them and turned it over and over. The rind was smooth and firm and seemed impossible to tear open. Then by accident one of his fingers punctured it and went through into coldness. After a moment's hesitation he put the little aperture to his lips. He had meant to extract the smallest, experimental sip, but the first taste put his caution all to flight. It was, of course, a taste, just as his thirst and hunger had been thirst and hunger. But then it was so different from every other taste that it seemed mere pedantry to call it a taste at all. It was like the discovery of a totally new *genus* of pleasures, something unheard of among men, out of all reckoning, beyond all covenant. For one draught of this on earth wars would be fought and nations betrayed. It could not be classified. He could never tell us, when he came back to the world of men, whether it was sharp or sweet, savoury or voluptuous, creamy or piercing. "Not like that" was all he could ever say to such inquiries. As he let the empty gourd fall from his hand and was about to pluck a second one, it came into his head that he was now neither hungry nor thirsty. And yet to repeat a pleasure so intense and almost so spiritual seemed an obvious thing to do. His reason, or what we commonly take to be reason in our own world, was all in favour of tasting this miracle again; the child-like innocence of fruit, the labours he had undergone, the uncertainty of the future, all seemed to commend the action. Yet something seemed opposed to this "reason." It is difficult to suppose that this opposition came from desire, for what desire would turn from so much deliciousness? But for whatever cause, it appeared to him better not to taste again. Perhaps the experience had been so complete that repetition would be a vulgarity — like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day.

As he stood pondering over this and wondering how often in his life on earth he had reiterated pleasures not through desire, but in the teeth of desire and in obedience to a spurious rationalism, he noticed that the light was changing. It was darker behind him than it had been; ahead, the sky and sea shone through the wood with a changed intensity. To step out of the forest would have been a minute's work on earth; on this undulating island it took him longer, and when he finally emerged into the open an extraordinary spectacle met his eyes. All day there had been no variation at any point in the golden roof to mark the sun's position, but now the whole of one half-heaven revealed it. The orb itself remained invisible, but on the rim of the sea rested an arc of green so luminous that he could not look at it,

and beyond that, spreading almost to the zenith, a great fan of colour like a peacock's tail. Looking over his shoulder he saw the whole island ablaze with blue, and across it and beyond it, even to the ends of the world, his own enormous shadow. The sea, far calmer now than he had yet seen it, smoked towards heaven in huge dolomites and elephants of blue and purple vapour, and a light wind, full of sweetness, lifted the hair on his forehead. The day was burning to death. Each moment the waters grew more level; something not far removed from silence began to be felt. He sat down cross-legged on the edge of the island, the desolate lord, it seemed, of this solemnity. For the first time it crossed his mind that he might have been sent to an uninhabited world, and the terror added, as it were, a razor-edge to all that profusion of pleasure.

Once more, a phenomenon which reason might have anticipated took him by surprise. To be naked yet warm, to wander among summer fruits and lie in sweet heather — all this had led him to count on a twilit night, a mild midsummer greyness. But before the great apocalyptic colours had died out in the west, the eastern heaven was black. A few moments, and the blackness had reached the western horizon. A little reddish light lingered at the zenith for a time, during which he crawled back to the woods. It was already, in common parlance, "too dark to see your way." But before he had lain down among the trees the real night had come — seamless darkness, not like night but like being in a coal-cellar, darkness in which his own hand held before his face was totally invisible. Absolute blackness, the undimensioned, the impenetrable, pressed on his eyeballs. There is no moon in that land, no star pierces the golden roof. But the darkness was warm. Sweet new scents came stealing out of it. The world had no size now. Its boundaries were the length and breadth of his own body and the little patch of soft fragrance which made his hammock, swaying ever more and more gently. Night covered him like a blanket and kept all loneliness from him. The blackness might have been his own room. Sleep came like a fruit which falls into the hand almost before you have touched the stem.

FOUR

At Ransom's waking something happened to him which perhaps never happens to a man until he is out of his own world: he saw reality, and thought it was a dream. He opened his eyes and saw a strange heraldically coloured tree loaded with yellow fruits and silver leaves. Round the base of the indigo stem was coiled a small dragon covered with scales of red gold. He recognised the garden of the Hesperides at once. "This is the most vivid dream I have ever had," he thought. By some means or other he then realised that he was awake; but extreme comfort and some trance-like quality, both in the sleep which had just left him and in the experience to which he had awaked, kept him lying motionless. He remembered how in the very different world called Malacandra — that cold, archaic world, as it now seemed to him — he had met the original of the Cyclops, a giant in a cave and a shepherd. Were all the things which appeared as mythology on earth scattered through other worlds as realities? Then the realisation came to him "You are in an unknown planet, naked and alone, and that may be a dangerous animal." But he was not badly frightened. He knew that the ferocity of terrestrial animals was, by cosmic standards, an exception, and had found kindness in stranger creatures than this. But he lay quiet a little longer and looked at it. It was a creature of the lizard type, about the size of a St. Bernard dog, with a serrated back. Its eyes were open.

Presently he ventured to rise on one elbow. The creature went on looking at him. He noticed that the island was perfectly level. He sat up and saw, between the stems of the trees, that they were in calm water. The sea looked like gilded glass. He resumed his study of the dragon. Could this be a rational animal — a *hnau* as they said in Malacandra — and the very thing he had been sent there to meet? It did not look like one, but it was worth trying. Speaking in the Old Solar tongue he formed his first sentence — and his own voice sounded to him unfamiliar.

"Stranger," he said, "I have been sent to your world through the Heaven by the servants of Maleldil. Do you give me welcome?"

The thing looked at him very hard and perhaps very wisely. Then, for the first time, it shut its eyes. This seemed an unpromising start. Ransom decided to rise to his feet. The dragon reopened its eyes. He stood looking at it while you could count twenty, very uncertain how to proceed. Then he

saw that it was beginning to uncoil itself. By a great effort of will he stood his ground; whether the thing were rational or irrational, flight could hardly help him for long. It detached itself from the tree, gave itself a shake, and opened two shining reptilian wings — bluish gold and bat-like. When it had shaken these and closed them again, it gave Ransom another long stare, and at last, half waddling and half crawling, made its way to the edge of the island and buried its long metallic-looking snout in the water. When it had drunk it raised its head and gave a kind of croaking bleat which was not entirely unmusical. Then it turned, looked yet again at Ransom, and finally approached him. “It’s madness to *wait* for it,” said the false reason, but Ransom set his teeth and stood. It came right up and began nudging him with its cold snout about his knees. He was in great perplexity. Was it rational and was this how it talked? Was it irrational but friendly — and if so, how should he respond? You could hardly stroke a creature with scales! Or was it merely scratching itself against him? At that moment, with a suddenness which convinced him it was only a beast, it seemed to forget all about him, turned away, and began tearing up the herbage with great avidity. Feeling that honour was now satisfied, he also turned away back to the woods.

There were trees near him loaded with the fruit which he had already tasted, but his attention was diverted by a strange appearance a little farther off. Amid the darker foliage of a greenish-grey thicket something seemed to be sparkling. The impression, caught out of the corner of his eye, had been that of a greenhouse roof with the sun on it. Now that he looked at it squarely it still suggested glass, but glass in perpetual motion. Light seemed to be coming and going in a spasmodic fashion. Just as he was moving to investigate this phenomenon he was startled by a touch on his left leg. The beast had followed him. It was once more nosing and nudging. Ransom quickened his pace. So did the dragon. He stopped; so did it. When he went on again it accompanied him so closely that its side pressed against his thighs and sometimes its cold, hard, heavy foot descended on his. The arrangement was so little to his satisfaction that he was beginning to wonder seriously how he could put an end to it when suddenly his whole attention was attracted by something else. Over his head there hung from a hairy tube-like branch a great spherical object, almost transparent, and shining. It held an area of reflected light in it and at one place a suggestion of rainbow colouring. So this was the explanation of the glass-like appearance in the

wood. And looking round he perceived innumerable shimmering globes of the same kind in every direction. He began to examine the nearest one attentively. At first he thought it was moving, then he thought it was not. Moved by a natural impulse he put out his hand to touch it. Immediately his head, face, and shoulders were drenched with what seemed (in that warm world) an ice-cold shower bath, and his nostrils filled with a sharp, shrill, exquisite scent that somehow brought to his mind the verse in Pope, “die of a rose in aromatic pain.” Such was the refreshment that he seemed to himself to have been, till now, but half awake. When he opened his eyes — which had closed involuntarily at the shock of moisture — all the colours about him seemed richer and the dimness of that world seemed clarified. A re-enchantment fell upon him. The golden beast at his side seemed no longer either a danger or a nuisance. If a naked man and a wise dragon were indeed the sole inhabitants of this floating paradise, then this also was fitting, for at that moment he had a sensation not of following an adventure but of enacting a myth. To be the figure that he was in this unearthly pattern appeared sufficient.

He turned again to the tree. The thing that had drenched him was quite vanished. The tube or branch, deprived of its pendent globe, now ended in a little quivering orifice from which there hung a bead of crystal moisture. He looked round in some bewilderment. The grove was still full of its iridescent fruit but now he perceived that there was a slow continual movement. A second later he had mastered the phenomenon. Each of the bright spheres was very gradually increasing in size, and each, on reaching a certain dimension, vanished with a faint noise, and in its place there was a momentary dampness on the soil and a soon-fading, delicious fragrance and coldness in the air. In fact, the things were not fruit at all but bubbles. The trees (he christened them at that moment) were bubble-trees. Their life, apparently, consisted in drawing up water from the ocean and then expelling it in this form, but enriched by its short sojourn in their sappy inwards. He sat down to feed his eyes upon the spectacle. Now that he knew the secret he could explain to himself why this wood looked and felt so different from every other part of the island. Each bubble, looked at individually, could be seen to emerge from its parent-branch as a mere bead, the size of a pea, and swell and burst; but looking at the wood as a whole, one was conscious only of a continual faint disturbance of light, an elusive interference with the prevailing Perelandrian silence, an unusual coolness in the air, and a fresher

quality in the perfume. To a man born in our world it felt a more out-door place than the open parts of the island, or even the sea. Looking at a fine cluster of the bubbles which hung above his head he thought how easy it would be to get up and plunge oneself through the whole lot of them and to feel, all at once, that magical refreshment multiplied tenfold. But he was restrained by the same sort of feeling which had restrained him over-night from tasting a second gourd. He had always disliked the people who encored a favourite air in an opera— "That just spoils it" had been his comment. But this now appeared to him as a principle of far wider application and deeper moment. This itch to have things over again, as if life were a film that could be unrolled twice or even made to work backwards . . . was it possibly the root of all evil? No: of course the love of money was called that. But money itself — perhaps one valued it chiefly as a defence against chance, a security for being able to have things over again, a means of arresting the unrolling of the film.

He was startled from his meditation by the physical discomfort of some weight on his knees. The dragon had lain down and deposited its long, heavy head across them. "Do you know," he said to it in English, "that you are a considerable nuisance?" It never moved. He decided that he had better try and make friends with it. He stroked the hard dry head, but the creature took no notice. Then his hand passed lower down and found softer surface, or even a chink in the mail. Ah . . . that was where it liked being tickled. It grunted and shot out a long cylindrical slate-coloured tongue to lick him. It rolled round on its back revealing an almost white belly, which Ransom kneaded with his toes. His acquaintance with the dragon prospered exceedingly. In the end it went to sleep.

He rose and got a second shower from a bubble-tree. This made him feel so fresh and alert that he began to think of food. He had forgotten whereabouts on the island the yellow gourds were to be found, and as he set out to look for them he discovered that it was difficult to walk. For a moment he wondered whether the liquid in the bubbles had some intoxicating quality, but a glance around assured him of the real reason. The plain of copper-coloured heather before him, even as he watched, swelled into a low hill and the low hill moved in his direction. Spellbound anew at the sight of land rolling towards him, like water, in a wave, he forgot to adjust himself to the movement and lost his feet. Picking himself up, he proceeded more carefully. This time there was no doubt about it. The sea

was rising. Where two neighbouring woods made a vista to the edge of this living raft he could see troubled water, and the warm wind was now strong enough to ruffle his hair. He made his way gingerly towards the coast, but before he reached it he passed some bushes which carried a rich crop of oval green berries, about three times the size of almonds. He picked one and broke it in two. The flesh was dryish and bread-like, something of the same kind as a banana. It turned out to be good to eat. It did not give the orgiastic and almost alarming pleasure of the gourds, but rather the specific pleasure of plain food — the delight of munching and being nourished, a "Sober certainty of waking bliss." A man, or at least a man like Ransom, felt he ought to say grace over it; and so he presently did. The gourds would have required rather an oratorio or a mystical meditation. But the meal had its unexpected high lights. Every now and then one struck a berry which had a bright red centre: and these were so savoury, so memorable among a thousand tastes, that he would have begun to look for them and to feed on them only, but that he was once more forbidden by that same inner adviser which had already spoken to him twice since he came to Perelandra. "Now on earth," thought Ransom, "they'd soon discover how to breed these redhearts, and they'd cost a great deal more than the others." Money, in fact, would provide the means of saying *encore* in a voice that could not be disobeyed.

When he had finished his meal he went down to the water's edge to drink, but before he arrived there it was already "up" to the water's edge. The island at that moment was a little valley of bright land nestling between hills of green water, and as he lay on his belly to drink he had the extraordinary experience of dipping his mouth in a sea that was higher than the shore. Then he sat upright for a bit with his legs dangling over the edge among the red weeds that fringed this little country. His solitude became a more persistent element in his consciousness. What had he been brought here to do? A wild fancy came into his head that this empty world had been waiting for him as for its first inhabitant, that he was singled out to be the founder, the beginner. It was strange that the utter loneliness through all these hours had not troubled him so much as one night of it on Malacandra. He thought the difference lay in this, that mere chance, or what he took for chance, had turned him adrift in Mars, but here he knew that he was part of a plan. He was no longer unattached, no longer on the outside.

As his country climbed the smooth mountains of dimly lustrous water he had frequent opportunity to see that many other islands were close at hand. They varied from his own island and from one another in their colouring more than he would have thought possible. It was a wonder to see these big mats or carpets of land tossing all around him like yachts in harbour on a rough day — their trees each moment at a different angle just as the masts of the yachts would be. It was a wonder to see some edge of vivid green or velvety crimson come creeping over the top of a wave far above him and then wait till the whole country unrolled itself down the wave's side for him to study. Sometimes his own land and a neighbouring land would be on opposite slopes of a trough, with only a narrow strait of water between them; and then, for the moment, you were cheated with the semblance of a terrestrial landscape. It looked exactly as though you were in a well-wooded valley with a river at the bottom of it. But while you watched, that seeming river did the impossible. It thrust itself up so that the land on either side sloped downwards from it; and then up farther still and shouldered half the landscape out of sight beyond its ridge; and became a huge greeny-gold hog's back of water hanging in the sky and threatening to engulf your own land, which now was concave and reeled backwards to the next roller, and rushing upwards, became convex again.

A clanging, whirring noise startled him. For a moment he fancied he was in Europe and that a plane was flying low over his head. Then he recognised his friend the dragon. Its tail was streaked out straight behind it so that it looked like a flying worm, and it was heading for an island about half a mile away. Following its course with his eyes, he saw two long lines of winged objects, dark against the gold firmament, approaching the same island from the left and the right. But they were not bat-winged reptiles. Peering hard into the distance, he decided that they were birds, and a musical chattering noise, presently wafted to him by a change of the wind, confirmed this belief. They must have been a little larger than swans. Their steady approach to the same island for which the dragon was heading fixed his attention and filled him with a vague feeling of expectation. What followed next raised this to positive excitement. He became aware of some creamily foamed disturbance in the water, much nearer, and making for the same island. A whole fleet of objects was moving in formation. He rose to his feet. Then the lift of a wave cut them off from his sight. Next moment they were visible again, hundreds of feet below him. Silver-coloured

objects, all alive with circling and frisking movements . . . he lost them again, and swore. In such a very uneventful world they had become important. Ah . . . ! here they were again. Fish certainly. Very large, obese, dolphin-like fish, two long lines together, some of them spouting columns of rainbow-coloured water from their noses, and one leader. There was something queer about the leader, some sort of projection or malformation on the back. If only the things would remain visible for more than fifty seconds at a time! They had almost reached that other island now, and the birds were all descending to meet them at its edge. There was the leader again, with his hump or pillar on his back. A moment of wild incredulity followed, and then Ransom was balanced, with legs wide apart, on the utmost fringe of his own island and shouting for all he was worth. For at the very moment when the leading fish had reached that neighbouring land, the land had risen up on a wave between him and the sky; and he had seen, in perfect and unmistakable silhouette, the thing on the fish's back reveal itself as a human form — a human form which stepped ashore, turned with a slight inclination of its body towards the fish and then vanished from sight as the whole island slid over the shoulder of the billow. With beating heart Ransom waited till it was in view again. This time it was not between him and the sky. For a second or so the human figure was undiscoverable. A stab of something like despair pierced him. Then he picked it out again — a tiny darkish shape moving slowly between him and a patch of blue vegetation. He waved and gesticulated and shouted till his throat was hoarse, but it took no notice of him. Every now and then he lost sight of it. Even when he found it again, he sometimes doubted whether it were not an optical illusion — some chance figuration of foliage which his intense desire had assimilated to the shape of a man. But always, just before he had despaired, it would become unmistakable again. Then his eyes began to grow tired and he knew that the longer he looked the less he would see. But he went on looking none the less.

At last, from mere exhaustion, he sat down. The solitude, which up till now had been scarcely painful, had become a horror. Any return to it was a possibility he dared not face. The drugging and entrancing beauty had vanished from his surroundings; take that one human form away and all the rest of this world was now pure nightmare, a horrible cell or trap in which he was imprisoned. The suspicion that he was beginning to suffer from hallucinations crossed his mind. He had a picture of living for ever and ever

on this hideous island, always really alone but always haunted by the phantoms of human beings, who would come up to him with smiles and outstretched hands, and then fade away as he approached them. Bowing his head on his knees, he set his teeth and endeavoured to restore some order in his mind. At first he found he was merely listening to his own breathing and counting the beats of his heart; but he tried again and presently succeeded. And then, like revelation, came the very simple idea that if he wished to attract the attention of this man-like creature he must wait till he was on the crest of a wave and then stand up so that it would see him outlined against the sky.

Three times he waited till the shore whereon he stood became a ridge, and rose, swaying to the movement of his strange country, gesticulating. The fourth time he succeeded. The neighbouring island was, of course, lying for the moment beneath him like a valley. Quite unmistakably the small dark figure waved back. It detached itself from a confusing background of greenish vegetation and began running towards him — that is, towards the nearer coast of its own island — across an orange-coloured field. It ran easily: the heaving surface of the field did not seem to trouble it. Then his own land reeled downwards and backwards and a great wall of water pushed its way up between the two countries and cut each off from sight of the other. A moment later, and Ransom, from the valley in which he now stood, saw the orange-coloured land pouring itself like a moving hillside down the slightly convex slope of a wave far above him. The creature was still running. The width of water between the two islands was about thirty feet, and the creature was less than a hundred yards away from him. He knew now that it was not merely man-like, but a man — a green man on an orange field, green like the beautifully coloured green beetle in an English garden, running downhill towards him with easy strides and very swiftly. Then the seas lifted his own land and the green man became a foreshortened figure far below him, like an actor seen from the gallery at Covent Garden. Ransom stood on the very brink of his island, straining his body forward and shouting. The green man looked up. He was apparently shouting too, with his hands arched about his mouth; but the roar of the seas smothered the noise and the next moment Ransom’s island dropped into the trough of the wave and the high green ridge of sea cut off his view. It was maddening. He was tortured with the fear that the distance between the islands might be increasing. Thank God: here came the orange land over the

crest following him down into the pit. And there was the stranger, now on the very shore, face to face with him. For one second the alien eyes looked at his full of love and welcome. Then the whole face changed: a shock as of disappointment and astonishment passed over it. Ransom realised, not without a disappointment of his own, that he had been mistaken for someone else. The running, the waving, the shouts, had not been intended for him. And the green man was not a man at all, but a woman.

It is difficult to say why this surprised him so. Granted the human form, he was presumably as likely to meet a female as a male. But it did surprise him, so that only when the two islands once more began to fall apart into separate wave-valleys did he realise that he had said nothing to her, but stood staring like a fool. And now that she was out of sight he found his brain on fire with doubts. Was *this* what he had been sent to meet? He had been expecting wonders, had been prepared for wonders, but not prepared for a goddess carved apparently out of green stone, yet alive. And then it flashed across his mind — he had not noticed it while the scene was before him — that she had been strangely accompanied. She had stood up amidst a throng of beasts and birds as a tall sapling stands among bushes — big pigeon-coloured birds and flame-coloured birds, and dragons, and beaver-like creatures about the size of rats, and heraldic-looking fish in the sea at her feet. Or had he imagined that? Was this the beginning of the hallucinations he had feared? Or another myth coming out into the world of fact — perhaps a more terrible myth, of Circe or Alcina? And the expression on her face . . . what had she expected to find that made the finding of him such a disappointment?

The other island became visible again. He had been right about the animals. They surrounded her ten or twenty deep, all facing her, most of them motionless, but some of them finding their places, as at a ceremony, with delicate noiseless movements. The birds were in long lines and more of them seemed to be alighting on the island every moment and joining these lines. From a wood of bubble-trees behind her half a dozen creatures like very short-legged and elongated pigs — the dachshunds of the pig world — were waddling up to join the assembly. Tiny frog-like beasts, like those he had seen falling in the rain, kept leaping about her, sometimes higher than her head, sometimes alighting on her shoulders; their colours were so vivid that at first he mistook them for kingfishers. Amidst all this she stood looking at him; her feet together, her arms hanging at her sides,

her stare level and unafraid, communicating nothing. Ransom determined to speak, using the Old Solar tongue. “I am from another world,” he began and then stopped. The Green Lady had done something for which he was quite unprepared. She raised her arm and pointed at him: not as in menace, but as though inviting the other creatures to behold him. At the same moment her face changed again, and for a second he thought she was going to cry. Instead she burst into laughter — peal upon peal of laughter till her whole body shook with it, till she bent almost double, with her hands resting on her knees, still laughing and repeatedly pointing at him. The animals, like our own dogs in similar circumstances, dimly understood that there was merriment afoot; all manner of gambolling, wing-clapping, snorting, and standing upon hind legs began to be displayed. And still the Green Lady laughed till yet again the wave divided them and she was out of sight.

Ransom was thunderstruck. Had the eldila sent him to meet an idiot? Or an evil spirit that mocked men? Or was it after all a hallucination? — for this was just how a hallucination might be expected to behave. Then an idea occurred to him which would have taken much longer, perhaps, to occur to me or you. It might not be she who was mad but he who was ridiculous. He glanced down at himself. Certainly his legs presented an odd spectacle, for one was brownish-red (like the flanks of a Titian satyr) and the other was white — by comparison, almost a leprous white. As far as self-inspection could go, he had the same parti-coloured appearance all over — no unnatural result of his one-sided exposure to the sun during the voyage. Had this been the joke? He felt a momentary impatience with the creature who could mar the meeting of two worlds with laughter at such a triviality. Then he smiled in spite of himself at the very undistinguished career he was having on Perelandra. For dangers he had been prepared; but to be first a disappointment and then an absurdity . . . Hullo! Here were the Lady and her island in sight again.

She had recovered from her laughter and sat with her legs trailing in the sea, half unconsciously caressing a gazelle-like creature which had thrust its soft nose under her arm. It was difficult to believe that she had ever laughed, ever done anything but sit on the shore of her floating isle. Never had Ransom seen a face so calm, and so unearthly, despite the full humanity of every feature. He decided afterwards that the unearthly quality was due to the complete absence of that element of resignation which mixes, in however slight a degree, with all profound stillness in terrestrial faces. This

was a calm which no storm had ever preceded. It might be idiocy, it might be immortality, it might be some condition of mind to which terrestrial experience offered no clue at all. A curious and rather horrifying sensation crept over him. On the ancient planet Malacandra he had met creatures who were not even remotely human in form but who had turned out, on further acquaintance, to be rational and friendly. Under an alien exterior he had discovered a heart like his own. Was he now to have the reverse experience? For now he realised that the word “human” refers to something more than the bodily form or even to the rational mind. It refers also to that community of blood and experience which unites all men and women on the Earth. But this creature was not of his race; no windings, however intricate, of any genealogical tree, could ever establish a connection between himself and her. In that sense, not one drop in her veins was “human.” The universe had produced her species and his quite independently.

All this passed through his mind very quickly, and was speedily interrupted by his consciousness that the light was changing. At first he thought that the green Creature had, of herself, began to turn bluish and to shine with a strange electric radiance. Then he noticed that the whole landscape was a blaze of blue and purple — and almost at the same time that the two islands were not so close together as they had been. He glanced at the sky. The many-coloured furnace of the short-lived evening was kindled all about him. In a few minutes it would be pitch black . . . and the islands were drifting apart. Speaking slowly in that ancient language, he cried out to her, “I am a stranger. I come in peace. Is it your will that I swim over to your land?”

The Green Lady looked quickly at him with an expression of curiosity.

“What is ‘peace’?” she asked.

Ransom could have danced with impatience. Already it was visibly darker and there was no doubt now that the distance between the islands was increasing. Just as he was about to speak again a wave rose between them and once more she was out of sight; and as that wave hung above him, shining purple in the light of the sunset, he noticed how dark the sky beyond it had become. It was already through a kind of twilight that he looked down from the next ridge upon the other island far below him. He flung himself into the water. For some seconds he found a difficulty in getting clear of the shore. Then he seemed to succeed and struck out.

Almost at once he found himself back again among the red weeds and bladders. A moment or two of violent struggling followed and then he was free — and swimming steadily — and then, almost without warning, swimming in total darkness. He swam on, but despair of finding the other land, or even of saving his life, now gripped him. The perpetual change of the great swell abolished all sense of direction. It could only be by chance that he would land anywhere. Indeed, he judged from the time he had already been in the water that he must have been swimming *along* the space between the islands instead of across it. He tried to alter his course; then doubted the wisdom of this, tried to return to his original course, and became so confused that he could not be sure he had done either. He kept on telling himself that he must keep his head. He was beginning to be tired. He gave up all attempts to guide himself. Suddenly, a long time after, he felt vegetation sliding past him. He gripped and pulled. Delicious smells of fruit and flowers came to him out of the darkness. He pulled harder still on his aching arms. Finally he found himself, safe and panting, on the dry, sweet-scented, undulating surface of an island.

FIVE

Ransom must have fallen asleep almost as soon as he landed, for he remembered nothing more till what seemed the song of a bird broke in upon his dreams. Opening his eyes, he saw that it was a bird indeed, a long-legged bird like a very small stork, singing rather like a canary. Full daylight — or what passes for such in Perelandra — was all about him, and in his heart such a premonition of good adventure as made him sit up forthwith and brought him, a moment later, to his feet. He stretched his arms and looked around. He was not on the orange-coloured island, but on the same island which had been his home ever since he came to this planet. He was floating in a dead calm and therefore had no difficulty in making his way to the shore. And there he stopped in astonishment. The Lady's island was floating beside his, divided only by five feet or so of water. The whole look of the world had changed. There was no expanse of sea now visible — only a flat wooded landscape as far as the eye could reach in every direction. Some ten or twelve of the islands, in fact, were here lying together and making a short-lived continent. And there walking before him, as if on the other side of a brook, was the Lady herself — walking with her head a little bowed and her hands occupied in plaiting together some blue flowers. She was singing to herself in a low voice but stopped and turned as he hailed her and looked him full in the face.

"I was young yesterday," she began, but he did not hear the rest of her speech. The meeting, now that it had actually come about, proved overwhelming. You must not misunderstand the story at this point. What overwhelmed him was not in the least the fact that she, like himself, was totally naked. Embarrassment and desire were both a thousand miles away from his experience: and if he was a little ashamed of his own body, that was a shame which had nothing to do with difference of sex and turned only on the fact that he knew his body to be a little ugly and a little ridiculous. Still less was her colour a source of horror to him. In her own world that green was beautiful and fitting; it was his pasty white and angry sunburn which were the monstrosity. It was neither of these; but he found himself unnerved. He had to ask her presently to repeat what she had been saying.

"I was young yesterday," she said. "When I laughed at you. Now I know that the people in your world do not like to be laughed at."

“You say you were young?”

“Yes.”

“Are you not young to-day also?”

She appeared to be thinking for a few moments, so intently that the flowers dropped, unregarded, from her hand.

“I see it now,” she said presently. “It is very strange to say one is young at the moment one is speaking. But to-morrow I shall be older. And then I shall say I was young to-day. You are quite right. This is great wisdom you are bringing, O Piebald Man.”

“What do you mean?”

“This looking backward and forward along the line and seeing how a day has one appearance as it comes to you, and another when you are in it, and a third when it has gone past. Like the waves.”

“But you are very little older than yesterday.”

“How do you know that?”

“I mean,” said Ransom, “a night is not a very long time.”

She thought again, and then spoke suddenly, her face lightening. “I see it now,” she said. “You think times have lengths. A night is always a night whatever you do in it, as from this tree to that is always so many paces whether you take them quickly or slowly. I suppose that is true in a way. But the waves do not always come at equal distances. I see that you come from a wise world . . . if this is wise. I have never done it before — stepping out of life into the Alongside and looking at oneself living as if one were not alive. Do they all do that in your world, Piebald?”

“What do you know about other worlds?” said Ransom.

“I know this. Beyond the roof it is all deep heaven, the high place. And the low is not really spread out as it seems to be” (here she indicated the whole landscape) “but is rolled up into little balls: little lumps of the low swimming in the high. And the oldest and greatest of them have on them that which we have never seen nor heard and cannot at all understand. But on the younger Maleldil has made to grow the things like us, that breathe and breed.”

“How have you found all this out? Your roof is so dense that your people cannot see through into Deep Heaven and look at the other worlds.”

Up till now her face had been grave. At this point she clapped her hands and a smile such as Ransom had never seen changed her. One does not see

that smile here except in children, but there was nothing of the child about it there.

“Oh, I see it,” she said. “I am older now. Your world has no roof. You look right out into the high place and see the great dance with your own eyes. You live always in that terror and that delight, and what we must only believe you can behold. Is not this a wonderful invention of Maleldil’s? When I was young I could imagine no beauty but this of our own world. But He can think of all, and all different.”

“That is one of the things that is bewildering me,” said Ransom. “That you are not different. You are shaped like the women of my own kind. I had not expected that. I have been in one other world beside my own. But the creatures there are not at all like you and me.”

“What is bewildering about it?”

“I do not see why different worlds should bring forth like creatures. Do different trees bring forth like fruit?”

“But that other world was older than yours,” she said.

“How do you know that?” asked Ransom in amazement.

“Maleldil is telling me,” answered the woman. And as she spoke the landscape had become different, though with a difference none of the senses would identify. The light was dim, the air gentle, and all Ransom’s body was bathed in bliss, but the garden world where he stood seemed to be packed quite full, and as if an unendurable pressure had been laid upon his shoulders, his legs failed him and he half sank, half fell, into a sitting position.

“It all comes into my mind now,” she continued. “I see the big furry creatures, and the white giants — what is it you called them? — the Sorns, and the blue rivers. Oh, what a strong pleasure it would be to see them with my outward eyes, to touch them, and the stronger because there are no more of that kind to come. It is only in the ancient worlds they linger yet.”

“Why?” said Ransom in a whisper, looking up at her.

“You must know that better than I,” she said. “For was it not in your own world that all this happened?”

“All what?”

“I thought it would be you who would tell me of it,” said the woman, now in her turn bewildered.

“What are you talking about?” said Ransom.

“I mean,” said she, “that in your world Maleldil first took Himself this form, the form of your race and mine.”

“You know that?” said Ransom sharply. Those who have had a dream which is very beautiful but from which, nevertheless, they have ardently desired to awake, will understand his sensations.

“Yes, I know that. Maleldil has made me older to that amount since we began speaking.” The expression on her face was such as he had never seen, and could not steadily look at. The whole of this adventure seemed to be slipping out of his hands. There was a long silence. He stooped down to the water and drank before he spoke again.

“Oh, my Lady,” he said, “why do you say that such creatures linger only in the ancient worlds?”

“Are you so young?” she answered. “How could they come again? Since our Beloved became a man, how should Reason in any world take on another form? Do you not understand? That is all over. Among times there is a time that turns a corner and everything this side of it is new. Times do not go backward.”

“And can one little world like mine be the corner?”

“I do not understand. Corner with us is not the name of a size.”

“And do you,” said Ransom with some hesitation— “and do you know *why* He came thus to my world?”

All through this part of the conversation he found it difficult to look higher than her feet, so that her answer was merely a voice in the air above him. “Yes,” said the voice. “I know the reason. But it is not the reason you know. There was more than one reason, and there is one I know and cannot tell to you, and another that you know and cannot tell to me.”

“And after this,” said Ransom, “it will all be men.”

“You say it as if you were sorry.”

“I think,” said Ransom, “I have no more understanding than a beast. I do not well know what I am saying. But I loved the furry people whom I met in Malacandra, that old world. Are they to be swept away? Are they only rubbish in the Deep Heaven?”

“I do not know what *rubbish* means,” she answered, “nor what you are saying. You do not mean they are worse because they come early in the history and do not come again? They are their own part of the history and not another. We are on this side of the wave and they on the far side. All is new.”

One of Ransom's difficulties was an inability to be quite sure who was speaking at any moment in this conversation. It may (or may not) have been due to the fact that he could not look long at her face. And now he wanted the conversation to end. He had "had enough" — not in the half-comic sense whereby we use those words to mean that a man has had too much, but in the plain sense. He had had his fill, like a man who has slept or eaten enough. Even an hour ago, he would have found it difficult to express this quite bluntly; but now it came naturally to him to say:

"I do not wish to talk any more. But I would like to come over to your island so that we may meet again when we wish."

"Which do you call my island?" said the Lady.

"The one you are on," said Ransom. "What else?"

"Come," she said, with a gesture that made that whole world a house and her a hostess. He slid into the water and scrambled out beside her. Then he bowed, a little clumsily as all modern men do, and walked away from her into a neighbouring wood. He found his legs unsteady and they ached a little; in fact a curious physical exhaustion possessed him. He sat down to rest for a few minutes and fell immediately into dreamless sleep.

He awoke completely refreshed but with a sense of insecurity. This had nothing to do with the fact that he found himself, on waking, strangely attended. At his feet, and with its snout partially resting upon them, lay the dragon; it had one eye shut and one open. As he rose on his elbow and looked about him he found that he had another custodian at his head: a furred animal something like a wallaby but yellow. It was the yellowest thing he had ever seen. As soon as he moved both beasts began nudging him. They would not leave him alone till he rose, and when he had risen they would not let him walk in any direction but one. The dragon was much too heavy for him to shove it out of the way, and the yellow beast danced round him in a fashion that headed him off from every direction but the one it wanted him to go. He yielded to their pressure and allowed himself to be shepherded, first through a wood of higher and browner trees than he had yet seen and then across a small open space and into a kind of alley of bubble trees and beyond that into large fields of silver flowers that grew waist-high. And then he saw that they had been bringing him to be shown to their mistress. She was standing a few yards away, motionless but not apparently disengaged — doing something with her mind, perhaps even with her muscles, that he did not understand. It was the first time he had

looked steadily at her, himself unobserved, and she seemed more strange to him than before. There was no category in the terrestrial mind which would fit her. Opposites met in her and were fused in a fashion for which we have no images. One way of putting it would be to say that neither our sacred nor our profane art could make her portrait. Beautiful, naked, shameless, young — she was obviously a goddess: but then the face, the face so calm that it escaped insipidity by the very concentration of its mildness, the face that was like the sudden coldness and stillness of a church when we enter it from a hot street — that made her a Madonna. The alert, inner silence which looked out from those eyes overawed him; yet at any moment she might laugh like a child, or run like Artemis or dance like a Mænad. All this against the golden sky which looked as if it were only an arm's length above her head. The beasts raced forward to greet her, and as they rushed through the feathery vegetation they startled from it masses of the frogs, so that it looked as if huge drops of vividly coloured dew were being tossed in the air. She turned as they approached her and welcomed them, and once again the picture was half like many earthly scenes but in its total effect unlike them all. It was not really like a woman making much of a horse, nor yet a child playing with a puppy. There was in her face an authority, in her caresses a condescension, which by taking seriously the inferiority of her adorers made them somehow less inferior — raised them from the status of pets to that of slaves. As Ransom reached her she stooped and whispered something in the ear of the yellow creature, and then, addressing the dragon, bleated to it almost in its own voice. Both of them, having received their congé, darted back into the woods.

"The beasts in your world seem almost rational," said Ransom.

"We make them older every day," she answered. "Is not that what it means to be a beast?"

But Ransom clung to her use of the word *we*.

"That is what I have come to speak to you about," he said. "Maleldil has sent me to your world for some purpose. Do you know what it is?"

She stood for a moment almost like one listening and then answered "No."

"Then you must take me to your home and show me to your people."

"People? I do not know what you are saying."

"Your kindred — the others of your kind."

"Do you mean the King?"

“Yes. If you have a King, I had better be brought before him.”

“I cannot do that,” she answered. “I do not know where to find him.”

“To your own home then.”

“What is *home*?”

“The place where people live together and have their possessions and bring up their children.”

She spread out her hands to indicate all that was in sight. “This is my home,” she said.

“Do you live here alone?” asked Ransom.

“What is *alone*?”

Ransom tried a fresh start. “Bring me where I shall meet others of our kind.”

“If you mean the King, I have already told you I do not know where he is. When we were young — many days ago — we were leaping from island to island, and when he was on one and I was on another the waves rose and we were driven apart.”

“But can you take me to some other of your kind? The King cannot be the only one.”

“He is the only one. Did you not know?”

“But there must be others of your kind — your brothers and sisters, your kindred, your friends.”

“I do not know what these words mean.”

“Who is this King?” said Ransom in desperation.

“He is himself, he is the King,” said she. “How can one answer such a question?”

“Look here,” said Ransom. “You must have had a mother. Is she alive? Where is she? When did you see her last?”

“I have a mother?” said the Green Lady, looking full at him with eyes of untroubled wonder. “What do you mean? I *am* the Mother.” And once again there fell upon Ransom the feeling that it was not she, or not she only, who had spoken. No other sound came to his ears, for the sea and the air were still, but a phantom sense of vast choral music was all about him. The awe which her apparently witless replies had been dissipating for the last few minutes returned upon him.

“I do not understand,” he said.

“Nor I,” answered the Lady. “Only my spirit praises Maleldil who comes down from Deep Heaven into this lowness and will make me to be blessed

by all the times that are rolling towards us. It is He who is strong and makes me strong and fills empty worlds with good creatures."

"If you are a mother, where are your children?"

"Not yet," she answered.

"Who will be their father?"

"The King — who else?"

"But the King — had he no father?"

"He *is* the Father."

"You mean," said Ransom slowly, "that you and he are the only two of your kind in the whole world?"

"Of course." Then presently her face changed. "Oh, how young I have been," she said. "I see it now. I had known that there were many creatures in that ancient world of the Hrossa and the Sorns. But I had forgotten that yours also was an older world than ours. I see — there are many of you by now. I had been thinking that of you also there were only two. I thought you were the King and Father of your world. But there are children of children of children by now, and you perhaps are one of these."

"Yes," said Ransom.

"Greet your Lady and Mother well from me when you return to your own world," said the Green Woman. And now for the first time there was a note of deliberate courtesy, even of ceremony, in her speech. Ransom understood. She knew now at last that she was not addressing an equal. She was a queen sending a message to a queen through a commoner, and her manner to him was henceforward more gracious. He found it difficult to make his next answer.

"Our Mother and Lady is dead," he said.

"What is *dead*?"

"With us they go away after a time. Maleldil takes the soul out of them and puts it somewhere else — in Deep Heaven, we hope. They call it death."

"Do not wonder, O Piebald Man, that your world should have been chosen for time's corner. You live looking out always on heaven itself, and as if this were not enough Maleldil takes you all thither in the end. You are favoured beyond all worlds."

Ransom shook his head. "No. It is not like that," he said.

"I wonder," said the woman, "if you were sent here to teach us *death*."

“You don’t understand,” he said. “It is not like that. It is horrible. It has a foul smell. Maleldil Himself wept when He saw it.” Both his voice and his facial expression were apparently something new to her. He saw the shock, not of horror, but of utter bewilderment, on her face for one instant and then, without effort, the ocean of her peace swallowed it up as if it had never been, and she asked him what he meant.

“You could never understand, Lady,” he replied. “But in our world not all events are pleasing or welcome. There may be such a thing that you would cut off both your arms and your legs to prevent it happening — and yet it happens: with us.”

“But how can one wish any of those waves not to reach us which Maleldil is rolling towards us?”

Against his better judgment Ransom found himself goaded into argument.

“But even you,” he said, “when you first saw me, I know now you were expecting and hoping that I was the King. When you found I was not, your face changed. Was *that* event not unwelcome? Did you not wish it to be otherwise?”

“Oh,” said the Lady. She turned aside with her head bowed and her hands clasped in an intensity of thought. She looked up and said, “You make me grow older more quickly than I can bear,” and walked a little farther off. Ransom wondered what he had done. It was suddenly borne in upon him that her purity and peace were not, as they had seemed, things settled and inevitable like the purity and peace of an animal — that they were alive and therefore breakable, a balance maintained by a mind and therefore, at least in theory, able to be lost. There is no reason why a man on a smooth road should lose his balance on a bicycle; but he could. There was no reason why she should step out of her happiness into the psychology of our own race; but neither was there any wall between to prevent her doing so. The sense of precariousness terrified him: but when she looked at him again he changed that word to Adventure, and then all words died out of his mind. Once more he could not look steadily at her. He knew now what the old painters were trying to represent when they invented the halo. Gaiety and gravity together, a splendour as of martyrdom yet with no pain in it at all, seemed to pour from her countenance. Yet when she spoke her words were a disappointment.

“I have been so young till this moment that all my life now seems to have been a kind of sleep. I have thought that I was being carried, and behold, I was walking.”

Ransom asked what she meant.

“What you have made me see,” answered the Lady, “is as plain as the sky, but I never saw it before. Yet it has happened every day. One goes into the forest to pick food and already the thought of one fruit rather than another has grown up in one’s mind. Then, it may be, one finds a different fruit and not the fruit one thought of. One joy was expected and another is given. But this I had never noticed before — that the very moment of the finding there is in the mind a kind of thrusting back, or setting aside. The picture of the fruit you have *not* found is still, for a moment, before you. And if you wished — if it were possible to wish — you could keep it there. You could send your soul after the good you had expected, instead of turning it to the good you had got. You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other.”

Ransom interrupted. “That is hardly the same thing as finding a stranger when you wanted your husband.”

“Oh, that is how I came to understand the whole thing. You and the King differ more than two kinds of fruit. The joy of finding him again and the joy of all the new knowledge I have had from you are more unlike than two tastes; and when the difference is as great as that, and each of the two things so great, then the first picture does stay in the mind quite a long time — many beats of the heart — after the other good has come. And this, O Piebald, is the glory and wonder you have made me see; that it is I, I myself, who turn from the good expected to the given good. Out of my own heart I do it. One can conceive a heart which did not: which clung to the good it had first thought of and turned the good which was given it into no good.”

“I don’t see the wonder and the glory of it,” said Ransom.

Her eyes flashed upon him such a triumphant flight above his thoughts as would have been scorn in earthly eyes; but in that world it was not scorn.

“I thought,” she said, “that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it. I thought that the good things He sent me drew me into them as the waves lift the islands; but now I see that it is I who plunge into them with my own legs and arms, as when we go swimming. I feel as if I were living in that roofless world of yours where men walk

undefended beneath naked heaven. It is a delight with terror in it! One's own self to be walking from one good to another, walking beside Him as Himself may walk, not even holding hands. How has He made me so separate from Himself? How did it enter His mind to conceive such a thing? The world is so much larger than I thought. I thought we went along paths — but it seems there are no paths. The going itself is the path."

"And have you no fear," said Ransom, "that it will ever be hard to turn your heart from the thing you wanted to the thing Maleldil sends?"

"I see," said the Lady presently. "The wave you plunge into may be very swift and great. You may need all your force to swim into it. You mean, He might send me a good like that?"

"Yes — or like a wave so swift and great that all your force was too little."

"It often happens that way in swimming," said the Lady. "Is not that part of the delight?"

"But are you happy without the King? Do you not *want* the King?"

"Want him?" she said. "How could there be anything I did not want?"

There was something in her replies that began to repel Ransom. "You can't want him very much if you are happy without him," he said: and was immediately surprised at the sulkiness of his own voice.

"Why?" said the Lady. "And why, O Piebald, are you making little hills and valleys in your forehead and why do you give a little lift of your shoulders? Are these the signs of something in your world?"

"They mean nothing," said Ransom hastily. It was a small lie; but there it would not do. It tore him as he uttered it, like a vomit. It became of infinite importance. The silver meadow and the golden sky seemed to fling it back at him. As if stunned by some measureless anger in the very air he stammered an emendation: "They mean nothing I could explain to you." The Lady was looking at him with a new and more judicial expression. Perhaps in the presence of the first mother's son she had ever seen, she was already dimly forecasting the problems that might arise when she had children of her own.

"We have talked enough now," she said at last. At first he thought she was going to turn away and leave him. Then, when she did not move, he bowed and drew back a step or two. She still said nothing and seemed to have forgotten about him. He turned and retraced his way through the deep

vegetation until they were out of sight of each other. The audience was at an end.

SIX

As soon as the Lady was out of sight Ransom's first impulse was to run his hands through his hair, to expel the breath from his lungs in a long whistle, to light a cigarette, to put his hands in his pockets, and in general, to go through all that ritual of relaxation which a man performs on finding himself alone after a rather trying interview. But he had no cigarettes and no pockets: nor indeed did he feel himself alone. That sense of being in Someone's Presence which had descended on him with such unbearable pressure during the very first moments of his conversation with the Lady did not disappear when he had left her. It was, if anything, increased. Her society had been, in some degree, a protection against it, and her absence left him not to solitude but to a more formidable kind of privacy. At first it was almost intolerable; as he put it to us, in telling the story, "There seemed no *room*." But later on, he discovered that it was intolerable only at certain moments — at just those moments in fact (symbolised by his impulse to smoke and to put his hands in his pockets) when a man asserts his independence and feels that now at last he's on his own. When you felt like that, then the very air seemed too crowded to breathe; a complete fulness seemed to be excluding you from a place which, nevertheless, you were unable to leave. But when you gave in to the thing, gave yourself up to it, there was no burden to be borne. It became not a load but a medium, a sort of splendour as of eatable, drinkable, breathable gold, which fed and carried you and not only poured into you but out from you as well. Taken the wrong way, it suffocated; taken the right way, it made terrestrial life seem, by comparison, a vacuum. At first, of course, the wrong moments occurred pretty often. But like a man who has a wound that hurts him in certain positions and who gradually learns to avoid those positions, Ransom learned not to make that inner gesture. His day became better and better as the hours passed.

During the course of the day he explored the island pretty thoroughly. The sea was still calm and it would have been possible in many directions to have reached neighbouring islands by a mere jump. He was placed, however, at the edge of this temporary archipelago, and from one shore he found himself looking out on the open sea. They were lying, or else very slowly drifting, in the neighbourhood of the huge green column which he

had seen a few moments after his arrival in Perelandra. He had an excellent view of this object at about a mile's distance. It was clearly a mountainous island. The column turned out to be really a cluster of columns — that is, of crags much higher than they were broad, rather like exaggerated dolomites, but smoother: so much smoother in fact that it might be truer to describe them as pillars from the Giant's Causeway magnified to the height of mountains. This huge upright mass did not, however, rise directly from the sea. The island had a base of rough country, but with smoother land at the coast, and a hint of valleys with vegetation in them between the ridges, and even of steeper and narrower valleys which ran some way up between the central crags. It was certainly land, real fixed land with its roots in the solid surface of the planet. He could dimly make out the texture of true rock from where he sat. Some of it was inhabitable land. He felt a great desire to explore it. It looked as if a landing would present no difficulties, and even the great mountain itself might turn out to be climbable.

He did not see the Lady again that day. Early next morning, after he had amused himself by swimming for a little and eaten his first meal, he was again seated on the shore looking out towards the Fixed Land. Suddenly he heard her voice behind him and looked round. She had come forth from the woods with some beasts, as usual, following her. Her words had been words of greeting, but she showed no disposition to talk. She came and stood on the edge of the floating island beside him and looked with him towards the Fixed Land.

"I will go there," she said at last.

"May I go with you?" asked Ransom.

"If you will," said the Lady. "But you see it is the Fixed Land."

"That is why I wish to tread on it," said Ransom. "In my world all the lands are fixed, and it would give me pleasure to walk in such a land again."

She gave a sudden exclamation of surprise and stared at him.

"Where, then, do you live in your world?" she asked.

"On the lands."

"But you said they are all fixed."

"Yes. We live on the fixed lands."

For the first time since they had met, something not quite unlike an expression of horror or disgust passed over her face.

"But what do you do during the nights?"

“During the nights?” said Ransom in bewilderment. “Why, we sleep, of course.”

“But where?”

“Where we live. On the land.”

She remained in deep thought so long that Ransom feared she was never going to speak again. When she did, her voice was hushed and once more tranquil, though the note of joy had not yet returned to it.

“He has never bidden you not to,” she said, less as a question than as a statement.

“No,” said Ransom.

“There can, then, be different laws in different worlds.”

“Is there a law in your world not to sleep in a Fixed Land?”

“Yes,” said the Lady. “He does not wish us to dwell there. We may land on them and walk on them, for the world is ours. But to stay there — to sleep and awake there . . .” she ended with a shudder.

“You couldn’t have that law in our world,” said Ransom. “There *are* no floating lands with us.”

“How many of you are there?” asked the Lady suddenly.

Ransom found that he didn’t know the population of the Earth, but contrived to give her some idea of many millions. He had expected her to be astonished, but it appeared that numbers did not interest her. “How do you all find room on your Fixed Land?” she asked.

“There is not one fixed land, but many,” he answered. “And they are big: almost as big as the sea.”

“How do you endure it?” she burst out. “Almost half your world empty and dead. Loads and loads of land, all tied down. Does not the very thought of it crush you?”

“Not at all,” said Ransom. “The very thought of a world which was all sea like yours would make my people unhappy and afraid.”

“Where will this end?” said the Lady, speaking more to herself than to him. “I have grown so old in these last few hours that all my life before seems only like the stem of a tree, and now I am like the branches shooting out in every direction. They are getting so wide apart that I can hardly bear it. First to have learned that I walk from good to good with my own feet . . . that was a stretch enough. But now it seems that good is not the same in all worlds; that Maleldil has forbidden in one what He allows in another.”

“Perhaps my world is wrong about this,” said Ransom rather feebly, for he was dismayed at what he had done.

“It is not so,” said she. “Maleldil Himself has told me now. And it could not be so, if your world has no floating lands. But He is not telling me why He has forbidden it to us.”

“There’s probably some good reason,” began Ransom, when he was interrupted by her sudden laughter.

“Oh, Piebald, Piebald,” she said, still laughing. “How often the people of your race speak!”

“I’m sorry,” said Ransom, a little put out.

“What are you sorry for?”

“I am sorry if you think I talk too much.”

“Too much? How can I tell what would be too much for you to talk?”

“In our world when they say a man talks much they mean they wish him to be silent.”

“If that is what they mean, why do they not say it?”

“What made you laugh?” asked Ransom, finding her question too hard.

“I laughed, Piebald, because you were wondering, as I was, about this law which Maleldil has made for one world and not for another. And you had nothing to say about it and yet made the nothing up into words.”

“I *had* something to say, though,” said Ransom almost under his breath. “At least,” he added in a louder voice, “this forbidding is no hardship in such a world as yours.”

“That also is a strange thing to say,” replied the Lady. “Who thought of its being hard? The beasts would not think it hard if I told them to walk on their heads. It would become their delight to walk on their heads. I am His beast, and all His biddings are joys. It is not that which makes me thoughtful. But it was coming into my mind to wonder whether there are two kinds of bidding.”

“Some of our wise men have said . . .” began Ransom, when she interrupted him.

“Let us wait and ask the King,” she said. “For I think, Piebald, you do not know much more about this than I do.”

“Yes, the King, by all means,” said Ransom. “If only we can find him.” Then, quite involuntarily, he added in English, “By Jove! What was that?” She also had exclaimed. Something like a shooting star seemed to have

streaked across the sky, far away on their left, and some seconds later an indeterminate noise reached their ears.

“What was that?” he asked again, this time in Old Solar.

“Something has fallen out of Deep Heaven,” said the Lady. Her face showed wonder and curiosity: but on earth we so rarely see these emotions without some admixture of defensive fear that her expression seemed strange to him.

“I think you’re right,” said he. “Hullo! What’s this?” The calm sea had swelled and all the weeds at the edge of their island were in movement. A single wave passed under their island and all was still again.

“Something has certainly fallen into the sea,” said the Lady. Then she resumed the conversation as if nothing had happened.

“It was to look for the King that I had resolved to go over to-day to the Fixed Land. He is on none of these islands here, for I have searched them all. But if we climbed high up on the Fixed Land and looked about, then we should see a long way. We could see if there are any other islands near us.”

“Let us do this,” said Ransom. “If we can swim so far.”

“We shall ride,” said the Lady. Then she knelt down on the shore — and such grace was in all her movements that it was a wonder to see her kneel — and gave three low calls all on the same note. At first no result was visible. But soon Ransom saw broken water coming rapidly towards them. A moment later and the sea beside the island was a mass of the large silver fishes: spouting, curling their bodies, pressing upon one another to get nearer, and the nearest ones nosing the land. They had not only the colour but the smoothness of silver. The biggest were about nine feet long and all were thick-set and powerful-looking. They were very unlike any terrestrial species, for the base of the head was noticeably wider than the foremost part of the trunk. But then the trunk itself grew thicker again towards the tail. Without this tailward bulge they would have looked like giant tadpoles. As it was, they suggested rather pot-bellied and narrow-chested old men with very big heads. The Lady seemed to take a long time in selecting two of them. But the moment she had done so the others all fell back for a few yards and the two successful candidates wheeled round and lay still with their tails to the shore, gently moving their fins. “Now, Piebald, like this,” she said, and seated herself astride the narrow part of the right-hand fish. Ransom followed her example. The great head in front of him served instead of shoulders so that there was no danger of sliding off. He watched

his hostess. She gave her fish a slight kick with her heels. He did the same to his. A moment later they were gliding out to sea at about six miles an hour. The air over the water was cooler and the breeze lifted his hair. In a world where he had as yet only swum and walked, the fish's progress gave the impression of quite an exhilarating speed. He glanced back and saw the feathery and billowy mass of the islands receding and the sky growing larger and more emphatically golden. Ahead, the fantastically shaped and coloured mountain dominated his whole field of vision. He noticed with interest that the whole school of rejected fish were still with them — some following, but the majority gambolling in wide extended wings to left and right.

"Do they always follow like this?" he asked.

"Do the beasts not follow in your world?" she replied. "We cannot ride more than two. It would be hard if those we did not choose were not even allowed to follow."

"Was that why you took so long to choose the two fish, Lady?" he asked.

"Of course," said the Lady. "I try not to choose the same fish too often."

The land came towards them apace and what had seemed level coastline began to open into bays and thrust itself forward into promontories. And now they were near enough to see that in this apparently calm ocean there was an invisible swell, a very faint rise and fall of water on the beach. A moment later the fishes lacked depth to swim any further, and following the Green Lady's example, Ransom slipped both his legs to one side of his fish and groped down with his toes. Oh, ecstasy! — they touched solid pebbles. He had not realised till now that he was pining for "fixed land." He looked up. Down to the bay in which they were landing ran a steep narrow valley with low cliffs and outcroppings of a reddish rock and, lower down, banks of some kind of moss and a few trees. The trees might almost have been terrestrial: planted in any southern country of our own world they would not have seemed remarkable to anyone except a trained botanist. Best of all, down the middle of the valley — and welcome to Ransom's eyes and ears as a glimpse of home or of heaven — ran a little stream, a dark translucent stream where a man might hope for trout.

"You love this land, Piebald?" said the Lady, glancing at him.

"Yes," said he, "it is like my own world."

They began to walk up the valley to its head. When they were under the trees the resemblance of an earthly country was diminished, for there is so

much less light in that world that the glade which should have cast only a little shadow cast a forest gloom. It was about a quarter of a mile to the top of the valley, where it narrowed into a mere cleft between low rocks. With one or two grips and a leap the Lady was up these, and Ransom followed. He was amazed at her strength. They emerged into a steep upland covered with a kind of turf which would have been very like grass but that there was more blue in it. It seemed to be closely cropped and dotted with white fluffy objects as far as the eye could reach.

"Flowers?" asked Ransom. The Lady laughed.

"No. These are the Piebalds. I named you after them." He was puzzled for a moment but presently the objects began to move, and soon to move quickly, towards the human pair whom they had apparently winded — for they were already so high that there was a strong breeze. In a moment they were bounding all about the Lady and welcoming her. They were white beasts with black spots — about the size of sheep but with ears so much larger, noses so much mobile, and tails so much longer, that the general impression was rather of enormous mice. Their claw-like or almost hand-like paws were clearly built for climbing, and the bluish turf was their food. After a proper interchange of courtesies with these creatures, Ransom and the Lady continued their journey. The circle of golden sea below them was now spread out in an enormous expanse and the green rock pillars above seemed almost to overhang. But it was a long and stiff climb to their base. The temperature here was much lower, though it was still warm. The silence was also noticeable. Down below, on the islands, though one had not remarked it at the time, there must have been a continual background of water noises, bubble noises, and the movement of beasts.

They were now entering into a kind of bay or re-entrant of turf between two of the green pillars. Seen from below these had appeared to touch one another; but now, though they had gone in so deep between two of them that most of the view was cut off on either hand, there was still room for a battalion to march in line. The slope grew steeper every moment; and as it grew steeper the space between the pillars also grew narrower. Soon they were scrambling on hands and knees in a place where the green walls hemmed them in so that they must go in single file, and Ransom, looking up, could hardly see the sky overhead. Finally they were faced with a little bit of real rock work — a neck of stone about eight feet high which joined, like a gum of rock, the roots of the two monstrous teeth of the mountain.

“I’d give a good deal to have a pair of trousers on,” thought Ransom to himself as he looked at it. The Lady, who was ahead, stood on tiptoe and raised her arms to catch a projection on the lip of the ridge. Then he saw her pull, apparently intending to lift her whole weight on her arms and swing herself to the top in a single movement. “Look here, you can’t do it that way,” he began, speaking inadvertently in English, but before he had time to correct himself she was standing on the edge above him. He did not see exactly how it was done, but there was no sign that she had taken any unusual exertion. His own climb was a less dignified affair, and it was a panting and perspiring man with a smudge of blood on his knee who finally stood beside her. She was inquisitive about the blood, and when he had explained the phenomenon to her as well as he could, wanted to scrape a little skin off her own knee to see if the same would happen. This led him to try to explain to her what was meant by pain, which only made her more anxious to try the experiment. But at the last moment Maleldil apparently told her not to.

Ransom now turned to survey their surroundings. High overhead, and seeming by perspective to lean inwards towards each other at the top and almost to shut out the sky, rose the immense piers of rock — not two or three of them, but nine. Some of them, like those two between which they had entered the circle, were close together. Others were many yards apart. They surrounded a roughly oval plateau of perhaps seven acres, covered with a finer turf than any known on our planet and dotted with tiny crimson flowers. A high, singing wind carried, as it were, a cooled and refined quintessence of all the scents from the richer world below, and kept these in continual agitation. Glimpses of the far-spread sea, visible between pillars, made one continually conscious of great height; and Ransom’s eyes, long accustomed to the medley of curves and colours in the floating islands, rested on the pure lines and stable masses of this place with great refreshment. He took a few paces forward into the cathedral spaciousness of the plateau, and when he spoke his voice woke echoes.

“Oh, this is good,” he said. “But perhaps you — you to whom it is forbidden — do not feel it so.” But a glance at the Lady’s face told him he was wrong. He did not know what was in her mind; but her face, as once or twice before, seemed to shine with something before which he dropped his eyes. “Let us examine the sea,” she said presently.

They made the circle of the plateau methodically. Behind them lay the group of islands from which they had set out that morning. Seen from this altitude it was larger even than Ransom had supposed. The richness of its colours — its orange, its silver, its purple and (to his surprise) its glossy blacks — made it seem almost heraldic. It was from this direction that the wind came; the smell of those islands, though faint, was like the sound of running water to a thirsty man. But on every other side they saw nothing but the ocean. At least, they saw no islands. But when they had made almost the whole circuit, Ransom shouted and the Lady pointed almost at the same moment. About two miles off, dark against the coppery-green of the water, there was some small round object. If he had been looking down on an earthly sea Ransom would have taken it, at first sight, for a buoy.

"I do not know what it is," said the Lady. "Unless it is the thing that fell out of Deep Heaven this morning."

"I wish I had a pair of field-glasses," thought Ransom, for the Lady's words had awakened in him a sudden suspicion. And the longer he stared at the dark blob the more his suspicion was confirmed. It appeared to be perfectly spherical; and he thought he had seen something like it before.

You have already heard that Ransom had been in that world which men call Mars but whose true name is Malacandra. But he had not been taken thither by the eldila. He had been taken by men, and taken in a space-ship, a hollow sphere of glass and steel. He had, in fact, been kidnapped by men who thought that the ruling powers of Malacandra demanded a human sacrifice. The whole thing had been a misunderstanding. The great Oyarsa who has governed Mars from the beginning (and whom my own eyes beheld, in a sense, in the hall of Ransom's cottage) had done him no harm and meant him none. But his chief captor, Professor Weston, had meant plenty of harm. He was a man obsessed with the idea which is at this moment circulating all over our planet in obscure works of "scientifiction," in little Interplanetary Societies and Rocketry Clubs, and between the covers of monstrous magazines, ignored or mocked by the intellectuals, but ready, if ever the power is put into its hands, to open a new chapter of misery for the universe. It is the idea that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area: that the vast astronomical distances which are God's quarantine regulations, must somehow be overcome. This for a start. But beyond this lies the sweet poison of the false infinite — the wild dream that

planet after planet, system after system, in the end galaxy after galaxy, can be forced to sustain, everywhere and for ever, the sort of life which is contained in the loins of our own species — a dream begotten by the hatred of death upon the fear of true immortality, fondled in secret by thousands of ignorant men and hundreds who are not ignorant. The destruction or enslavement of other species in the universe, if such there are, is to these minds a welcome corollary. In Professor Weston the power had at last met the dream. The great physicist had discovered a motive power for his space-ship. And that little black object, now floating beneath him on the sinless waters of Perelandra, looked to Ransom more like the space-ship every moment. “So that,” he thought, “that is why I have been sent here. He failed on Malacandra and now he is coming here. And it’s up to me to do something about it.” A terrible sense of inadequacy swept over him. Last time — in Mars — Weston had had only one accomplice. But he had had firearms. And how many accomplices might he have this time? And in Mars he had been foiled not by Ransom but by the eldila, and specially the great eldil, the Oyarsa, of that world. He turned quickly to the Lady.

“I have seen no eldila in your world,” he said.

“Eldila?” she repeated as if it were a new name to her.

“Yes. Eldila,” said Ransom, “the great and ancient servants of Maleldil. The creatures that neither breed nor breathe. Whose bodies are made of light. Whom we can hardly see. Who ought to be obeyed.”

She mused for a moment and then spoke. “Sweetly and gently this time Maleldil makes me older. He shows me all the natures of these blessed creatures. But there is no obeying them *now*, not in this world. That is all the old order, Piebald, the far side of the wave that has rolled past us and will not come again. That very ancient world to which you journeyed was put under the eldila. In your own world also they ruled once: but not since our Beloved became a Man. In your world they linger still. But in our world, which is the first of worlds to wake after the great change, they have no power. There is nothing now between us and Him. They have grown less and we have increased. And now Maleldil puts it into my mind that this is their glory and their joy. They received us — us things of the low worlds, who breed and breathe — as weak and small beasts whom their lightest touch could destroy; and their glory was to cherish us and make us older till we were older than they — till they could fall at our feet. It is a joy we shall not have. However I teach the beasts they will never be better than I. But it

is a joy beyond all. Not that it is better joy than ours. Every joy is beyond all others. The fruit we are eating is always the best fruit of all."

"There have been eldila who did not think it a joy," said Ransom.

"How?"

"You spoke yesterday, Lady, of clinging to the old good instead of taking the good that came."

"Yes — for a few heart-beats."

"There was an eldil who clung longer — who has been clinging since before the worlds were made."

"But the old good would cease to be a good at all if he did that."

"Yes. It has ceased. And still he clings."

She stared at him in wonder and was about to speak, but he interrupted her.

"There is no time to explain," he said.

"No time? What has happened to the time?" she asked.

"Listen," he said. "That thing down there has come through Deep Heaven from my world. There is a man in it: perhaps many men — —"

"Look," she said, "it is turning into two — one big and one small."

Ransom saw that a small black object had detached itself from the space-ship and was beginning to move uncertainly away from it. It puzzled him for a moment. Then it dawned on him that Weston — if it was Weston — probably knew the watery surface he had to expect on Venus and had brought some kind of collapsible boat. But could it be that he had not reckoned with tides or storms and did not foresee that it might be impossible for him ever to recover the space-ship? It was not like Weston to cut off his own retreat. And Ransom certainly did not wish Weston's retreat to be cut off. A Weston who could not, even if he chose, return to Earth, was an insoluble problem. Anyway, what could he, Ransom, possibly do without support from the eldila? He began to smart under a sense of injustice. What was the good of sending him — a mere scholar — to cope with a situation of this sort? Any ordinary pugilist, or, better still, any man who could make good use of a tommy-gun, would have been more to the purpose. If only they could find this King whom the Green Woman kept on talking about. . . .

But while these thoughts were passing through his mind he became aware of a dim murmuring or growling sound which had gradually been encroaching on the silence for some time. "Look," said the Lady suddenly,

and pointed to the mass of islands. Their surface was no longer level. At the same moment he realised that the noise was that of waves: small waves as yet, but definitely beginning to foam on the rocky headlands of the Fixed Island. “The sea is rising,” said the Lady. “We must go down and leave this land at once. Soon the waves will be too great — and I must not be here by night.”

“Not that way,” shouted Ransom. “Not where you will meet the man from my world.”

“Why?” said the Lady. “I am Lady and Mother of this world. If the King is not here, who else should greet a stranger?”

“I will meet him.”

“It is not your world, Piebald,” she replied.

“You do not understand,” said Ransom. “This man — he is a friend of that eldil of whom I told you — one of those who cling to the wrong good.”

“Then I must explain it to him,” said the Lady. “Let us go and make him older,” and with that she slung herself down the rocky edge of the plateau and began descending the mountain slope. Ransom took longer to manage the rocks; but once his feet were again on the turf he began running as fast as he could. The Lady cried out in surprise as he flashed past her, but he took no notice. He could now see clearly which bay the little boat was making for and his attention was fully occupied in directing his course and making sure of his feet. There was only one man in the boat. Down and down the long slope he raced. Now he was in a fold: now in a winding valley which momentarily cut off the sight of the sea. Now at last he was in the cove itself. He glanced back and saw to his dismay that the Lady had also been running and was only a few yards behind. He glanced forward again. There were waves, though not yet very large ones, breaking on the pebbly beach. A man in shirt and shorts and a pith helmet was ankle-deep in the water, wading ashore and pulling after him a little canvas punt. It was certainly Weston, though his face had something about it which seemed subtly unfamiliar. It seemed to Ransom of vital importance to prevent a meeting between Weston and the Lady. He had seen Weston murder an inhabitant of Malacandra. He turned back, stretching out both arms to bar her way and shouting “Go back!” She was too near. For a second she was almost in his arms. Then she stood back from him, panting from the race, surprised, her mouth opened to speak. But at that moment he heard

Weston’s voice, from behind him, saying in English, “May I ask you, Dr. Ransom, what is the meaning of this?”

SEVEN

In all the circumstances it would have been reasonable to expect that Weston would be much more taken aback at Ransom's presence than Ransom could be at his. But if he were, he showed no sign of it, and Ransom could hardly help admiring the massive egoism which enabled this man in the very moment of his arrival on an unknown world to stand there unmoved in all his authoritative vulgarity, his arms akimbo, his face scowling, and his feet planted as solidly on that unearthly soil as if he had been standing with his back to the fire in his own study. Then, with a shock, he noticed that Weston was speaking to the Lady in the Old Solar language with perfect fluency. On Malacandra, partly from incapacity, and much more from his contempt for the inhabitants, he had never acquired more than a smattering of it. Here was an inexplicable and disquieting novelty. Ransom felt that his only advantage had been taken from him. He felt that he was now in the presence of the incalculable. If the scales had been suddenly weighted in this one respect, what might come next?

He awoke from his abstraction to find that Weston and the Lady had been conversing fluently, but without mutual understanding. "It is no use," she was saying. "You and I are not old enough to speak together, it seems. The sea is rising; let us go back to the islands. Will he come with us, Piebald?"

"Where are the two fishes?" said Ransom.

"They will be waiting in the next bay," said the Lady.

"Quick, then," said Ransom to her; and then, in answer to her look: "No, he will not come." She did not, presumably, understand his urgency, but her eye was on the sea and she understood her own reason for haste. She had already begun to ascend the side of the valley, with Ransom following her, when Weston shouted, "No, you don't." Ransom turned and found himself covered by a revolver. The sudden heat which swept over his body was the only sign by which he knew that he was frightened. His head remained clear.

"Are you going to begin in this world also by murdering one of its inhabitants?" he asked.

"What are you saying?" asked the Lady, pausing and looking back at the two men with a puzzled, tranquil face.

“Stay where you are, Ransom,” said the Professor. “That native can go where she likes; the sooner the better.”

Ransom was about to implore her to make good her escape when he realised that no imploring was needed. He had irrationally supposed that she would understand the situation; but apparently she saw nothing more than two strangers talking about something which she did not at the moment understand — that, and her own necessity of leaving the Fixed Land at once.

“You and he do not come with me, Piebald?” she asked.

“No,” said Ransom, without turning round. “It may be that you and I shall not meet soon again. Greet the King for me if you find him and speak of me always to Maleldil. I stay here.”

“We shall meet when Maleldil pleases,” she answered, “or if not, some greater good will happen to us instead.” Then he heard her footsteps behind him for a few seconds, and then he heard them no more and knew he was alone with Weston.

“You allowed yourself to use the word Murder just now, Dr. Ransom,” said the Professor, “in reference to an accident that occurred when we were in Malacandra. In any case, the creature killed was not a human being. Allow me to tell you that I consider the seduction of a native girl as an almost equally unfortunate way of introducing civilisation to a new planet.”

“Seduction?” said Ransom. “Oh, I see. You thought I was making love to her.”

“When I find a naked civilised man embracing a naked savage woman in a solitary place, that is the name I give to it.”

“I wasn’t embracing her,” said Ransom dully, for the whole business of defending himself on this score seemed at that moment a mere weariness of the spirit. “And no one wears clothes here. But what does it matter? Get on with the job that brings you to Perelandra.”

“You ask me to believe that you have been living here with that woman under these conditions in a state of sexless innocence?”

“Oh, sexless!” said Ransom disgustedly. “All right, if you like. It’s about as good a description of living in Perelandra as it would be to say that a man had forgotten water because Niagara Falls didn’t immediately give him the idea of making it into cups of tea. But you’re right enough if you mean that I have had no more thought of desiring her than — than . . .” Comparisons failed him and his voice died. Then he began again: “But don’t say I’m

asking you to believe it, or to believe anything. I am asking you nothing but to begin and end as soon as possible whatever butcheries and robberies you have come to do."

Weston eyed him for a moment with a curious expression: then, unexpectedly, he turned his revolver to its holster.

"Ransom," he said, "you do me a great injustice."

For several seconds there was silence between them. Long breakers with white woolpacks of foam on them were now rolling into the cove exactly as on earth.

"Yes," said Weston at last, "and I will begin with a frank admission. You may make what capital of it you please. I shall not be deterred. I deliberately say that I was, in some respects, mistaken — seriously mistaken — in my conception of the whole interplanetary problem when I went to Malacandra."

Partly from the relaxation which followed the disappearance of the pistol, and partly from the elaborate air of magnanimity with which the great scientist spoke, Ransom felt very much inclined to laugh. But it occurred to him that this was possibly the first occasion in his whole life in which Weston had ever acknowledged himself in the wrong, and that even the false dawn of humility, which is still ninety-nine per cent. of arrogance, ought not to be rebuffed — or not by him.

"Well, that's very handsome," he said. "How do you mean?"

"I'll tell you presently," said Weston. "In the meantime I must get my things ashore." Between them they beached the punt, and began carrying Weston's primus-stove and tins and tent and other packages to a spot about two hundred yards inland. Ransom, who knew all the paraphernalia to be needless, made no objection, and in about a quarter of an hour something like an encampment had been established in a mossy place under some blue-trunked silver-leaved trees beside a rivulet. Both men sat down and Ransom listened at first with interest, then with amazement, and finally with incredulity. Weston cleared his throat, threw out his chest, and assumed his lecturing manner. Throughout the conversation that followed, Ransom was filled with a sense of crazy irrelevance. Here were two human beings, thrown together in an alien world under conditions of inconceivable strangeness; the one separated from his space-ship, the other newly released from the threat of instant death. Was it sane — was it imaginable — that they should find themselves at once engaged in a philosophical argument

which might just as well have occurred in a Cambridge combination room? Yet that, apparently, was what Weston insisted upon. He showed no interest in the fate of his space-ship; he even seemed to feel no curiosity about Ransom's presence on Venus. Could it be that he had travelled more than thirty million miles of space in search of — conversation? But as he went on talking, Ransom felt himself more and more in the presence of a monomaniac. Like an actor who cannot think of anything but his celebrity, or a lover who can think of nothing but his mistress, tense, tedious, and unescapable, the scientist pursued his fixed idea.

"The tragedy of my life," he said, "and indeed of the modern intellectual world in general, is the rigid specialisation of knowledge entailed by the growing complexity of what is known. It is my own share in that tragedy that an early devotion to physics has prevented me from paying any proper attention to Biology until I reached the fifties. To do myself justice, I should make it clear that the false humanist ideal of knowledge as an end in itself never appealed to me. I always wanted to know in order to achieve utility. At first, that utility naturally appeared to me in a personal form — I wanted scholarships, an income, and that generally recognised position in the world without which a man has no leverage. When those were attained, I began to look farther: to the utility of the human race!"

He paused as he rounded his period and Ransom nodded to him to proceed.

"The utility of the human race," continued Weston, "in the long run depends rigidly on the possibility of inter-planetary, and even inter-sidereal, travel. That problem I solved. The key of human destiny was placed in my hands. It would be unnecessary — and painful to us both — to remind you how it was wrenched from me in Malacandra by a member of a hostile intelligent species whose existence, I admit, I had not anticipated."

"Not hostile exactly," said Ransom, "but go on."

"The rigours of our return journey from Malacandra led to a serious breakdown in my health — —"

"Mine too," said Ransom.

Weston looked somewhat taken aback at the interruption and went on. "During my convalescence I had that leisure for reflection which I had denied myself for many years. In particular I reflected on the objections you had felt to that liquidation of the non-human inhabitants of Malacandra which was, of course, the necessary preliminary to its occupation by our

own species. The traditional and, if I may say so, the humanitarian form in which you advanced those objections had till then concealed from me their true strength. That strength I now began to perceive. I began to see that my own exclusive devotion to human utility was really based on an unconscious dualism."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that all my life I had been making a wholly unscientific dichotomy or antithesis between Man and Nature — had conceived myself fighting *for* Man against his non-human environment. During my illness I plunged into Biology, and particularly into what may be called biological philosophy. Hitherto, as a physicist, I had been content to regard Life as a subject outside my scope. The conflicting views of those who drew a sharp line between the organic and the inorganic and those who held that what we call Life was inherent in matter from the very beginning had not interested me. Now it did. I saw almost at once that I could admit no break, no discontinuity, in the unfolding of the cosmic process. I became a convinced believer in emergent evolution. All is one. The stuff of mind, the unconsciously purposive dynamism, is present from the very beginning."

Here he paused. Ransom had heard this sort of thing pretty often before and wondered when his companion was coming to the point. When Weston resumed it was with an even deeper solemnity of tone.

"The majestic spectacle of this blind, inarticulate purposiveness thrusting its way upward and ever upward in an endless unity of differentiated achievements towards an ever-increasing complexity of organisation, towards spontaneity and spirituality, swept away all my old conception of a duty to Man as such. Man in himself is nothing. The forward movement of Life — the growing spirituality — is everything. I say to you quite freely, Ransom, that I should have been wrong in liquidating the Malacandrians. It was a mere prejudice that made me prefer our own race to theirs. To spread spirituality, not to spread the human race, is henceforth my mission. This sets the coping-stone on my career. I worked first for myself; then for science; then for humanity; but now at last for Spirit itself — I might say, borrowing language which will be more familiar to you, the Holy Spirit."

"Now what exactly do you mean by that?" asked Ransom.

"I mean," said Weston, "that nothing now divides you and me except a few outworn theological technicalities with which organised religion has unhappily allowed itself to get incrusted. But I have penetrated that crust.

The Meaning beneath it is as true and living as ever. If you will excuse me for putting it that way, the essential truth of the religious view of life finds a remarkable witness in the fact that it enabled you, on Malacandra, to grasp, in your own mythical and imaginative fashion, a truth which was hidden from me."

"I don't know much about what people call the religious view of life," said Ransom, wrinkling his brow. "You see, I'm a Christian. And what we mean by the Holy Ghost is *not* a blind, inarticulate purposiveness."

"My dear Ransom," said Weston, "I understand you perfectly. I have no doubt that my phraseology will seem strange to you, and perhaps even shocking. Early and revered associations may have put it out of your power to recognise in this new form the very same truths which religion has so long preserved and which science is now at last re-discovering. But whether you can see it or not, believe me, we are talking about exactly the same thing."

"I'm not at all sure that we are."

"That, if you will permit me to say so, is one of the real weaknesses of organised religion — that adherence to formulæ, that failure to recognise one's own friends. God is a spirit, Ransom. Get hold of that. You're familiar with that already. Stick to it. God is a spirit."

"Well, of course. But what then?"

"What then? Why, spirit — mind — freedom — spontaneity — that's what I'm talking about. That is the goal towards which the whole cosmic process is moving. The final disengagement of that freedom, that spirituality, is the work to which I dedicate my own life and the life of humanity. The goal, Ransom, the goal: think of it! *Pure* spirit: the final vortex of self-thinking, self-originating activity."

"Final?" said Ransom. "You mean it doesn't yet exist?"

"Ah," said Weston, "I see what's bothering you. Of course I know. Religion pictures it as being there from the beginning. But surely that is not a real difference? To make it one, would be to take time too seriously. When it has once been attained, you might then say it had been at the beginning just as well as at the end. Time is one of the things it will transcend."

"By the way," said Ransom, "is it in any sense at all personal — is it alive?"

An indescribable expression passed over Weston's face. He moved a little nearer to Ransom and began speaking in a lower voice.

“That’s what none of them understand,” he said. It was such a gangster’s or a schoolboy’s whisper and so unlike his usual orotund lecturing style that Ransom for a moment felt a sensation almost of disgust.

“Yes,” said Weston, “I couldn’t have believed, myself, till recently. Not a person, of course. Anthropomorphism is one of the childish diseases of popular religion” (here he had resumed his public manner), “but the opposite extreme of excessive abstraction has perhaps in the aggregate proved more disastrous. Call it a Force. A great, inscrutable Force, pouring up into us from the dark bases of being. A Force that can choose its instruments. It is only lately, Ransom, that I’ve learned from actual experience something which you have believed all your life as part of your religion.” Here he suddenly subsided again into a whisper — a croaking whisper unlike his usual voice. “Guided,” he said. “Chosen. Guided. I’ve become conscious that I’m a man set apart. Why did I do physics? Why did I discover the Weston rays? Why did I go to Malacandra? It — the Force — has pushed me on all the time. I’m being guided. I know now that I am the greatest scientist the world has yet produced. I’ve been made so for a purpose. It is through me that Spirit itself is at this moment pushing on to its goal.”

“Look here,” said Ransom, “one wants to be careful about this sort of thing. There are spirits and spirits you know.”

“Eh?” said Weston. “What are you talking about?”

“I mean a thing might be a spirit and not good for you.”

“But I thought you agreed that Spirit was the good — the end of the whole process? I thought you religious people were all out for spirituality? What is the point of asceticism — fasts and celibacy and all that? Didn’t we agree that God is a spirit? Don’t you worship Him because He is pure spirit?”

“Good heavens, no! We worship Him because He is wise and good. There’s nothing specially fine about simply being a spirit. The Devil is a spirit.”

“Now your mentioning the Devil is very interesting,” said Weston, who had by this time quite recovered his normal manner. “It is a most interesting thing in popular religion, this tendency to fissiparate, to breed pairs of opposites: heaven and hell, God and Devil. I need hardly say that in my view no real dualism in the universe is admissible; and on that ground I should have been disposed, even a few weeks ago, to reject these pairs of

doublets as pure mythology. It would have been a profound error. The cause of this universal religious tendency is to be sought much deeper. The doublets are really portraits of Spirit, of cosmic energy — self-portraits, indeed — for it is the Life-Force itself which has deposited them in our brains."

"What on earth do you mean?" said Ransom. As he spoke he rose to his feet and began pacing to and fro. A quite appalling weariness and malaise had descended upon him.

"*Your* Devil and *your* God," said Weston, "are both pictures of the same Force. Your heaven is a picture of the perfect spirituality ahead; your hell a picture of the urge or *nisus* which is driving us on to it from behind. Hence the static peace of the one and the fire and darkness of the other. The next stage of emergent evolution, beckoning us forward, is God; the transcended stage behind, ejecting us, is the Devil. Your own religion, after all, says that the devils are fallen angels."

"And you are saying precisely the opposite, as far as I can make out — that angels are devils who've risen in the world."

"It comes to the same thing," said Weston.

There was another long pause. "Look here," said Ransom, "it's easy to misunderstand one another on a point like this. What you are saying sounds to me like the most horrible mistake a man could fall into. But that may be because in the effort to accommodate it to my supposed 'religious views,' you're saying a good deal more than you mean. It's only a metaphor, isn't it, all this about spirits and forces? I expect all you really mean is that you feel it your duty to work for the spread of civilisation and knowledge and that kind of thing." He had tried to keep out of his voice the involuntary anxiety which he had begun to feel. Next moment he recoiled in horror at the cackling laughter, almost an infantile or senile laughter, with which Weston replied.

"There you go, there you go," he said. "Like all you religious people. You talk and talk about these things all your life, and the moment you meet the reality you get frightened."

"What proof," said Ransom (who indeed did feel frightened), "what proof have you that you are being guided or supported by anything except your own individual mind and other people's books?"

"You didn't notice, dear Ransom," said Weston, "that I'd improved a bit since we last met in my knowledge of extra-terrestrial language. You are a

philologist, they tell me.”

Ransom started. “How did you do it?” he blurted out.

“Guidance, you know, guidance,” croaked Weston. He was squatting at the roots of his tree with his knees drawn up, and his face, now the colour of putty, wore a fixed and even slightly twisted grin. “Guidance. Guidance,” he went on. “Things coming into my head. I’m being prepared all the time. Being made a fit receptacle for it.”

“That ought to be fairly easy,” said Ransom impatiently. “If this Life-Force is something so ambiguous that God and the Devil are equally good portraits of it, I suppose any receptacle is equally fit, and anything you can do is equally an expression of it.”

“There’s such a thing as the main current,” said Weston. “It’s a question of surrendering yourself to that — making yourself the conductor of the live, fiery, central purpose — becoming the very finger with which it reaches forward.”

“But I thought that was the Devil aspect of it, a moment ago.”

“That is the fundamental paradox. The thing we are reaching forward to is what you would call God. The reaching forward, the dynamism, is what people like you always call the Devil. The people like me, who do the reaching forward, are always martyrs. You revile us, and by us come to your goal.”

“Does that mean in plainer language that the things the Force wants you to do are what ordinary people call diabolical?”

“My dear Ransom, I wish you would not keep relapsing on to the popular level. The two things are only moments in the single, unique reality. The world leaps forward through great men and greatness always transcends mere moralism. When the leap has been made our ‘diabolism’ as you would call it becomes the morality of the next stage; but while we are making it, we are called criminals, heretics, blasphemers. . . .”

“How far does it go? Would you still obey the Life-Force if you found it prompting you to murder me?”

“Yes.”

“Or to sell England to the Germans?”

“Yes.”

“Or to print lies as serious research in a scientific periodical?”

“Yes.”

“God help you!” said Ransom.

“You are still wedded to your conventionalities,” said Weston. “Still dealing in abstractions. Can you not even conceive a total commitment — a commitment to something which utterly overrides all our petty ethical pigeon-holes?”

Ransom grasped at the straw. “Wait, Weston,” he said abruptly. “That may be a point of contact. You say it’s a total commitment. That is, you’re giving up yourself. You’re not out for your own advantage. No, wait half a second. This *is* the point of contact between your morality and mine. We both acknowledge — —”

“Idiot,” said Weston. His voice was almost a howl and he had risen to his feet. “Idiot,” he repeated. “Can you understand nothing? Will you always try to press everything back into the miserable framework of your old jargon about self and self-sacrifice? That is the old accursed dualism in another form. There is no possible distinction in concrete thought between me and the universe. In so far as I am the conductor of the central forward pressure of the universe, I am it. Do you see, you timid, scruple-mongering fool? I *am* the Universe. I, Weston, am your God and your Devil. I call that Force into me completely. . . .”

Then horrible things began happening. A spasm like that preceding a deadly vomit twisted Weston’s face out of recognition. As it passed, for one second something like the old Weston reappeared — the old Weston, staring with eyes of horror and howling, “Ransom, Ransom! For Christ’s sake don’t let them — —” and instantly his whole body spun round as if he had been hit by a revolver-bullet and he fell to the earth, and was there rolling at Ransom’s feet, slavering and chattering and tearing up the moss by handfuls. Gradually the convulsions decreased. He lay still, breathing heavily, his eyes open but without expression. Ransom was kneeling beside him now. It was obvious that the body was alive, and Ransom wondered whether this were a stroke or an epileptic fit, for he had never seen either. He rummaged among the packages and found a bottle of brandy which he uncorked and applied to the patient’s mouth. To his consternation the teeth opened, closed on the neck of the bottle and bit it through. No glass was spat out. “O God, I’ve killed him,” said Ransom. But beyond a spurt of blood at the lips there was no change in his appearance. The face suggested that either he was in no pain or in a pain beyond all human comprehension. Ransom rose at last, but before doing so he plucked the revolver from

Weston's belt, then, walking down to the beach, he threw it as far as he could into the sea.

He stood for some moments gazing out upon the bay and undecided what to do. Presently he turned and climbed up the turfy ridge that bordered the little valley on his left hand. He found himself on a fairly level upland with a good view of the sea, now running high and teased out of its level gold into a continually changing pattern of lights and shadows. For a second or two he could catch no sight of the islands. Then suddenly their tree-tops appeared, hanging high up against the sky, and widely separated. The weather, apparently, was already driving them apart — and even as he thought this they vanished once more into some unseen valley of the waves. What was his chance, he wondered, of ever finding them again? A sense of loneliness smote him, and then a feeling of angry frustration. If Weston were dying, or even if Weston were to live, imprisoned here with him on an island they could not leave, what had been the danger he was sent to avert from Perelandra? And so, having begun to think of himself, he realised that he was hungry. He had seen neither fruit nor gourd on the Fixed Land. Perhaps it was a death trap. He smiled bitterly at the folly which had made him so glad, that morning, to exchange those floating paradises, where every grove dropped sweetness, for this barren rock. But perhaps it was not barren after all. Determined, despite the weariness which was every moment descending upon him, to make a search for food, he was just turning inland when the swift changes of colour that announce the evening of that world overtook him. Uselessly he quickened his pace. Before he had got down into the valley, the grove where he had left Weston was a mere cloud of darkness. Before he had reached it he was in seamless, undimensioned night. An effort or two to grope his way to the place where Weston's stores had been deposited only served to abolish his sense of direction altogether. He sat down perforce. He called Weston's name aloud once or twice but, as he expected, received no answer. "I'm glad I removed his gun, all the same," thought Ransom; and then, "Well, *qui dort dîne* and I suppose I must make the best of it till the morning." When he lay down he discovered that the solid earth and moss of the Fixed Land was very much less comfortable than the surfaces to which he had lately been accustomed. That, and the thought of the other human being lying, no doubt, close at hand with open eyes and teeth clenched on splintered glass, and the sullen recurring pound of breakers on the beach, all made the night comfortless.

“If I lived on Perelandra,” he muttered, “Maleldil wouldn’t need to *forbid* this island. I wish I’d never set eyes on it.”

EIGHT

He woke, after a disturbed and dreamful sleep, in full daylight. He had a dry mouth, a crick in his neck, and a soreness in his limbs. It was so unlike all previous wakings in the world of Venus, that for a moment he supposed himself back on Earth: and the dream (for so it seemed to him) of having lived and walked on the oceans of the Morning Star rushed through his memory with a sense of lost sweetness that was well-nigh unbearable. Then he sat up and the facts came back to him. “It’s jolly nearly the same as having waked from a dream, though,” he thought. Hunger and thirst became at once his dominant sensations, but he conceived it a duty to look first at the sick man — though with very little hope that he could help him. He gazed round. There was the grove of silvery trees all right, but he could not see Weston. Then he glanced at the bay; there was no punt either. Assuming that in the darkness he had blundered into the wrong valley, he rose and approached the stream for a drink. As he lifted his face from the water with a long sigh of satisfaction, his eyes suddenly fell on a little wooden box — and then beyond it on a couple of tins. His brain was working rather slowly and it took him a few seconds to realise that he was in the right valley after all, and a few more to draw conclusions from the fact that the box was open and empty, and that some of the stores had been removed and others left behind. But was it possible that a man in Weston’s physical condition could have recovered sufficiently during the night to strike camp and to go away laden with some kind of pack? Was it possible that any man could have faced a sea like that in a collapsible punt? It was true, as he now noticed for the first time, that the storm (which had been a mere squall by Perelandrian standards) appeared to have blown itself out during the night; but there was still a quite formidable swell and it seemed out of the question that the Professor could have left the island. Much more probably he had left the valley on foot and carried the punt with him. Ransom decided that he must find Weston at once: he must keep in touch with his enemy. For if Weston had recovered, there was no doubt he meant mischief of some kind. Ransom was not at all certain that he had understood all his wild talk on the previous day; but what he did understand he disliked very much, and suspected that this vague mysticism about “spirituality” would turn out to be something even nastier than his old and comparatively simple programme of planetary

imperialism. It would be unfair to take seriously the things the man had said immediately before his seizure, no doubt; but there was enough without that.

The next few hours Ransom passed in searching the island for food and for Weston. As far as food was concerned, he was rewarded. Some fruit like bilberries could be gathered in handfuls on the upper slopes, and the wooded valleys abounded in a kind of oval nut. The kernel had a toughly soft consistency, rather like cork or kidneys, and the flavour, though somewhat austere and prosaic after the fruit of the floating islands, was not unsatisfactory. The giant mice were as tame as other Perelandrian beasts but seemed stupider. Ransom ascended to the central plateau. The sea was dotted with islands in every direction, rising and falling with the swell, and all separated from one another by wide stretches of water. His eye at once picked out an orange-coloured island, but he did not know whether it was that on which he had been living, for he saw at least two others in which the same colour predominated. At one time he counted twenty-three floating islands in all. That, he thought, was more than the temporary archipelago had contained, and allowed him to hope that any one of those he saw might hide the King — or that the King might even at this moment be re-united to the Lady. Without thinking it out very clearly, he had come to rest almost all his hopes on the King.

Of Weston he could find no trace. It really did seem, in spite of all improbabilities, that he had somehow contrived to leave the Fixed Island; and Ransom's anxiety was very great. What Weston, in his new vein, might do, he had no idea. The best to hope for was that he would simply ignore the master and mistress of Perelandra as mere savages or "natives."

Late in the day, being tired, he sat down on the shore. There was very little swell now and the waves, just before they broke, were less than knee-deep. His feet, made soft by the mattress-like surface which one walks on in those floating islands, were hot and sore. Presently he decided to refresh them by a little wading. The delicious quality of the water drew him out till he was waist-deep. As he stood there, deep in thought, he suddenly perceived that what he had taken to be an effect of light on the water was really the back of one of the great silvery fish. "I wonder would it let me ride it?" he thought; and then, watching how the beast nosed towards him and kept itself as near the shallows as it dared, it was borne in upon him that it was trying to attract his attention. Could it have been *sent*? The thought

had no sooner darted through his mind than he decided to make the experiment. He laid his hand across the creature's back, and it did not flinch from his touch. Then with some difficulty he scrambled into a sitting position across the narrow part behind its head, and while he was doing this it remained as nearly stationary as it could; but as soon as he was firmly in the saddle it whisked itself about and headed for the sea.

If he had wished to withdraw, it was very soon impossible to do so. Already the green pinnacles of the mountain, as he looked back, had withdrawn their summits from the sky and the coastline of the island had begun to conceal its bays and nesses. The breakers were no longer audible — only the prolonged sibilant or chattering noises of the water about him. Many floating islands were visible, though seen from this level they were mere feathery silhouettes. But the fish seemed to be heading for none of these. Straight on, as if it well knew its way, the beat of the great fins carried him for more than an hour. Then green and purple splashed the whole world, and after that darkness.

Somehow he felt hardly any uneasiness when he found himself swiftly climbing and descending the low hills of water through the black night. And here it was not all black. The heavens had vanished, and the surface of the sea; but far, far below him in the heart of the vacancy through which he appeared to be travelling, strange bursting star shells and writhing streaks of a bluish-green luminosity appeared. At first they were very remote, but soon, as far as he could judge, they were nearer. A whole world of phosphorescent creatures seemed to be at play not far from the surface — coiling eels and darting things in complete armour, and then heraldically fantastic shapes to which the sea-horse of our own waters would be commonplace. They were all round him — twenty or thirty of them often in sight at once. And mixed with all this riot of sea-centaurs and sea-dragons he saw yet stranger forms: fishes, if fishes they were, whose forward part was so nearly human in shape that when he first caught sight of them he thought he had fallen into a dream and shook himself to awake. But it was no dream. There — and there again — it was unmistakable: now a shoulder, now a profile, and then for one second a full face: veritable mermen or mermaids. The resemblance to humanity was indeed greater, not less, than he had first supposed. What had for a moment concealed it from him was the total absence of human expression. Yet the faces were not idiotic; they were not even brutal parodies of humanity like those of our terrestrial apes.

They were more like human faces asleep, or faces in which humanity slept while some other life, neither bestial nor diabolic, but merely elvish, out of our orbit, was irrelevantly awake. He remembered his old suspicion that what was myth in one world might always be fact in some other. He wondered also whether the King and Queen of Perelandra, though doubtless the first human pair of this planet, might on the physical side have a marine ancestry. And if so, what then of the man-like things before men in our own world? Must they in truth have been the wistful brutalities whose pictures we see in popular books on evolution? Or were the old myths truer than the modern myths? Had there in truth been a time when satyrs danced in the Italian woods? But he said “Hush” to his mind at this stage, for the mere pleasure of breathing in the fragrance which now began to steal towards him from the blackness ahead. Warm and sweet, and every moment sweeter and purer, and every moment stronger and more filled with all delights, it came to him. He knew well what it was. He would know it henceforward out of the whole universe — the night-breath of a floating island in the star Venus. It was strange to be filled with homesickness for places where his sojourn had been so brief and which were, by any objective standard, so alien to all our race. Or were they? The cord of longing which drew him to the invisible isle seemed to him at that moment to have been fastened long, long before his coming to Perelandra, long before the earliest times that memory could recover in his childhood, before his birth, before the birth of man himself, before the origins of time. It was sharp, sweet, wild, and holy, all in one, and in any world where men’s nerves have ceased to obey their central desires would doubtless have been aphrodisiac too, but not in Perelandra. The fish was no longer moving. Ransom put out his hand. He found he was touching weed. He crawled forward over the head of the monstrous fish, and levered himself on to the gently moving surface of the island. Short as his absence from such places had been, his earth-trained habits of walking had reasserted themselves, and he fell more than once as he groped his way on the heaving lawn. But it did no harm falling here; good luck to it! There were trees all about him in the dark and when a smooth, cool, rounded object came away in his hand he put it, unfearing, to his lips. It was none of the fruits he had tasted before. It was better than any of them. Well might the Lady say of her world that the fruit you ate at any moment was, at that moment, the best. Wearied with his day’s walking and

climbing, and, still more, borne down by absolute satisfaction, he sank into dreamless sleep.

He felt that it was several hours later when he awoke and found himself still in darkness. He knew, too, that he had been suddenly waked: and a moment later he was listening to the sound that had waked him. It was the sound of voices — a man's voice and a woman's in earnest conversation. He judged that they were very close to him — for in a Perelandrian night an object is no more visible six inches than six miles away. He perceived at once who the speakers were: but the voices sounded strange, and the emotions of the speakers were obscure to him, with no facial expression to eke them out.

"I am wondering," said the woman's voice, "whether all the people of your world have the habit of talking about the same thing more than once. I have said already that we are forbidden to dwell on the Fixed Land. Why do you not either talk of something else or stop talking?"

"Because this forbidding is such a strange one," said the Man's voice. "And so unlike the ways of Maleldil in my world. And He has not forbidden you to think about dwelling on the Fixed Land."

"That would be a strange thing — to think about what will never happen."

"Nay, in our world we do it all the time. We put words together to mean things that have never happened and places that never were: beautiful words, well put together. And then tell them to one another. We call it stories or poetry. In that old world you spoke of, Malacandra, they did the same. It is for mirth and wonder and wisdom."

"What is the wisdom in it?"

"Because the world is made up not only of what is but of what might be. Maleldil knows both and wants us to know both."

"This is more than I ever thought of. The other — the Piebald one — has already told me things which made me feel like a tree whose branches were growing wider and wider apart. But this goes beyond all. Stepping out of what is into what might be and talking and making things out there . . . alongside the world. I will ask the King what he thinks of it."

"You see, that is what we always come back to. If only you had not been parted from the King."

"Oh, I see. That also is one of the things that might be. The world might be so made that the King and I were never parted."

“The world would not have to be different — only the way you live. In a world where people live on the Fixed Lands they do not become suddenly separated.”

“But you remember we are not to live on the Fixed Land.”

“No, but He has never forbidden you to think about it. Might not that be one of the reasons why you are forbidden to do it — so that you may have a Might Be to think about, to make Story about as we call it?”

“I will think more of this. I will get the King to make me older about it.”

“How greatly I desire to meet this King of yours! But in the matter of Stories he may be no older than you himself.”

“That saying of yours is like a tree with no fruit. The King is always older than I, and about all things.”

“But Piebald and I have already made you older about certain matters which the King never mentioned to you. That is the new good which you never expected. You thought you would always learn all things from the King; but now Maleldil has sent you other men whom it had never entered your mind to think of and they have told you things the King himself could not know.”

“I begin to see now why the King and I were parted at this time. This is a strange and great good He intended for me.”

“And if you refused to learn things from me and kept on saying you would wait and ask the King, would that not be like turning away from the fruit you had found to the fruit you had expected?”

“These are deep questions, Stranger. Maleldil is not putting much into my mind about them.”

“Do you not see why?”

“No.”

“Since Piebald and I have come to your world we have put many things into your mind which Maleldil has not. Do you not see that He is letting go of your hand a little?”

“How could He? He is wherever we go.”

“Yes, but in another way. He is making you older — making you to learn things not straight from Him but by your own meetings with other people and your own questions and thoughts.”

“He is certainly doing that.”

“Yes. He is making you a full woman, for up till now you were only half made — like the beasts who do nothing of themselves. This time, when you

meet the King again, it is you who will have things to tell him. It is you who will be older than he and who will make him older."

"Maleldil would not make a thing like that happen. It would be like a fruit with no taste."

"But it would have a taste for *him*. Do you not think the King must sometimes be tired of being the older? Would he not love you more if you were wiser than he?"

"Is this what you call a Poetry or do you mean that it really is?"

"I mean a thing that really is."

"But how could anyone love anything more? It is like saying a thing could be bigger than itself."

"I only meant you could become more like the women of my world."

"What are they like?"

"They are of a great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does. They are, as it were, little Maleldils. And because of their wisdom, their beauty is as much greater than yours as the sweetness of these gourds surpasses the taste of water. And because of their beauty the love which the men have for them is as much greater than the King's love for you as the naked burning of Deep Heaven seen from my world is more wonderful than the golden roof of yours."

"I wish I could see them."

"I wish you could."

"How beautiful is Maleldil and how wonderful are all His works: perhaps He will bring out of me daughters as much greater than I as I am greater than the beasts. It will be better than I thought. I had thought I was to be always Queen and Lady. But I see now that I may be as the eldila. I may be appointed to cherish when they are small and weak children who will grow up and overtop me and at whose feet I shall fall. I see it is not only questions and thoughts that grow out wider and wider like branches. Joy also widens out and comes where we had never thought."

"I will sleep now," said the other voice. As it said this it became, for the first time, unmistakably the voice of Weston — and of Weston disgruntled and snappish. Up till now Ransom, though constantly resolving to join the conversation, had been kept silent in a kind of suspense between two

conflicting states of mind. On the one hand he was certain, both from the voice and from many of the things it said, that the male speaker was Weston. On the other hand, the voice, divided from the man's appearance, sounded curiously unlike itself. Still more, the patient persistent manner in which it was used was very unlike the Professor's usual alternation between pompous lecturing and abrupt bullying. And how could a man fresh from such a physical crisis as he had seen Weston undergo have recovered such mastery of himself in a few hours? And how could he have reached the floating island? Ransom had found himself throughout their dialogue confronted with an intolerable contradiction. Something which was and was not Weston was talking: and the sense of this monstrosity, only a few feet away in the darkness, had sent thrills of exquisite horror tingling along his spine, and raised questions in his mind which he tried to dismiss as fantastic. Now that the conversation was over he realised, too, with what intense anxiety he had followed it. At the same moment he was conscious of a sense of triumph. But it was not he who was triumphant. The whole darkness about him rang with victory. He started and half raised himself. Had there been any actual sound? Listening hard he could hear nothing but the low murmurous noise of warm wind and gentle swell. The suggestion of music must have been from within. But as soon as he lay down again he felt assured that it was not. From without, most certainly from without, but not by the sense of hearing, festal revelry and dance and splendour poured into him — no sound, yet in such fashion that it could not be remembered or thought of except as music. It was like having a new sense. It was like being present when the morning stars sang together. It was as if Perelandra had that moment been created — and perhaps in some sense it had. The feeling of a great disaster averted was forced upon his mind, and with it came the hope that there would be no second attempt; and then, sweeter than all, the suggestion that he had been brought there not to do anything but only as a spectator or a witness. A few minutes later he was asleep.

NINE

The weather had changed during the night. Ransom sat looking out from the edge of the forest in which he had slept, on a flat sea where there were no other islands in view. He had waked a few minutes before and found himself lying alone in a close thicket of stems that were rather reed-like in character but stout as those of birch trees and which carried an almost flat roof of thick foliage. From this there hung fruits as smooth and bright and round as holly-berries, some of which he ate. Then he found his way to open country near the skirts of the island and looked about him. Neither Weston nor the Lady was in sight, and he began walking in a leisurely fashion beside the sea. His bare feet sank a little into a carpet of saffron-coloured vegetation, which covered them with an aromatic dust. As he was looking down at this he suddenly noticed something else. At first he thought it was a creature of more fantastic shape than he had yet seen on Perelandra. Its shape was not only fantastic but hideous. Then he dropped on one knee to examine it. Finally he touched it, with reluctance. A moment later he drew back his hands like a man who had touched a snake.

It was a damaged animal. It was, or had been, one of the brightly coloured frogs. But some accident had happened to it. The whole back had been ripped open in a sort of V-shaped gash, the point of the V being a little behind the head. Something had torn a widening wound backward — as we do in opening an envelope — along the trunk and pulled it out so far behind the animal that the hoppers or hind legs had been almost torn off with it. They were so damaged that the frog could not leap. On earth it would have been merely a nasty sight, but up to this moment Ransom had as yet seen nothing dead or spoiled in Perelandra, and it was like a blow in the face. It was like the first spasm of well-remembered pain warning a man who had thought he was cured that his family have deceived him and he is dying after all. It was like the first lie from the mouth of a friend on whose truth one was willing to stake a thousand pounds. It was irrevocable. The milk-warm wind blowing over the golden sea, the blues and silvers and greens of the floating garden, the sky itself — all these had become, in one instant, merely the illuminated margin of a book whose text was the struggling little horror at his feet, and he himself, in that same instant, had passed into a state of emotion which he could neither control nor understand. He told

himself that a creature of that kind probably had very little sensation. But it did not much mend matters. It was not merely pity for pain that had suddenly changed the rhythm of his heart-beats. The thing was an intolerable obscenity which afflicted him with shame. It would have been better, or so he thought at that moment, for the whole universe never to have existed than for this one thing to have happened. Then he decided, in spite of his theoretical belief that it was an organism too low for much pain, that it had better be killed. He had neither boots nor stone nor stick. The frog proved remarkably hard to kill. When it was far too late to desist he saw clearly that he had been a fool to make the attempt. Whatever its sufferings might be he had certainly increased and not diminished them. But he had to go through with it. The job seemed to take nearly an hour. And when at last the mangled result was quite still and he went down to the water's edge to wash, he was sick and shaken. It seems odd to say this of a man who had been on the Somme; but the architects tell us that nothing is great or small save by position.

At last he got up and resumed his walk. Next moment he started and looked at the ground again. He quickened his pace, and then once more stopped and looked. He stood stock-still and covered his face. He called aloud upon heaven to break the nightmare or to let him understand what was happening. A trail of mutilated frogs lay along the edge of the island. Picking his footsteps with care, he followed it. He counted ten, fifteen, twenty: and the twenty-first brought him to a place where the wood came down to the water's edge. He went into the wood and came out on the other side. There he stopped dead and stared. Weston, still clothed but without his pith helmet, was standing about thirty feet away: and as Ransom watched he was tearing a frog — quietly and almost surgically inserting his forefinger, with its long sharp nail, under the skin behind the creature's head and ripping it open. Ransom had not noticed before that Weston had such remarkable nails. Then he finished the operation, threw the bleeding ruin away, and looked up. Their eyes met.

If Ransom said nothing, it was because he could not speak. He saw a man who was certainly not ill, to judge from his easy stance and the powerful use he had just been making of his fingers. He saw a man who was certainly Weston, to judge from his height and build and colouring and features. In that sense he was quite recognisable. But the terror was that he was also unrecognisable. He did not look like a sick man: but he looked

very like a dead one. The face which he raised from torturing the frog had that terrible power which the face of a corpse sometimes has of simply rebuffing every conceivable human attitude one can adopt towards it. The expressionless mouth, the unwinking stare of the eyes, something heavy and inorganic in the very folds of the cheek, said clearly: “I have features as you have, but there is nothing in common between you and me.” It was this that kept Ransom speechless. What could you say — what appeal or threat could have any meaning — to *that*? And now, forcing its way up into consciousness, thrusting aside every mental habit and every longing not to believe, came the conviction that this, in fact, was not a man: that Weston’s body was kept, walking and undecaying, in Perelandra by some wholly different kind of life, and that Weston himself was gone.

It looked at Ransom in silence and at last began to smile. We have all often spoken — Ransom himself had often spoken — of a devilish smile. Now he realised that he had never taken the words seriously. The smile was not bitter, nor raging, nor, in an ordinary sense, sinister; it was not even mocking. It seemed to summon Ransom, with a horrible naïveté of welcome, into the world of its own pleasures, as if all men were at one in those pleasures, as if they were the most natural thing in the world and no dispute could ever have occurred about them. It was not furtive, nor ashamed, it had nothing of the conspirator in it. It did not defy goodness, it ignored it to the point of annihilation. Ransom perceived that he had never before seen anything but half-hearted and uneasy attempts at evil. This creature was whole-hearted. The extremity of its evil had passed beyond all struggle into some state which bore a horrible similarity to innocence. It was beyond vice as the Lady was beyond virtue.

The stillness and the smiling lasted for perhaps two whole minutes: certainly not less. Then Ransom made to take a step towards the thing, with no very clear notion of what he would do when he reached it. He stumbled and fell. He had a curious difficulty in getting to his feet again, and when he got to them he overbalanced and fell for the second time. Then there was a moment of darkness filled with a noise of roaring express trains. After that the golden sky and coloured waves returned and he knew he was alone and recovering from a faint. As he lay there, still unable and perhaps unwilling to rise, it came into his mind that in certain old philosophers and poets he had read that the mere sight of the devils was one of the greatest among the torments of Hell. It had seemed to him till now merely a quaint fancy. And

yet (as he now saw) even the children know better: no child would have any difficulty in understanding that there might be a face the mere beholding of which was final calamity. The children, the poets, and the philosophers were right. As there is one Face above all worlds merely to see which is irrevocable joy, so at the bottom of all worlds that face is waiting whose sight alone is the misery from which none who beholds it can recover. And though there seemed to be, and indeed were, a thousand roads by which a man could walk through the world, there was not a single one which did not lead sooner or later either to the Beatific or the Miserific Vision. He himself had, of course, seen only a mask or faint adumbration of it; even so, he was not quite sure that he would live.

When he was able, he got up and set out to search for the thing. He must either try to prevent it from meeting the Lady or at least be present when they met. What he could do, he did not know; but it was clear beyond all evasion that this was what he had been sent for. Weston's body, travelling in a space-ship, had been the bridge by which something else had invaded Perelandra — whether that supreme and original evil whom in Mars they call The Bent One, or one of his lesser followers, made no difference. Ransom was all goose-flesh, and his knees kept getting in each other's way. It surprised him that he could experience so extreme a terror and yet be walking and thinking — as men in war or sickness are surprised to find how much can be borne. "It will drive us mad," "It will kill us outright," we say; and then it happens and we find ourselves neither mad nor dead, still held to the task.

The weather changed. The plain on which he was walking swelled to a wave of land. The sky grew paler: it was soon rather primrose than gold. The sea grew darker, almost the colour of bronze. Soon the island was climbing considerable hills of water. Once or twice he had to sit down and rest. After several hours (for his progress was very slow) he suddenly saw two human figures on what was for the moment a skyline. Next moment they were out of sight as the country heaved up between them and him. It took about half an hour to reach them. Weston's body was standing — swaying and balancing itself to meet each change of the ground in a manner of which the real Weston would have been incapable. It was talking to the Lady. And what surprised Ransom most was that she continued to listen to it without turning to welcome him or even to comment on his arrival when he came and sat down beside her on the soft turf.

“It *is* a great branching out,” it was saying. “This making of story or poetry about things that might be but are not. If you shrink back from it, are you not drawing back from the fruit that is offered you?”

“It is not from the making a story that I shrink back, O Stranger,” she answered, “but from this one story that you have put into my head. I can make myself stories about my children or the King. I can make it that the fish fly and the land beasts swim. But if I try to make the story about living on the Fixed Island I do not know how to make it about Maleldil. For if I make it that He has changed His command, that will not go. And if I make it that we are living there against His command, that is like making the sky all black and the water so that we cannot drink it and the air so that we cannot breathe it. But also, I do not see what is the pleasure of trying to make these things.”

“To make you wiser, older,” said Weston’s body.

“Do you know for certain that it will do that?” she asked.

“Yes, for certain,” it replied. “That is how the women of my world have become so great and so beautiful.”

“Do not listen to him,” broke in Ransom; “send him away. Do not hear what he says, do not think of it.”

She turned to Ransom for the first time. There had been some very slight change in her face since he had last seen her. It was not sad, nor deeply bewildered, but the hint of something precarious had increased. On the other hand she was clearly pleased to see him, though surprised at his interruption; and her first words revealed that her failure to greet him at his arrival had resulted from her never having envisaged the possibility of a conversation between more than two speakers. And throughout the rest of their talk, her ignorance of the technique of general conversation gave a curious and disquieting quality to the whole scene. She had no notion of how to glance rapidly from one face to another or to disentangle two remarks at once. Sometimes she listened wholly to Ransom, sometimes wholly to the other, but never to both.

“Why do you start speaking before this man has finished, Piebald?” she inquired. “How do they do in your world where you are many and more than two must often be together? Do they not talk in turns; or have you an art to understand even when all speak together? I am not old enough for that.”

“I do not want you to hear him at all,” said Ransom. “He is — —” and then he hesitated. “Bad,” “liar,” “enemy,” none of these words would, as yet, have any meaning for her. Racking his brains he thought of their previous conversation about the great eldil who had held on to the old good and refused the new one. Yes; that would be her only approach to the idea of badness. He was just about to speak but it was too late. Weston’s voice anticipated him.

“This Piebald,” it said, “does not want you to hear me, because he wants to keep you young. He does not want you to go on to the new fruits that you have never tasted before.”

“But how could he want to keep me younger?”

“Have you not seen already,” said Weston’s body, “that Piebald is one who always shrinks back from the wave that is coming towards us and would like, if he could, to bring back the wave that is past? In the very first hour of his talking with you, did he not betray this? He did not know that all was new since Maleldil became a man and that now all creatures with reason will be men. You had to teach him this. And when he had learned it he did not welcome it. He was sorry that there would be no more of the old furry people. He would bring back that old world if he could. And when you asked him to teach you Death, he would not. He wanted you to remain young, not to learn Death. Was it not he who first put into your mind the very thought that it was possible not to desire the wave that Maleldil was rolling towards us; to shrink so much that you would cut off your arms and legs to prevent it coming?”

“You mean he is so young?”

“He is what in my world we call Bad,” said Weston’s body. “One who rejects the fruit he is given for the sake of the fruit he expected or the fruit he found last time.”

“We must make him older, then,” said the Lady, and though she did not look at Ransom, all the Queen and Mother in her were revealed to him and he knew that she wished him, and all things, infinitely well. And he — he could do nothing. His weapon had been knocked out of his hand.

“And will you teach us Death?” said the Lady to Weston’s shape, where it stood above her.

“Yes,” it said, “it is for this that I came here, that you may have Death in abundance. But you must be very courageous.”

“*Courageous.* What is that?”

“It is what makes you to swim on a day when the waves are so great and swift that something inside you bids you to stay on land.”

“I know. And those are the best days of all for swimming.”

“Yes. But to find Death, and with Death the real oldness and the strong beauty and the uttermost branching out, you must plunge into things greater than waves.”

“Go on. Your words are like no other words that I have ever heard. They are like the bubble breaking on the tree. They make me think of — of — I do not know what they make me think of.”

“I will speak greater words than these; but I must wait till you are older.”

“Make me older.”

“Lady, Lady,” broke in Ransom, “will not Maleldil make you older in His own time and His own way, and will not that be far better?”

Weston’s face did not turn in his direction either at this point or at any other time during the conversation, but his voice, addressed wholly to the Lady, answered Ransom’s interruption.

“You see?” it said. “He himself, though he did not mean nor wish to do so, made you see a few days ago that Maleldil is beginning to teach you to walk by yourself, without holding you by the hand. That was the first branching out. When you came to know that, you were becoming really old. And since then Maleldil has let you learn much — not from His own voice, but from mine. You are becoming your own. That is what Maleldil wants you to do. That is why He has let you be separated from the King and even, in a way, from Himself. His way of making you older is to make you make yourself older. And yet this Piebald would have you sit still and wait for Maleldil to do it all.”

“What must we do to Piebald to make him older?” said the Lady.

“I do not think you can help him till you are older yourself,” said the voice of Weston. “You cannot help anyone yet. You are as a tree without fruit.”

“It is very true,” said the Lady. “Go on.”

“Then listen,” said Weston’s body. “Have you understood that to wait for Maleldil’s voice when Maleldil wishes you to walk on your own is a kind of disobedience?”

“I think I have.”

“The wrong kind of obeying itself can be a disobeying.”

The Lady thought for a few moments and then clapped her hands. “I see,” she said, “I see! Oh, how old you make me. Before now I have chased a beast for mirth. And it has understood and run away from me. If it had stood still and let me catch it, that would have been a sort of obeying — but not the best sort.”

“You understand very well. When you are fully grown you will be even wiser and more beautiful than the women of my own world. And you see that it might be so with Maleldil’s biddings.”

“I think I do not see quite clearly.”

“Are you certain that He really wishes to be always obeyed?”

“How can we not obey what we love?”

“The beast that ran away loved you.”

“I wonder,” said the Lady, “if that is the same. The beast knows very well when I mean it to run away and when I want it to come to me. But Maleldil has never said to us that any word or work of His was a jest. How could our Beloved need to jest or frolic as we do? He is all a burning joy and a strength. It is like thinking that He needed sleep or food.”

“No, it would not be a jest. That is only a thing like it, not the thing itself. But could the taking away of your hand from His — the full growing up — the walking in your own way — could that ever be perfect unless you had, if only once, *seemed* to disobey Him?”

“How could one *seem* to disobey?”

“By doing what He only *seemed* to forbid. There might be a commanding which He wished you to break.”

“But if He told us we were to break it, then it would be no command. And if He did not, how should we know?”

“How wise you are growing, beautiful one,” said Weston’s mouth. “No. If He told you to break what He commanded, it would be no true command, as you have seen. For you are right, He makes no jests. A real disobeying, a real branching out, this is what He secretly longs for: secretly, because to tell you would spoil all.”

“I begin to wonder,” said the Lady after a pause, “whether you are so much older than I. Surely what you are saying is like fruit with no taste! How can I step out of His will save into something that cannot be wished? Shall I start trying not to love Him — or the King — or the beasts? It would be like trying to walk on water or swim through islands. Shall I try not to

sleep or to drink or to laugh? I thought your words had a meaning. But now it seems they have none. To walk out of His will is to walk into nowhere."

"That is true of all His commands except one."

"But can that one be different?"

"Nay, you see of yourself that it is different. These other commands of His — to love, to sleep, to fill this world with your children — you see for yourself that they are good. And they are the same in all worlds. But the command against living on the Fixed Island is not so. You have already learned that He gave no such command to my world. And you cannot see where the goodness of it is. No wonder. If it were really good, must He not have commanded it to all worlds alike? For how could Maleldil not command what was good? There is *no* good in it. Maleldil Himself is showing you that, this moment, through your own reason. It is mere command. It is forbidding for the mere sake of forbidding."

"But why . . . ?"

"In order that you may break it. What other reason can there be? It is not good. It is not the same for other worlds. It stands between you and all settled life, all command of your own days. Is not Maleldil showing you as plainly as He can that it was set up as a test — as a great wave you have to go over, that you may become really old, really separate from Him."

"But if this concerns me so deeply, why does He put none of this into my mind? It is all coming from you, Stranger. There is no whisper, even, of the Voice saying Yes to your words."

"But do you not see that there cannot be? He longs — oh, how greatly He longs — to see His creature become fully itself, to stand up in its own reason and its own courage even against Him. But how can He *tell* it to do this? That would spoil all. Whatever it did after that would only be one more step taken *with* Him. This is the one thing of all the things He desires in which He must have no finger. Do you think He is not weary of seeing nothing but Himself in all that He has made? If that contented Him, why should He create at all? To find the Other — the thing whose will is no longer His — that is Maleldil's desire."

"If I could but know this — —"

"He must not tell you. He cannot tell you. The nearest He can come to telling you is to let some other creature tell it for Him. And behold, He has done so. Is it for nothing, or without His will, that I have journeyed through

Deep Heaven to teach you what He would have you know but must not teach you Himself?"

"Lady," said Ransom, "if I speak, will you hear me?"

"Gladly, Piebald."

"This man has said that the law against living on the Fixed Island is different from the other Laws, because it is not the same for all worlds and because we cannot see the goodness in it. And so far he says well. But then he says that it is thus different in order that you may disobey it. But there might be another reason."

"Say it, Piebald."

"I think He made one law of that kind in order that there might be obedience. In all these other matters what you call obeying Him is but doing what seems good in your own eyes also. Is love content with that? You do them, indeed, because they are His will, but not only because they are His will. Where can you taste the joy of obeying unless He bids you do something for which His bidding is the *only* reason? When we spoke last you said that if you told the beasts to walk on their heads, they would delight to do so. So I know that you understand well what I am saying."

"Oh, brave Piebald," said the Green Lady, "this is the best you have said yet. This makes me older far: yet it does not feel like the oldness this other is giving me. Oh, how well I see it! We cannot walk out of Maleldil's will: but He has given us a way to walk out of *our* will. And there could be no such way except a command like this. Out of our own will. It is like passing out through the world's roof into Deep Heaven. All beyond is Love Himself. I knew there was joy in looking upon the Fixed Island and laying down all thought of ever living there, but I did not till now understand." Her face was radiant as she spoke, but then a shade of bewilderment crossed it. "Piebald," she said, "if you are so young, as this other says, how do you know these things?"

"He says I am young, but I say not."

The voice of Weston's face spoke suddenly, and it was louder and deeper than before and less like Weston's voice.

"I am older than he," it said, "and he dare not deny it. Before the mothers of the mothers of his mother were conceived, I was already older than he could reckon. I have been with Maleldil in Deep Heaven where he never came and heard the eternal councils. And in the order of creation I am greater than he, and before me he is of no account. Is it not so?" The corpse-

like face did not even now turn towards him, but the speaker and the Lady both seemed to wait for Ransom to reply. The falsehood which sprang to his mind died on his lips. In that air, even when truth seemed fatal, only truth would serve. Licking his lips and choking down a feeling of nausea, he answered:

"In our world to be older is not always to be wiser."

"Look on him," said Weston's body to the Lady; "consider how white his cheeks have turned and how his forehead is wet. You have not seen such things before: you will see them more often hereafter. It is what happens — it is the beginning of what happens — to little creatures when they set themselves against great ones."

An exquisite thrill of fear travelled along Ransom's spine. What saved him was the face of the Lady. Untouched by the evil so close to her, removed as it were ten years' journey deep within the region of her own innocence, and by that innocence at once so protected and so endangered, she looked up at the standing Death above her, puzzled indeed, but not beyond the bounds of cheerful curiosity, and said:

"But he was right, Stranger, about this forbidding. It is you who need to be made older. Can you not see?"

"I have always seen the whole whereof he sees but the half. It is most true that Maleldil has given you a way of walking out of your own will — but out of your deepest will."

"And what is that?"

"Your deepest will, at present, is to obey Him — to be always as you are now, only His beast or His very young child. The way out of that is hard. It was made hard that only the very great, the very wise, the very courageous should dare to walk in it, to go on — on out of this smallness in which you now live — through the dark wave of His forbidding, into the real life, Deep Life, with all its joy and splendour and hardness."

"Listen, Lady," said Ransom. "There is something he is not telling you. All this that we are now talking has been talked before. The thing he wants you to try has been tried before. Long ago, when our world began, there was only one man and one woman in it, as you and the King are in this. And there once before he stood, as he stands now, talking to the woman. He had found her alone as he has found you alone. And she listened, and did the thing Maleldil had forbidden her to do. But no joy and splendour came of it. What came of it I cannot tell you because you have no image of it in

your mind. But all love was troubled and made cold, and Maleldil's voice became hard to hear so that wisdom grew little among them; and the woman was against the man and the mother against the child; and when they looked to eat there was no fruit on their trees, and hunting for food took all their time, so that their life became narrower, not wider."

"He has hidden the half of what happened," said Weston's corpse-like mouth. "Hardness came out of it but also splendour. They made with their own hands mountains higher than your Fixed Island. They made for themselves Floating Islands greater than yours which they could move at will through the ocean faster than any bird can fly. Because there was not always food enough, a woman could give the only fruit to her child or her husband and eat death instead — could give them all, as you in your little narrow life of playing and kissing and riding fishes have never done, nor shall do till you break the commandment. Because knowledge was harder to find, those few who found it became more beautiful and excelled their fellows as you excel the beasts; and thousands were striving for their love . . ."

"I think I will go to sleep now," said the Lady quite suddenly. Up to this point she had been listening to Weston's body with open mouth and wide eyes, but as he spoke of the women with the thousands of lovers she yawned, with the unconcealed and unpremeditated yawn of a young cat.

"Not yet," said the other. "There is more. He has not told you that it was this breaking of the commandment which brought Maleldil to our world and because of which He was made man. He dare not deny it."

"Do you say this, Piebald?" asked the Lady.

Ransom was sitting with his fingers locked so tightly that his knuckles were white. The unfairness of it all was wounding him like barbed wire. Unfair . . . unfair. How could Maleldil expect him to fight against this, to fight with every weapon taken from him, forbidden to lie and yet brought to places where truth seemed fatal? It was unfair! A sudden impulse of hot rebellion arose in him. A second later, doubt, like a huge wave, came breaking over him. How if the enemy were right after all? *Felix peccatum Adae.* Even the Church would tell him that good came of disobedience in the end. Yes, and it was true too that he, Ransom, was a timid creature, a man who shrank back from new and hard things. On which side, after all, did the temptation lie? Progress passed before his eyes in a great momentary vision: cities, armies, tall ships, and libraries and fame, and the

grandeur of poetry spurting like a fountain out of the labours and ambitions of men. Who could be certain that Creative Evolution was not the deepest truth? From all sorts of secret crannies in his own mind whose very existence he had never before suspected, something wild and heady and delicious began to rise, to pour itself toward the shape of Weston. “It is a spirit, it is a spirit,” said this inner voice, “and you are only a man. It goes on from century to century. You are only a man. . . .”

“Do you say this, Piebald?” asked the Lady a second time.

The spell was broken.

“I will tell you what I say,” answered Ransom, jumping to his feet. “Of course good came of it. Is Maleldil a beast that we can stop His path, or a leaf that we can twist His shape? Whatever you do, He will make good of it. But not the good He had prepared for you if you had obeyed Him. That is lost for ever. The first King and first Mother of our world did the forbidden thing; and He brought good of it in the end. But what they did was not good; and what they lost we have not seen. And there were some to whom no good came nor ever will come.” He turned to the body of Weston. “You,” he said, “tell her all. What good came to you? Do *you* rejoice that Maleldil became a man? Tell her of *your* joys, and of what profit you had when you made Maleldil and death acquainted.”

In the moment that followed this speech two things happened that were utterly unlike terrestrial experience. The body that had been Weston’s threw up its head and opened its mouth and gave a long melancholy howl like a dog; and the Lady lay down, wholly unconcerned, and closed her eyes and was instantly asleep. And while these two things were happening the piece of ground on which the two men stood and the woman lay was rushing down a great hillside of water.

Ransom kept his eyes fixed upon the enemy, but it took no notice of him. Its eyes moved like the eyes of a living man but it was hard to be sure what it was looking at, or whether it really used the eyes as organs of vision at all. One got the impression of a force that cleverly kept the pupils of those eyes fixed in a suitable direction while the mouth talked but which, for its own purpose, used wholly different modes of perception. The thing sat down close to the Lady’s head on the far side of her from Ransom. If you could call it sitting down. The body did not reach its squatting position by the normal movements of a man: it was more as if some external force manoeuvred it into the right position and then let it drop. It was impossible

to point to any particular motion which was definitely non-human. Ransom had the sense of watching an imitation of living motions which had been very well studied and was technically correct: but somehow it lacked the master touch. And he was chilled with an inarticulate, night-nursery horror of the thing he had to deal with — the managed corpse, the bogey, the Un-man.

There was nothing to do but to watch: to sit there, for ever if need be, guarding the Lady from the Un-man while their island climbed interminably over the Alps and Andes of burnished water. All three were very still. Beasts and birds came often and looked upon them. Hours later the Un-man began to speak. It did not even look in Ransom's direction; slowly and cumbrously, as if by some machinery that needed oiling, it made its mouth and lips pronounce his name.

"Ransom," it said.

"Well?" said Ransom.

"Nothing," said the Un-man. He shot an inquisitive glance at it. Was the creature mad? But it looked, as before, dead rather than mad, sitting there with the head bowed and the mouth a little open, and some yellow dust from the moss settled in the creases of its cheeks, and the legs crossed tailor-wise, and the hands, with their long metallic-looking nails, pressed flat together on the ground before it. He dismissed the problem from his mind and returned to his own uncomfortable thoughts.

"Ransom," it said again.

"What is it?" said Ransom sharply.

"Nothing," it answered.

Again there was silence; and again, about a minute later, the horrible mouth said:

"Ransom!" This time he made no reply. Another minute and it uttered his name again; and then, like a minute gun, "Ransom . . . Ransom . . . Ransom," perhaps a hundred times.

"What the Hell do you want?" he roared at last.

"Nothing," said the voice. Next time he determined not to answer; but when it had called on him about a thousand times he found himself answering whether he would or no, and "Nothing," came the reply. He taught himself to keep silent in the end: not that the torture of resisting his impulse to speak was less than the torture of response but because something within him rose up to combat the tormentor's assurance that he

must yield in the end. If the attack had been of some more violent kind it might have been easier to resist. What chilled and almost cowed him was the union of malice with something nearly childish. For temptation, for blasphemy, for a whole battery of horrors, he was in some sort prepared: but hardly for this petty, indefatigable nagging as of a nasty little boy at a preparatory school. Indeed no imagined horror could have surpassed the sense which grew within him as the slow hours passed, that this creature was, by all human standards, inside out — its heart on the surface and its shallowness at the heart. On the surface, great designs and an antagonism to Heaven which involved the fate of worlds: but deep within, when every veil had been pierced, was there, after all, nothing but a black puerility, an aimless empty spitefulness content to sate itself with the tiniest cruelties, as love does not disdain the smallest kindness? What kept him steady, long after all possibility of thinking about something else had disappeared, was the decision that if he must hear either the word Ransom or the word Nothing a million times, he would prefer the word Ransom.

And all the time the little jewel-coloured land went soaring up into the yellow firmament and hung there a moment and tilted its woods and went racing down into the warm lustrous depths between the waves: and the Lady lay sleeping with one arm bent beneath her head and her lips a little parted. Sleeping, assuredly — for her eyes were shut and her breathing regular — yet not looking quite like those who sleep in our world, for her face was full of expression and intelligence, and the limbs looked as if they were ready at any moment to leap up, and altogether she gave the impression that sleep was not a thing that happened to her but an action which she performed.

Then all at once it was night. “Ransom . . . Ransom . . . Ransom . . . Ransom” went on the voice. And suddenly it crossed his mind that though he would some time require sleep, the Un-man might not.

TEN

Sleep proved to be indeed the problem. For what seemed a great time, cramped and wearied, and soon hungry and thirsty as well, he sat still in the darkness trying not to attend to the unflagging repetition of “Ransom — Ransom — Ransom.” But presently he found himself listening to a conversation of which he knew he had not heard the beginning and realised that he had slept. The Lady seemed to be saying very little. Weston’s voice was speaking gently and continuously. It was not talking about the Fixed Land nor even about Maleldil. It appeared to be telling, with extreme beauty and pathos, a number of stories, and at first Ransom could not perceive any connecting link between them. They were all about women, but women who had apparently lived at different periods of the world’s history and in quite different circumstances. From the Lady’s replies it appeared that the stories contained much that she did not understand; but oddly enough the Un-man did not mind. If the questions aroused by any one story proved at all difficult to answer, the speaker simply dropped that story and instantly began another. The heroines of the stories seemed all to have suffered a great deal — they had been oppressed by fathers, cast off by husbands, deserted by lovers. Their children had risen up against them and society had driven them out. But the stories all ended, in a sense, happily: sometimes with honours and praises to a heroine still living, more often with tardy acknowledgment and unavailing tears after her death. As the endless speech proceeded, the Lady’s questions grew always fewer; some meaning for the words Death and Sorrow — though what kind of meaning Ransom could not even guess — was apparently being created in her mind by mere repetition. At last it dawned upon him what all these stories were about. Each one of these women had stood forth alone and braved a terrible risk for her child, her lover, or her people. Each had been misunderstood, reviled, and persecuted: but each also magnificently vindicated by the event. The precise details were often not very easy to follow. Ransom had more than a suspicion that many of these noble pioneers had been what in ordinary terrestrial speech we call witches or perverts. But that was all in the background. What emerged from the stories was rather an image than an idea — the picture of the tall, slender form, unbowed though the world’s weight rested upon its shoulders, stepping forth fearless and friendless into

the dark to do for others what those others forbade it to do yet needed to have done. And all the time, as a sort of background to these goddess shapes, the speaker was building up a picture of the other sex. No word was directly spoken on the subject: but one felt them there as a huge, dim multitude of creatures pitifully childish and complacently arrogant; timid, meticulous, unoriginating; sluggish and ox-like, rooted to the earth almost in their indolence, prepared to try nothing, to risk nothing, to make no exertion, and capable of being raised into full life only by the unthanked and rebellious virtue of their females. It was very well done. Ransom, who had little of the pride of sex, found himself for a few moments all but believing it.

In the midst of this the darkness was suddenly torn by a flash of lightning; a few seconds later came a revel of Perelandrian thunder, like the playing of a heavenly tambourine, and after that warm rain. Ransom did not much regard it. The flash had shown him the Un-man sitting bolt upright, the Lady raised on one elbow, the dragon lying awake at her head, a grove of trees beyond, and great waves against the horizon. He was thinking of what he had seen. He was wondering how the Lady could see that face — those jaws monotonously moving as if they were rather munching than talking — and not know the creature to be evil. He saw, of course, that this was unreasonable of him. He himself was doubtless an uncouth figure in her eyes; she could have no knowledge either about evil or about the normal appearance of terrestrial man to guide her. The expression on her face, revealed in the sudden light, was one that he had not seen there before. Her eyes were not fixed on the narrator: as far as that went, her thoughts might have been a thousand miles away. Her lips were shut and a little pursed. Her eyebrows were slightly raised. He had not yet seen her look so like a woman of our own race; and yet her expression was one he had not very often met on earth — except, as he realised with a shock, on the stage. “Like a tragedy queen” was the disgusting comparison that arose in his mind. Of course it was a gross exaggeration. It was an insult for which he could not forgive himself. And yet . . . and yet . . . the tableau revealed by the lightning had photographed itself on his brain. Do what he would, he found it impossible not to think of that new look in her face. A very *good* tragedy queen, no doubt. The heroine of a very great tragedy, very nobly played by an actress who was a good woman in real life. By earthly standards, an expression to be praised, even to be revered: but remembering

all that he had read in her countenance before, the unselfconscious radiance, the frolic sanctity, the depth of stillness that reminded him sometimes of infancy and sometimes of extreme old age while the hard youth and valiancy of face and body denied both, he found this new expression horrifying. The fatal touch of invited grandeur, of enjoyed pathos — the assumption, however slight, of a rôle — seemed a hateful vulgarity. Perhaps she was doing no more — he had good hope that she was doing no more — than responding in a purely imaginative fashion to this new art of Story or Poetry. But by God she'd better not! And for the first time the thought "This can't go on" formulated itself in his mind.

"I will go where the leaves cover us from the rain," said her voice in the darkness. Ransom had hardly noticed that he was getting wet — in a world without clothes it is less important. But he rose when he heard her move and followed her as well as he could by ear. The Un-man seemed to be doing the same. They progressed in total darkness on a surface as variable as that of water. Every now and then there was another flash. One saw the Lady walking erect, the Un-man slouching by her side with Weston's shirt and shorts now sodden and clinging to it, and the dragon puffing and waddling behind. At last they came to a place where the carpet under their feet was dry and there was a drumming noise of rain on firm leaves above their heads. They lay down again. "And another time," began the Un-man at once, "there was a queen in our world who ruled over a little land — —"

"Hush!" said the Lady, "let us listen to the rain." Then, after a moment, she added, "What was that? It was some beast I never heard before" — and indeed, there had been something very like a low growl close beside them.

"I do not know," said the voice of Weston.

"I think I do," said Ransom.

"Hush!" said the Lady again, and no more was said that night.

This was the beginning of a series of days and nights which Ransom remembered with loathing for the rest of his life. He had been only too correct in supposing that his enemy required no sleep. Fortunately the Lady did, but she needed a good deal less than Ransom and possibly, as the days passed, came to take less than she needed. It seemed to Ransom that whenever he dozed he awoke to find the Un-man already in conversation with her. He was dead tired. He could hardly have endured it at all but for the fact that their hostess quite frequently dismissed them both from her presence. On such occasions Ransom kept close to the Un-man. It was a

rest from the main battle, but it was a very imperfect rest. He did not dare to let the enemy out of his sight for a moment, and every day its society became more unendurable. He had full opportunity to learn the falsity of the maxim that the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Again and again he felt that a suave and subtle Mephistopheles with red cloak and rapier and a feather in his cap, or even a sombre tragic Satan out of *Paradise Lost*, would have been a welcome release from the thing he was actually doomed to watch. It was not like dealing with a wicked politician at all: it was much more like being set to guard an imbecile or a monkey or a very nasty child. What had staggered and disgusted him when it first began saying, "Ransom . . . Ransom . . ." continued to disgust him every day and every hour. It showed plenty of subtlety and intelligence when talking to the Lady; but Ransom soon perceived that it regarded intelligence simply and solely as a weapon, which it had no more wish to employ in its off-duty hours than a soldier has to do bayonet practice when he is on leave. Thought was for it a device necessary to certain ends, but thought in itself did not interest it. It assumed reason as externally and inorganically as it had assumed Weston's body. The moment the Lady was out of sight it seemed to relapse. A great deal of his time was spent in protecting the animals from it. Whenever it got out of sight, or even a few yards ahead, it would make a grab at any beast or bird within its reach and pull out some fur or feathers. Ransom tried whenever possible to get between it and its victim. On such occasions there were nasty moments when the two stood facing each other. It never came to a fight, for the Un-man merely grinned and perhaps spat and fell back a little, but before that happened Ransom usually had opportunity to discover how terribly he feared it. For side by side with his disgust, the more childlike terror of living with a ghost or a mechanised corpse never left him for many minutes together. The fact of being *alone* with it sometimes rushed upon his mind with such dismay that it took all his reason to resist his longing for society — his impulse to rush madly over the island until he found the Lady and to beg her protection. When the Un-man could not get animals it was content with plants. It was fond of cutting their outer rinds through with its nails, or grubbing up roots, or pulling off leaves, or even tearing up handfuls of turf. With Ransom himself it had innumerable games to play. It had a whole repertory of obscenities to perform with its own — or rather with Weston's — body: and the mere silliness of them was almost worse than the dirtiness. It would sit making grimaces at him for hours

together; and then, for hours more, it would go back to its old repetition of "Ransom . . . Ransom." Often its grimaces achieved a horrible resemblance to people whom Ransom had known and loved in our own world. But worst of all were those moments when it allowed Weston to come back into its countenance. Then its voice, which was always Weston's voice, would begin a pitiful, hesitant mumbling, "You be very careful, Ransom. I'm down in the bottom of a big black hole. No I'm not, though. I'm on Perelandra. I can't think very well now, but that doesn't matter, he does all my thinking for me. It'll get quite easy presently. That boy keeps on shutting the windows. That's all right, they've taken off my head and put someone else's on me. I'll soon be all right now. They won't let me see my press cuttings. So then I went and told him that if they didn't want me in the first Fifteen they could jolly well do without me, see. We'll tell that young whelp it's an insult to the examiners to show up this kind of work. What I want to know is why I should pay for a first-class ticket and then be crowded out like this. It's not fair. Not fair. I never meant any harm. Could you take some of this weight off my chest, I don't want all those clothes. Let me alone. Let me alone. It's not fair. It's not fair. What enormous bluebottles. They say you get used to them" — and then it would end in the canine howl. Ransom never could make up his mind whether it was a trick or whether a decaying psychic energy that had once been Weston were indeed fitfully and miserably alive within the body that sat there beside him. He discovered that any hatred he had once felt for the Professor was dead. He found it natural to pray fervently for his soul. Yet what he felt for Weston was not exactly pity. Up till that moment, whenever he had thought of Hell, he had pictured the lost souls as being still human; now, as the frightful abyss which parts ghosthood from manhood yawned before him, pity was almost swallowed up in horror — in the unconquerable revulsion of the life within him from positive and self-consuming Death. If the remains of Weston were, at such moments, speaking through the lips of the Un-man, then Weston was not now a man at all. The forces which had begun, perhaps years ago, to eat away his humanity had now completed their work. The intoxicated will which had been slowly poisoning the intelligence and the affections had now at last poisoned itself and the whole psychic organism had fallen to pieces. Only a ghost was left — an everlasting unrest, a crumbling, a ruin, an odour of decay. "And this," thought Ransom, "might be my destination; or hers."

But of course the hours spent alone with the Un-man were like hours in a back area. The real business of life was the interminable conversation between the Tempter and the Green Lady. Taken hour by hour the progress was hard to estimate; but as the days passed Ransom could not resist the conviction that the general development was in the enemy's favour. There were, of course, ups and downs. Often the Un-man was unexpectedly repulsed by some simplicity which it seemed not to have anticipated. Often, too, Ransom's own contributions to the terrible debate were for the moment successful. There were times when he thought, "Thank God! We've won at last." But the enemy was never tired, and Ransom grew more weary all the time; and presently he thought he could see signs that the Lady was becoming tired too. In the end he taxed her with it and begged her to send them both away. But she rebuked him, and her rebuke revealed how dangerous the situation had already become. "Shall I go and rest and play," she asked, "while all this lies on our hands? Not till I am certain that there is no great deed to be done by me for the King and for the children of our children."

It was on those lines that the enemy now worked almost exclusively. Though the Lady had no word for Duty he had made it appear to her in the light of a Duty that she should continue to fondle the idea of disobedience, and convinced her that it would be a cowardice if she repulsed him. The ideas of the Great Deed, of the Great Risk, of a kind of martyrdom, were presented to her every day, varied in a thousand forms. The notion of waiting to ask the King before a decision was made had been unobtrusively shuffled aside. Any such "cowardice" was now not to be thought of. The whole point of her action — the whole grandeur — would lie in taking it without the King's knowledge, in leaving him utterly free to repudiate it, so that all the benefits should be his, and all the risks hers; and with the risk, of course, all the magnanimity, the pathos, the tragedy, and the originality. And also, the Tempter hinted, it would be no use asking the King, for he would certainly *not* approve the action: men were like that. The King must be forced to be free. Now, while she was on her own — now or never — the noble thing must be achieved; and with that "Now or never" he began to play on a fear which the Lady apparently shared with the women of earth — the fear that life might be wasted, some great opportunity let slip. "How if I were as a tree that could have born gourds and yet bore none," she said. Ransom tried to convince her that children were fruit enough. But the Un-

man asked whether this elaborate division of the human race into two sexes could possibly be meant for no other purpose than offspring? — a matter which might have been more simply provided for, as it was in many of the plants. A moment later it was explaining that men like Ransom in his own world — men of that intensely male and backward-looking type who always shrank away from the new good — had continuously laboured to keep woman down to mere child-bearing and to ignore the high destiny for which Maleldil had actually created her. It told her that such men had already done incalculable harm. Let her look to it that nothing of the sort happened on Perelandra. It was at this stage that it began to teach her many new words: words like Creative and Intuition and Spiritual. But that was one of its false steps. When she had at last been made to understand what "creative" meant she forgot all about the Great Risk and the tragic loneliness and laughed for a whole minute on end. Finally she told the Un-man that it was younger even than Piebald, and sent them both away.

Ransom gained ground over that; but on the following day he lost it all by losing his temper. The enemy had been pressing on her with more than usual ardour the nobility of self-sacrifice and self-dedication, and the enchantment seemed to be deepening in her mind every moment, when Ransom, goaded beyond all patience, had leaped to his feet and really turned upon her, talking far too quickly and almost shouting, and even forgetting his Old Solar and intermixing English words. He tried to tell her that he'd seen this kind of "unselfishness" in action: to tell her of women making themselves sick with hunger rather than begin the meal before the man of the house returned, though they knew perfectly well that there was nothing he disliked more; of mothers wearing themselves to a ravelling to marry some daughter to a man whom she detested; of Agrippina and of Lady Macbeth. "Can you not see," he shouted, "that he is making you say words that mean nothing? What is the good of saying you would do this for the King's sake when you know it is what the King would hate most? Are you Maleldil that you should determine what is good for the King?" But she understood only a very small part of what he said and was bewildered by his manner. The Un-man made capital out of this speech.

But through all these ups and downs, all changes of the front line, all counter-attacks and stands and withdrawals, Ransom came to see more and more clearly the strategy of the whole affair. The Lady's response to the suggestion of becoming a risk-bearer, a tragic pioneer, was still a response

made chiefly out of her love for the King and for her unborn children, and even, in a sense, of Maleldil Himself. The idea that He might not really wish to be obeyed to the letter was the sluice through which the whole flood of suggestion had been admitted to her mind. But mixed with this response, from the moment when the Un-man began its tragic stories, there was the faintest touch of theatricality, the first hint of a self-admiring inclination to seize a grand rôle in the drama of her world. It was clear that the Un-man's whole effort was to increase this element. As long as this was but one drop, so to speak, in the sea of her mind, he would not really succeed. Perhaps, while it remained so, she was protected from actual disobedience: perhaps no rational creature, until such a motive became dominant, could really throw away happiness for anything quite so vague as the Tempter's chatter about Deeper Life and the Upward Path. The veiled egoism in the conception of noble revolt must be increased. And Ransom thought, despite many rallies on her part and many set-backs suffered by the enemy, that it was, very slowly and yet perceptibly, increasing. The matter was, of course, cruelly complicated. What the Un-man said was always very nearly true. Certainly it must be part of the Divine plan that this happy creature should mature, should become more and more a creature of free choice, should become, in a sense, more distinct from God and from her husband in order thereby to be at one with them in a richer fashion. In fact, he had seen this very process going on from the moment at which he met her, and had, unconsciously, assisted it. This present temptation, if conquered, would itself be the next, and greatest, step in the same direction: an obedience freer, more reasoned, more conscious than any she had known before, was being put in her power. But for that very reason the fatal false step which, once taken, would thrust her down into the terrible slavery of appetite and hate and economics and government which our race knows so well, could be made to sound so like the true one. What made him feel sure that the dangerous element in her interest was growing was her progressive disregard of the plain intellectual bones of the problem. It became harder to recall her mind to the *data* — a command from Maleldil, a complete uncertainty about the results of breaking it, and a present happiness so great that hardly any change could be for the better. The turgid swell of indistinctly splendid images which the Un-man aroused, and the transcendent importance of the central image, carried all this away. She was still in her innocence. No evil intention had been formed in her mind. But if

her will was uncorrupted, half her imagination was already filled with bright, poisonous shapes. “This can’t go on,” thought Ransom for the second time. But all his arguments proved in the long run unavailing, and it did go on.

There came a night when he was so tired that towards morning he fell into a leaden sleep and slept far into the following day. He woke to find himself alone. A great horror came over him. “What could I have done? What could I have done?” he cried out, for he thought that all was lost. With sick heart and sore head he staggered to the edge of the island: his idea was to find a fish and to pursue the truants to the Fixed Land where he felt little doubt that they had gone. In the bitterness and confusion of his mind he forgot that he had no notion in which direction that land now lay nor how far it was distant. Hurrying through the woods, he emerged into an open place and suddenly found that he was not alone. Two human figures, robed to their feet, stood before him, silent under the yellow sky. Their clothes were of purple and blue, their heads wore chaplets of silver leaves, and their feet were bare. They seemed to him to be, the one the ugliest, and the other the most beautiful, of the children of men. Then one of them spoke and he realised that they were none other than the Green Lady herself and the haunted body of Weston. The robes were of feathers, and he knew well the Perelandrian birds from which they had been derived; the art of the weaving, if weaving it could be called, was beyond his comprehension.

“Welcome, Piebald,” said the Lady. “You have slept long. What do you think of us in our leaves?”

“The birds,” said Ransom. “The poor birds! What has he done to them?”

“He has found the feathers somewhere,” said the Lady carelessly. “They drop them.”

“Why have you done this, Lady?”

“He has been making me older again. Why did you never tell me, Piebald?”

“Tell you what?”

“We never knew. This one showed me that the trees have leaves and the beasts have fur, and said that in your world the men and women also hung beautiful things about them. Why do you not tell us how we look? Oh, Piebald, Piebald, I hope this is not going to be another of the new goods from which you draw back your hand. It cannot be new to you if they all do it in your world.”

“Ah,” said Ransom, “but it is different there. It is cold.”

“So the Stranger said,” she answered. “But not in all parts of your world. He says they do it even where it is warm.”

“Has he said why they do it?”

“To be beautiful. Why else?” said the Lady, with some wonder in her face.

“Thank Heaven,” thought Ransom, “he is only teaching her vanity”; for he had feared something worse. Yet could it be possible, in the long run, to wear clothes without learning modesty, and through modesty lasciviousness?

“Do you think we are more beautiful?” said the Lady, interrupting his thoughts.

“No,” said Ransom; and then, correcting himself, “I don’t know.” It was, indeed, not easy to reply. The Un-man, now that Weston’s prosaic shirt and shorts were concealed, looked a more exotic and therefore a more imaginatively, less squalidly, hideous figure. As for the Lady — that she looked in some way worse was not doubtful. Yet there is a plainness in nudity — as we speak of “plain” bread. A sort of richness, a flamboyancy, a concession, as it were, to lower conceptions of the beautiful, had come with the purple robe. For the first (and last) time she appeared to him at that moment as a woman whom an earth-born man might conceivably love. And this was intolerable. The ghastly inappropriateness of the idea had, all in one moment, stolen something from the colours of the landscape and the scent of the flowers.

“Do you think we are more beautiful?” repeated the Lady.

“What does it matter?” said Ransom dully.

“Everyone should wish to be as beautiful as they can,” she answered. “And we cannot see ourselves.”

“We can,” said Weston’s body.

“How can this be?” said the Lady, turning to it. “Even if you could roll your eyes right round to look inside they would see only blackness.”

“Not that way,” it answered. “I will show you.” It walked a few paces away to where Weston’s pack lay in the yellow turf. With that curious distinctness which often falls upon us when we are anxious and preoccupied Ransom noticed the exact make and pattern of the pack. It must have been from the same shop in London where he had bought his own: and that little fact, suddenly reminding him that Weston had once been a man, that he too

had once had pleasures and pains and a human mind, almost brought the tears into his eyes. The horrible fingers which Weston would never use again worked at the buckles and brought out a small bright object — an English pocket mirror that might have cost three-and-six. He handed it to the Green Lady. She turned it over in her hands.

"What is it? What am I to do with it?" she said.

"Look in it," said the Un-man.

"How?"

"Look!" he said. Then taking it from her he held it up to her face. She stared for quite an appreciable time without apparently making anything of it. Then she started back with a cry and covered her face. Ransom started too. It was the first time he had seen her the mere passive recipient of any emotion. The world about him was big with change.

"Oh — oh," she cried. "What is it? I saw a face."

"Only your own face, beautiful one," said the Un-man.

"I know," said the Lady, still averting her eyes from the mirror. "My face — out there — looking at me. Am I growing older or is it something else? I feel . . . I feel . . . my heart is beating too hard. I am not warm. What is it?" She glanced from one of them to the other. The mysteries had all vanished from her face. It was as easy to read as that of a man in a shelter when a bomb is coming.

"What is it?" she repeated.

"It is called Fear," said Weston's mouth. Then the creature turned its face full on Ransom and grinned.

"Fear," she said. "This is Fear," pondering the discovery; then, with abrupt finality, "I do not like it."

"It will go away," said the Un-man, when Ransom interrupted.

"It will never go away if you do what he wishes. It is into more and more fear that he is leading you."

"It is," said the Un-man, "into the great waves and through them and beyond. Now that you know Fear, you see that it must be you who shall taste it on behalf of your race. You know the King will not. You do not wish him to. But there is no cause for fear in this little thing: rather for joy. What is fearful in it?"

"Things being two when they are one," replied the Lady decisively. "That thing" (she pointed at the mirror) "is me and not me."

"But if you do not look you will never know how beautiful you are."

“It comes into my mind, Stranger,” she answered, “that a fruit does not eat itself, and a man cannot be together with himself.”

“A fruit cannot do that because it is only a fruit,” said the Un-man. “But we can do it. We call this thing a mirror. A man can love himself, and be together with himself. That is what it means to be a man or a woman — to walk alongside oneself as if one were a second person and to delight in one’s own beauty. Mirrors were made to teach this art.”

“Is it a good?” said the Lady.

“No,” said Ransom.

“How can you find out without trying?” said the Un-man.

“If you try it and it is not good,” said Ransom, “how do you know whether you will be able to stop doing it?”

“I am walking alongside myself already,” said the Lady. “But I do not yet know what I look like. If I have become two I had better know what the other is. As for you, Piebald, one look will show me this woman’s face and why should I look more than once?”

She took the mirror, timidly but firmly, from the Un-man and looked into it in silence for the better part of a minute. Then she let it sink and stood holding it at her side.

“It is very strange,” she said at last.

“It is very beautiful,” said the Un-man. “Do you not think so?”

“Yes.”

“But you have not yet found what you set out to find.”

“What was that? I have forgotten.”

“Whether the robe of feathers made you more beautiful or less.”

“I saw only a face.”

“Hold it farther away and you will see the whole of the alongside woman — the other who is yourself. Or no — I will hold it.”

The commonplace suggestions of the scene became grotesque at this stage. She looked at herself first with the robe, then without it, then with it again; finally she decided against it and threw it away. The Un-man picked it up.

“Will you not keep it?” he said; “you might wish to carry it on some days even if you do not wish for it on all days.”

“*Keep* it?” she asked, not clearly understanding.

“I had forgotten,” said the Un-man. “I had forgotten that you would not live on the Fixed Land nor build a house nor in any way become mistress of

your own days. *Keeping* means putting a thing where you know you can always find it again, and where rain, and beasts, and other people cannot reach it. I would give you this mirror to keep. It would be the Queen's mirror, a gift brought into the world from Deep Heaven: the other women would not have it. But you have reminded me. There can be no gifts, no keeping, no foresight while you live as you do — from day to day, like the beasts."

But the Lady did not appear to be listening to him. She stood like one almost dazed with the richness of a day-dream. She did not look in the least like a woman who is thinking about a new dress. The expression of her face was noble. It was a great deal too noble. Greatness, tragedy, high sentiment — these were obviously what occupied her thoughts. Ransom perceived that the affair of the robes and the mirror had been only superficially concerned with what is commonly called female vanity. The image of her beautiful body had been offered to her only as a means to awake the far more perilous image of her great soul. The external and, as it were, dramatic conception of the self was the enemy's true aim. He was making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage. He had already written the play.

ELEVEN

Because he had slept so late that morning Ransom found it easy to keep awake the following night. The sea had become calm and there was no rain. He sat upright in the darkness with his back against a tree. The others were close beside him — the Lady, to judge by her breathing, asleep and the Unman doubtless waiting to arouse her and resume its solicitations the moment Ransom should doze. For the third time, more strongly than ever before, it came into his head, "This can't go on."

The Enemy was using Third Degree methods. It seemed to Ransom that, but for a miracle, the Lady's resistance was bound to be worn away in the end. Why did no miracle come? Or rather, why no miracle on the right side? For the presence of the Enemy was in itself a kind of Miracle. Had Hell a prerogative to work wonders? Why did Heaven work none? Not for the first time he found himself questioning Divine Justice. He could not understand why Maleldil should remain absent when the Enemy was there in person.

But while he was thinking this, as suddenly and sharply as if the solid darkness about him had spoken with articulate voice, he knew that Maleldil was not absent. That sense — so very welcome yet never welcomed without the overcoming of a certain resistance — that sense of the Presence which he had once or twice before experienced on Perelandra, returned to him. The darkness was packed quite full. It seemed to press upon his trunk so that he could hardly use his lungs: it seemed to close in on his skull like a crown of intolerable weight so that for a space he could hardly think. Moreover, he became aware in some indefinable fashion that it had never been absent, that only some unconscious activity of his own had succeeded in ignoring it for the past few days.

Inner silence is for our race a difficult achievement. There is a chattering part of the mind which continues, until it is corrected, to chatter on even in the holiest places. Thus, while one part of Ransom remained, as it were, prostrated in a hush of fear and love that resembled a kind of death, something else inside him, wholly unaffected by reverence, continued to pour queries and objections into his brain. "It's all very well," said this voluble critic, "a presence of *that* sort! But the Enemy is really here, really saying and doing things. Where is Maleldil's representative?"

The answer which came back to him, quick as a fencer's or a tennis player's *riposte*, out of the silence and the darkness, almost took his breath away. It seemed Blasphemous. "Anyway, what can I do?" babbled the voluble self. "I've done all I can. I've talked till I'm sick of it. It's no good, I tell you." He tried to persuade himself that he, Ransom, could not possibly be Maleldil's representative as the Un-man was the representative of Hell. The suggestion was, he argued, itself diabolical — a temptation to fatuous pride, to megalomania. He was horrified when the darkness simply flung back this argument in his face, almost impatiently. And then — he wondered how it had escaped him till now — he was forced to perceive that his own coming to Perelandra was at least as much of a marvel as the Enemy's. That miracle on the right side, which he had demanded, had in fact occurred. He himself was the miracle.

"Oh, but this is nonsense," said the voluble self. He, Ransom, with his ridiculous piebald body and his ten times defeated arguments — what sort of a miracle was that? His mind darted hopefully down a side-alley that seemed to promise escape. Very well then. He *had* been brought here miraculously. He was in God's hands. As long as he did his best — and he *had* done his best — God would see to the final issue. He had not succeeded. But he had done his best. No one could do more. "'Tis not in mortals to command success." He must not be worried about the final result. Maleldil would see to that. And Maleldil would bring him safe back to earth after his very real, though unsuccessful, efforts. Probably Maleldil's real intention was that he should publish to the human race the truths he had learned on the planet Venus. As for the fate of Venus, that could not really rest upon his shoulders. It was in God's hands. One must be content to leave it there. One must have Faith. . . .

It snapped like a violin string. Not one rag of all this evasion was left. Relentlessly, unmistakably, the Darkness pressed down upon him the knowledge that this picture of the situation was utterly false. His journey to Perelandra was not a moral exercise, nor a sham fight. If the issue lay in Maleldil's hands, Ransom and the Lady *were* those hands. The fate of a world really depended on how they behaved in the next few hours. The thing was irreducibly, nakedly real. They could, if they chose, decline to save the innocence of this new race, and if they declined its innocence would not be saved. It rested with no other creature in all time or all space. This he saw clearly, though as yet he had no inkling of what he could do.

The voluble self protested, wildly, swiftly, like the propeller of a ship racing when it is out of the water. The imprudence, the unfairness, the absurdity of it! Did Maleldil *want* to lose worlds? What was the sense of so arranging things that anything really important should finally and absolutely depend on such a man of straw as himself? And at that moment, far away on Earth, as he now could not help remembering, men were at war, and white-faced subalterns and freckled corporals who had but lately begun to shave, stood in horrible gaps or crawled forward in deadly darkness, awaking, like him, to the preposterous truth that all really depended on their actions; and far away in time Horatius stood on the bridge, and Constantine settled in his mind whether he would or would not embrace the new religion, and Eve herself stood looking upon the forbidden fruit and the Heaven of Heavens waited for her decision. He writhed and ground his teeth, but could not help seeing. Thus, and not otherwise, the world was made. Either something or nothing must depend on individual choices. And if something, who could set bounds to it? A stone may determine the course of a river. He was that stone at this horrible moment which had become the centre of the whole universe. The eldila of all worlds, the sinless organisms of everlasting light, were silent in Deep Heaven to see what Elwin Ransom of Cambridge would do.

Then came blessed relief. He suddenly realised that he did not know what he *could* do. He almost laughed with joy. All this horror had been premature. No definite task was before him. All that was being demanded of him was a general and preliminary resolution to oppose the Enemy in any mode which circumstances might show to be desirable: in fact — and he flew back to the comforting words as a child flies back to its mother's arms— "to do his best" — or rather, to go on doing his best, for he had really been doing it all along. "What bug-bears we make of things unnecessarily!" he murmured, settling himself in a slightly more comfortable position. A mild flood of what appeared to him to be cheerful and rational piety rose and engulfed him.

Hullo! What was this? He sat straight upright again, his heart beating wildly against his side. His thoughts had stumbled on an idea from which they started back as a man starts back when he has touched a hot poker. But this time the idea was really too childish to entertain. This time it *must* be a deception, risen from his own mind. It stood to reason that a struggle with the Devil meant a *spiritual* struggle . . . the notion of a physical combat was

only fit for a savage. If only it *were* as simple as that . . . but here the voluble self had made a fatal mistake. The habit of imaginative honesty was too deeply engrained in Ransom to let him toy for more than a second with the pretence that he feared bodily strife with the Un-man less than he feared anything else. Vivid pictures crowded upon him . . . the deadly cold of those hands (he had touched the creature accidentally some hours before) . . . the long metallic nails . . . ripping off narrow strips of flesh, pulling out tendons. One would die slowly. Up to the very end that cruel idiocy would smile into one's face. One would give way long before one died — beg for mercy, promise it help, worship, anything.

It was fortunate that something so horrible should be so obviously out of the question. Almost, but not quite, Ransom decreed that whatever the Silence and the Darkness seemed to be saying about this, no such crude, materialistic struggle could possibly be what Maleldil really intended. Any suggestion to the contrary must be only his own morbid fancy. It would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology. But here he got another check. Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial — was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. In Perelandra it would have no meaning at all. Whatever happened here would be of such a nature that earth-men would call it mythological. All this he had thought before. Now he knew it. The Presence in the darkness, never before so formidable, was putting these truths into his hands, like terrible jewels.

The voluble self was almost thrown out of its argumentative stride — became for some seconds as the voice of a mere whimpering child begging to be let off, to be allowed to go home. Then it rallied. It explained precisely where the absurdity of a physical battle with the Un-man lay. It would be quite irrelevant to the spiritual issue. If the Lady were to be kept in obedience only by the forcible removal of the Tempter, what was the use of that? What would it prove? And if the temptation were not a proving or testing, why was it allowed to happen at all? Did Maleldil suggest that our own world might have been saved if the elephant had accidentally trodden

on the serpent a moment before Eve was about to yield? Was it as easy and as un-moral as that? The thing was patently absurd!

The terrible silence went on. It became more and more like a face, a face not without sadness, that looks upon you while you are telling lies, and never interrupts, but gradually you know that it knows, and falter, and contradict yourself, and lapse into silence. The voluble self petered out in the end. Almost the Darkness said to Ransom, “You know you are only wasting time.” Every minute it became clearer to him that the parallel he had tried to draw between Eden and Perelandra was crude and imperfect. What had happened on Earth, when Maleldil was born a man at Bethlehem, had altered the universe for ever. The new world of Perelandra was not a mere repetition of the old world Tellus. Maleldil never repeated Himself. As the Lady had said, the same wave never came twice. When Eve fell, God was not Man. He had not yet made men members of His body: since then He had, and through them henceforward He would save and suffer. One of the purposes for which He had done all this was to save Perelandra not through Himself but through Himself in Ransom. If Ransom refused, the plan, so far, miscarried. For that point in the story, a story far more complicated than he had conceived, it was he who had been selected. With a strange sense of “fallings from him, vanishings,” he perceived that you might just as well call Perelandra, not Tellus, the centre. You might look upon the Perelandrian story as merely an indirect consequence of the Incarnation on earth: or you might look on the Earth story as mere preparation for the new worlds of which Perelandra was the first. The one was neither more nor less true than the other. Nothing was more or less important than anything else, nothing was a copy or model of anything else.

At the same time he also perceived that his voluble self had begged the question. Up to this point the Lady had repelled her assailant. She was shaken and weary, and there were some stains perhaps in her imagination, but she had stood. In that respect the story already differed from anything that he certainly knew about the mother of our own race. He did not know whether Eve had resisted at all, or if so, for how long. Still less did he know how the story would have ended if she had. If the “serpent” had been foiled, and returned the next day, and the next . . . what then? Would the trial have lasted for ever? How would Maleldil have stopped it? Here on Perelandra his own intuition had been not that no temptation must occur but that “This can’t go on.” This stopping of a third-degree solicitation, already more than

once refused, was a problem to which the terrestrial Fall offered no clue — a new task, and for that new task a new character in the drama, who appeared (most unfortunately) to be himself. In vain did his mind hark back, time after time, to the Book of Genesis, asking "What would have happened?" But to this the Darkness gave him no answer. Patiently and inexorably it brought him back to the here and the now, and to the growing certainty of what was here and now demanded. Almost he felt that the words "would have happened" were meaningless — mere invitations to wander in what the Lady would have called an "alongside world" which had no reality. Only the actual was real: and every actual situation was new. Here in Perelandra the temptation would be stopped by Ransom, or it would not be stopped at all. The Voice — for it was almost with a Voice that he was now contending — seemed to create around this alternative an infinite vacancy. This chapter, this page, this very sentence, in the cosmic story was utterly and eternally itself; no other passage that had occurred or ever would occur could be substituted for it.

He fell back on a different line of defence. How *could* he fight the immortal enemy? Even if he were a fighting man — instead of a sedentary scholar with weak eyes and a baddish wound from the last war — what use was there in fighting it? It couldn't be killed, could it? But the answer was almost immediately plain. Weston's body could be destroyed; and presumably that body was the Enemy's only foothold in Perelandra. By that body, when that body still obeyed a human will, it had entered the new world: expelled from it, it would doubtless have no other habitation. It had entered that body at Weston's own invitation, and without such invitation could enter no other. Ransom remembered that the unclean spirits, in the Bible, had a horror of being cast out into the "deep." And thinking of these things he perceived at last, with a sinking of heart, that if physical action were indeed demanded of him, it was an action, by ordinary standards, neither impossible nor hopeless. On the physical plane it was one middle-aged, sedentary body against another, and both unarmed save for fists and teeth and nails. At the thought of these details, terror and disgust overcame him. To kill the thing with such weapons (he remembered his killing of the frog) would be a nightmare; to be killed — who knew how slowly? — was more than he could face. That he would be killed he felt certain. "When," he asked, "did I ever win a fight in all my life?"

He was no longer making efforts to resist the conviction of what he must do. He had exhausted all his efforts. The answer was plain beyond all subterfuge. The Voice out of the night spoke it to him in such unanswerable fashion that, though there was no noise, he almost felt it must wake the woman who slept close by. He was faced with the impossible. This he must do: this he could not do. In vain he reminded himself of the things that unbelieving boys might at this moment be doing on Earth for a lesser cause. His will was in that valley where the appeal to shame becomes useless — nay, makes the valley darker and deeper. He believed he could face the Un-man with firearms: even that he could stand up unarmed and face certain death if the creature had retained Weston's revolver. But to come to grips with it, to go voluntarily into those dead yet living arms, to grapple with it, naked chest to naked chest. . . . Terrible follies came into his mind. He would fail to obey the Voice, but it would be all right because he would repent later on, when he was back on Earth. He would lose his nerve as St. Peter had done, and be, like St. Peter, forgiven. Intellectually, of course, he knew the answer to these temptations perfectly well; but he was at one of those moments when all the utterances of intellect sound like twice-told tales. Then some cross-wind of the mind changed his mood. Perhaps he would fight and win, perhaps not even be badly mauled. But no faintest hint of a guarantee in that direction came to him from the darkness. The future was black as the night itself.

"It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom," said the Voice.

And he knew that this was no fancy of his own. He knew it for a very curious reason — because he had known for many years that his surname was derived not from *ransom* but from *Ranolf's son*. It would never have occurred to him thus to associate the two words. To connect the name Ransom with the act of ransoming would have been for him a mere pun. But even his voluble self did not now dare to suggest that the Voice was making a play upon words. All in a moment of time he perceived that what was, to human philologists, a mere accidental resemblance of two sounds, was in truth no accident. The whole distinction between things accidental and things designed, like the distinction between fact and myth, was purely terrestrial. The pattern is so large that within the little frame of earthly experience there appear pieces of it between which we can see no connection, and other pieces between which we can. Hence we rightly, for our use, distinguish the accidental from the essential. But step outside that

frame and the distinction drops down into the void, fluttering useless wings. He had been forced out of the frame, caught up into the larger pattern. He knew now why the old philosophers had said that there is no such thing as chance or fortune beyond the Moon. Before his Mother had born him, before his ancestors had been called Ransoms, before *ransom* had been the name for a payment that delivers, before the world was made, all these things had so stood together in eternity that the very significance of the pattern at this point lay in their coming together in just this fashion. And he bowed his head and groaned and repined against his fate — to be still a man and yet to be forced up into the metaphysical world, to enact what philosophy only thinks.

"My name also is Ransom," said the Voice.

It was some time before the purport of this saying dawned upon him. He whom the other worlds call Maleldil, was the world's ransom, his own ransom, well he knew. But to what purpose was it said now? Before the answer came to him he felt its insufferable approach and held out his arms before him as if he could keep it from forcing open the door of his mind. But it came. So *that* was the real issue. If he now failed, this world also would hereafter be redeemed. If he were not the ransom, Another would be. Yet nothing was ever repeated. Not a second crucifixion: perhaps — who knows — not even a second Incarnation . . . some act of even more appalling love, some glory of yet deeper humility. For he had seen already how the pattern grows and how from each world it sprouts into the next through some other dimension. The small external evil which Satan had done in Malacandra was only as a line: the deeper evil he had done in Earth was as a square: if Venus fell, her evil would be a cube — her Redemption beyond conceiving. Yet redeemed she would be. He had long known that great issues hung on his choice; but as he now realised the true width of the frightful freedom that was being put into his hands — a width to which all merely spatial infinity seemed narrow — he felt like a man brought out under naked heaven, on the edge of a precipice, into the teeth of a wind that came howling from the Pole. He had pictured himself, till now, standing before the Lord, like Peter. But it was worse. He sat before Him like Pilate. It lay with him to save or to spill. His hands had been reddened, as all men's hands have been, in the slaying before the foundation of the world; now, if he chose, he could dip them again in the same blood. "Mercy," he groaned; and then, "Lord, why me?" But there was no answer.

The thing still seemed impossible. But gradually something happened to him which had happened to him only twice before in his life. It had happened once while he was trying to make up his mind to do a very dangerous job in the last war. It had happened again while he was screwing his resolution to go and see a certain man in London and make to him an excessively embarrassing confession which justice demanded. In both cases the thing had seemed a sheer impossibility: he had not thought but known that, being what he was, he was psychologically incapable of doing it; and then, without any apparent movement of the will, as objective and unemotional as the reading on a dial, there had arisen before him, with perfect certitude, the knowledge "about this time to-morrow you will have done the impossible." The same thing happened now. His fear, his shame, his love, all his arguments, were not altered in the least. The thing was neither more nor less dreadful than it had been before. The only difference was that he knew — almost as a historical proposition — that it was going to be done. He might beg, weep, or rebel — might curse or adore — sing like a martyr or blaspheme like a devil. It made not the slightest difference. The thing was going to be done. There was going to arrive, in the course of time, a moment at which he would have done it. The future act stood there, fixed and unalterable as if he had already performed it. It was a mere irrelevant detail that it happened to occupy the position we call future instead of that which we call past. The whole struggle was over, and yet there seemed to have been no moment of victory. You might say, if you liked, that the power of choice had been simply set aside and an inflexible destiny substituted for it. On the other hand, you might say that he had been delivered from the rhetoric of his passions and had emerged into unassailable freedom. Ransom could not, for the life of him, see any difference between these two statements. Predestination and freedom were apparently identical. He could no longer see any meaning in the many arguments he had heard on this subject.

No sooner had he discovered that he would certainly try to kill the Un-man to-morrow than the doing of it appeared to him a smaller matter than he had supposed. He could hardly remember why he had accused himself of megalomania when the idea first occurred to him. It was true that if he left it undone, Maleldil Himself would do some greater thing instead. In that sense, he stood for Maleldil: but no more than Eve would have stood for Him by simply not eating the apple, or than any man stands for Him in

doing any good action. As there was no comparison in person, so there was none in suffering — or only such comparison as may be between a man who burns his finger putting out a spark and a fireman who loses his life in fighting a conflagration because that spark was not put out. He asked no longer “Why me?” It might as well be he as another. It might as well be any other choice as this. The fierce light which he had seen resting on this moment of decision rested in reality on all.

“I have cast your Enemy into sleep,” said the Voice. “He will not wake till morning. Get up. Walk twenty paces back into the wood; there sleep. Your sister sleeps also.”

TWELVE

When some dreaded morning comes we usually wake fully to it at once. Ransom passed with no intermediate stages from dreamless sleep to a full consciousness of his task. He found himself alone — the island gently rocking on a sea that was neither calm nor stormy. The golden light, glinting through indigo trunks of trees, told him in which direction the water lay. He went to it and bathed. Then, having landed again, he lay down and drank. He stood for a few minutes running his hands through his wet hair and stroking his limbs. Looking down at his own body he noticed how greatly the sunburn on one side and the pallor on the other had decreased. He would hardly be christened Piebald if the Lady were now to meet him for the first time. His colour had become more like ivory: and his toes, after so many days of nakedness, had begun to lose the cramped, squalid shape imposed by boots. Altogether he thought better of himself as a human animal than he had done before. He felt pretty certain that he would never again wield an un-maimed body until a greater morning came for the whole universe, and he was glad that the instrument had been thus tuned up to concert pitch before he had to surrender it. “When I wake up after Thy image, I shall be satisfied,” he said to himself.

Presently he walked into the woods. Accidentally — for he was at the moment intent on food — he blundered through a whole cloud of the arboreal bubbles. The pleasure was as sharp as when he had first experienced it, and his very stride was different as he emerged from them. Although this was to be his last meal, he did not even now feel it proper to look for any favourite fruit. But what met him was gourds. “A good breakfast on the morning you’re hanged,” he thought whimsically as he let the empty shell drop from his hand — filled for the moment with such pleasure as seemed to make the whole world a dance. “All said and done,” he thought, “it’s been worth it. I have had a time. I have lived in Paradise.”

He went a little farther in the wood, which grew thickly hereabout, and almost tripped over the sleeping form of the Lady. It was unusual for her to be sleeping at this time of the day, and he assumed it was Maleldil’s doing. “I shall never see her again,” he thought; and then, “I shall never again look on a female body in quite the same way as I look on this.” As he stood looking down on her, what was most with him was an intense and orphaned

longing that he might, if only for once, have seen the great Mother of his own race thus, in her innocence and splendour. “Other things, other blessings, other glories,” he murmured. “But never that. Never in all worlds, that. God can make good use of all that happens. But the loss is real.” He looked at her once again and then walked abruptly past the place where she lay. “I was right,” he thought, “it couldn’t have gone on. It was time to stop it.”

It took him a long time, wandering like this, in and out of the dark yet coloured thickets, before he found his Enemy. He came on his old friend the dragon, just as he had first seen it, coiled about the trunk of a tree, but it also was asleep; and now he noticed that ever since he awoke he had perceived no chattering of birds, no rustling of sleek bodies or peering of brown eyes through the leafage, nor heard any noise but that of water. It seemed that the Lord God had cast that whole island or perhaps that whole world into deep sleep. For a moment this gave him a sense of desolation, but almost at once he rejoiced that no memory of blood and rage should be left imprinted in these happy minds.

After about an hour, suddenly rounding a little clump of bubble-trees he found himself face to face with the Un-man. “Is it wounded already?” he thought as the first vision of a blood-stained chest broke on him. Then he saw that of course it was not its own blood. A bird, already half plucked and with beak wide open in the soundless yell of strangulation, was feebly struggling in its long clever hands. Ransom found himself acting before he knew what he had done. Some memory of boxing at his preparatory school must have awaked, for he found he had delivered a straight left with all his might on the Un-man’s jaw. But he had forgotten that he was not fighting with gloves; what recalled him to himself was the pain as his fist crashed against the jaw-bone — it seemed almost to have broken his knuckles — and the sickening jar all up his arm. He stood still for a second under the shock of it and this gave the Un-man time to fall back about six paces. It too had not liked the first taste of the encounter. It had apparently bitten its tongue, for blood came bubbling out of the mouth when it tried to speak. It was still holding the bird.

“So you mean to try strength,” it said in English, speaking thick.

“Put down that bird,” said Ransom.

“But this is very foolish,” said the Un-man. “Do you not know who I am?”

“I know *what* you are,” said Ransom. “Which of them doesn’t matter.”

“And you think, little one,” it answered, “that you can fight with me? You think He will help you, perhaps? Many thought that. I’ve known Him longer than you, little one. They all think He’s going to help them — till they come to their senses screaming recantations too late in the middle of the fire, mouldering in concentration camps, writhing under saws, jibbering in mad-houses, or nailed on to crosses. Could He help Himself?” — and the creature suddenly threw back its head and cried in a voice so loud that it seemed the golden sky-roof must break, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*.”

And the moment it had done so, Ransom felt certain that the sounds it had made were perfect Aramaic of the First Century. The Un-man was not quoting; it was remembering. These were the very words spoken from the Cross, treasured through all those years in the burning memory of the outcast creature which had heard them, and now brought forward in hideous parody; the horror made him momentarily sick. Before he had recovered the Un-man was upon him, howling like a gale, with eyes so wide opened that they seemed to have no lids, and with all its hair rising on its scalp. It had him caught tightly to its chest, with its arms about him, and its nails were ripping great strips off his back. His own arms were inside its embrace and, pummelling wildly, he could get no blow at it. He turned his head and bit deeply into the muscle of its right arm, at first without success, then deeper. It gave a howl, tried to hold on, and then suddenly he was free. Its defence was for an instant unready and he found himself raining punches about the region of its heart, faster and harder than he had supposed possible. He could hear through its open mouth the great gusts of breath that he was knocking out of it. Then its hands came up again, fingers arched like claws. It was not trying to box. It wanted to grapple. He knocked its right arm aside with a horrible shock of bone against bone and caught it a jab on the fleshy part of the chin: at the same moment its nails tore his right. He grabbed at its arms. More by luck than by skill he got it held by both wrists.

What followed for the next minute or so would hardly have looked like a fight at all to any spectator. The Un-man was trying with every ounce of power it could find in Weston’s body to wrench its arms free from Ransom’s hands, and he, with every ounce of his power, was trying to retain his manacle hold round its wrists. But this effort, which sent streams of sweat down the backs of both combatants, resulted in a slow and seemingly leisurely, and even aimless, movement of both pairs of arms. Neither could

for the moment hurt the other. The Un-man bent forward its head and tried to bite, but Ransom straightened his arms and kept it at arm's length. There seemed no reason why this should ever end.

Then suddenly it shot out its leg and crooked it behind his knee. He was nearly taken off his feet. Movements became quick and flurried on both sides. Ransom in his turn tried to trip, and failed. He started bending the enemy's left arm back by main force with some idea of breaking or at least spraining it. But in the effort to do so he must have weakened his hold on the other wrist. It got its right free. He had just time to close his eyes before the nails tore fiercely down his cheek and the pain put an end to the blows his left was already raining on its ribs. A second later — he did not know quite how it happened — they were standing apart, their chests heaving in great gasps, each staring at the other.

Both were doubtless sorry spectacles. Ransom could not see his own wounds but he seemed to be covered with blood. The enemy's eyes were nearly closed and the body, wherever the remains of Weston's shirt did not conceal it, was a mass of what would soon be bruises. This, and its laboured breathing, and the very taste of its strength in their grapples, had altered Ransom's state of mind completely. He had been astonished to find it no stronger. He had all along, despite what reason told him, expected that the strength of its body would be superhuman, diabolical. He had reckoned on arms that could no more be caught and stopped than the blades of an aeroplane's propeller. But now he knew, by actual experience, that its bodily strength was merely that of Weston. On the physical plane it was one middle-aged scholar against another. Weston had been the more powerfully built of the two men, but he was fat; his body would not take punishment well. Ransom was nimbler and better breathed. His former certainty of death now seemed to him ridiculous. It was a very fair match. There was no reason why he should not win — and live.

This time it was Ransom who attacked, and the second bout was much the same as the first. What it came to was that whenever he could box Ransom was superior; whenever he came under tooth and claw he was beaten. His mind, even in the thick of it, was now quite clear. He saw that the issue of the day hung on a very simple question — whether loss of blood would undo him before heavy blows on heart and kidneys undid the other.

All that rich world was asleep about them. There were no rules, no umpire, no spectators; but mere exhaustion, constantly compelling them to fall apart, divided the grotesque duel into rounds as accurately as could be wished. Ransom could never remember how many of these rounds were fought. The thing became like the frantic repetitions of delirium, and thirst a greater pain than any the adversary could inflict. Sometimes they were both on the ground together. Once he was actually astride the enemy's chest, squeezing its throat with both hands and — he found to his surprise — shouting a line out of *The Battle of Maldon*: but it tore his arms so with its nails and so pounded his back with its knees that he was thrown off.

Then he remembers — as one remembers an island of consciousness preceded and followed by long anæsthesia — going forward to meet the Un-man for what seemed the thousandth time and knowing clearly that he could not fight much more. He remembers seeing the Enemy for a moment looking not like Weston but like a mandrill, and realising almost at once that this was delirium. He wavered. Then an experience that perhaps no good man can ever have in our world came over him — a torrent of perfectly unmixed and lawful hatred. The energy of hating, never before felt without some guilt, without some dim knowledge that he was failing fully to distinguish the sinner from the sin, rose into his arms and legs till he felt that they were pillars of burning blood. What was before him appeared no longer a creature of corrupted will. It was corruption itself to which will was attached only as an instrument. Ages ago it had been a Person: but the ruins of personality now survived in it only as weapons at the disposal of a furious self-exiled negation. It is perhaps difficult to understand why this filled Ransom not with horror but with a kind of joy. The joy came from finding at last what hatred was made for. As a boy with an axe rejoices on finding a tree, or a boy with a box of coloured chalks rejoices on finding a pile of perfectly white paper, so he rejoiced in the perfect congruity between his emotion and its object. Bleeding and trembling with weariness as he was, he felt that nothing was beyond his power, and when he flung himself upon the living Death, the eternal Surd in the universal mathematic, he was astonished, and yet (on a deeper level) not astonished at all, at his own strength. His arms seemed to move quicker than his thought. His hands taught him terrible things. He felt its ribs break, he heard its jaw-bone crack. The whole creature seemed to be crackling and splitting under his blows.

His own pains, where it tore him, somehow failed to matter. He felt that he could so fight, so hate with a perfect hatred, for a whole year.

All at once he found he was beating the air. He was in such a state that at first he could not understand what was happening — could not believe that the Un-man had fled. His momentary stupidity gave it a start; and when he came to his senses he was just in time to see it vanishing into the wood, with a limping uneven stride, with one arm hanging useless, and with its dog-like howl. He dashed after it. For a second or so it was concealed from him by the tree trunks. Then it was once more in sight. He began running with all his power, but it kept its lead.

It was a fantastic chase, in and out of the lights and shadows and up and down the slowly moving ridges and valleys. They passed the dragon where it slept. They passed the Lady, sleeping with a smile on her face, The Un-man stooped low as it passed her with the fingers of its left hand crooked for scratching. It would have torn her if it dared, but Ransom was close behind and it could not risk the delay. They passed through a flock of large orange-coloured birds all fast asleep, each on one leg, each with its head beneath its wing, so that they looked like a grove of formal and flowery shrubs. They picked their steps where pairs and families of the yellow wallabies lay on their backs with eyes fast shut and their small forepaws folded on their breasts as if they were crusaders carved on tombs. They stooped beneath branches which were bowed down because on them lay the tree-pigs, making a comfortable noise like a child’s snore. They crashed through thickets of bubble-trees and forgot, for the moment, their weariness. It was a large island. They came out of the woods and rushed across wide fields of saffron or of silver, sometimes deep to their ankles and sometimes to their waists in the cool or poignant scents. They rushed down into yet other woods which lay, as they approached them, at the bottom of secret valleys, but rose before they reached them to crown the summits of lonely hills. Ransom could not gain on his quarry. It was a wonder that any creature so maimed as its uneven strides showed it to be, could maintain that pace. If the ankle were really sprained, as he suspected, it must suffer indescribably at every step. Then the horrible thought came into his mind that perhaps it could somehow hand over the pain to be borne by whatever remnants of Weston’s consciousness yet survived in its body. The idea that something which had once been of his own kind and fed at a human breast might even now be imprisoned in the thing he was pursuing redoubled his

hatred, which was unlike nearly all other hatreds he had ever known, for it increased his strength.

As they emerged from about the fourth wood he saw the sea before them not thirty yards away. The Un-man rushed on as if it made no distinction between land and water and plunged in with a great splash. He could see its head, dark against the coppery sea, as it swam. Ransom rejoiced, for swimming was the only sport in which he had ever approached excellence. As he took the water he lost sight of the Un-man for a moment; then, looking up and shaking the wet hair from his face as he struck out in pursuit (his hair was very long by now), he saw its whole body upright and above the surface as though it were sitting on the sea. A second glance and he realised that it had mounted a fish. Apparently the charm'd slumber extended only to the island, for the Un-man on his mount was making good speed. It was stooping down doing something to its fish, Ransom could not see what. Doubtless it would have many ways of urging the animal to quicken its pace.

For a moment he was in despair: but he had forgotten the man-loving nature of these sea-horses. He found almost at once that he was in a complete shoal of the creatures, leaping and frisking to attract his attention. In spite of their good will it was no easy matter to get himself on to the slippery surface of the fine specimen which his grabbing hands first reached: while he was struggling to mount, the distance widened between him and the fugitive. But at last it was done. Settling himself behind the great goggle-eyed head he nudged the animal with his knees, kicked it with his heels, whispered words of praise and encouragement, and in general did all he could to awake its metal. It began threshing its way forward. But looking ahead Ransom could no longer see any sign of the Un-man, but only the long empty ridge of the next wave coming towards him. Doubtless the quarry was beyond the ridge. Then he noticed that he had no cause to be bothered about the direction. The slope of water was dotted all over with the great fish, each marked by a heap of yellow foam and some of them spouting as well. The Un-man possibly had not reckoned on the instinct which made them follow as leader any of their company on whom a human being sat. They were all forging straight ahead, no more uncertain of their course than homing rooks or bloodhounds on a scent. As Ransom and his fish rose to the top of the wave, he found himself looking down on a wide shallow trough shaped much like a valley in the home counties. Far away

and now approaching the opposite slope was the little, dark puppet-like silhouette of the Un-man: and between it and him the whole school of fish was spread out in three or four lines. Clearly there was no danger of losing touch. Ransom was hunting him with the fish and they would not cease to follow. He laughed aloud. “My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind, so flew’d so sanded,” he roared.

Now for the first time the blessed fact that he was no longer fighting nor even standing thrust itself upon his attention. He made to assume a more relaxed position and was pulled up sharp by a grinding pain across his back. He foolishly put back his hand to explore his shoulders, and almost screamed at the pain of his own touch. His back seemed to be in shreds and the shreds seemed to be all stuck together. At the same time he noticed that he had lost a tooth and that nearly all the skin was gone from his knuckles; and underneath the smarting surface pains, deeper and more ominous aches racked him from head to foot. He had not known he was so knocked up.

Then he remembered that he was thirsty. Now that he had begun to cool and stiffen he found the task of getting a drink from the water that raced by him extremely difficult. His first idea had been to stoop low till his head was almost upside down and bury his face in the water: but a single attempt cured him of that. He was reduced to putting down his cupped hands, and even this, as his stiffness grew upon him, had to be done with infinite caution and with many groans and gasps. It took many minutes to get a tiny sip which merely mocked his thirst. The quenching of that thirst kept him employed for what seemed to be half an hour — a half-hour of sharp pains and insane pleasures. Nothing had ever tasted so good. Even when he had done drinking he went on taking up water and splashing it over himself. This would have been among the happiest moments of his life — if only the smarting of his back did not seem to be getting worse and if only he were not afraid that there was poison in the cuts. His legs kept on getting stuck to the fish and having to be unstuck with pain and care. Every now and then blackness threatened to come over him. He could easily have fainted, but he thought “This will never do” and fixed his eyes on objects close at hand and thought plain thoughts and so retained his consciousness.

All this time the Un-man rode on before him, up-wave and down-wave, and the fishes followed and Ransom followed the fishes. There seemed to be more of them now, as if the chase had met other shoals and gathered them up into itself in snowball fashion: and soon there were creatures other

than fish. Birds with long necks like swans — he could not tell their colour for they looked black against the sky — came, wheeling at first, overhead, but afterwards they settled in long straight files — all following the Un-man. The crying of these birds was often audible, and it was the wildest sound that Ransom had ever heard, the loneliest, and the one that had least to do with Man. No land was in sight, nor had been for many hours. He was on the high seas, the waste places of Perelandra, as he had not been since his first arrival. The sea-noises continuously filled his ear: the sea-smell, unmistakable and stirring as that of our Tellurian oceans, but quite different in its warmth and golden sweetness, entered into his brain. It also was wild and strange. It was not hostile: if it had been, its wildness and strangeness would have been the less, for hostility is a relation and an enemy is not a total stranger. It came into his head that he knew nothing at all about this world. Some day, no doubt, it would be peopled by the descendants of the King and Queen. But all its millions of years in the unpeopled past, all its uncounted miles of laughing water in the lonely present . . . did they exist solely for that? It was strange that he to whom a wood or a morning sky on earth had sometimes been a kind of meal, should have had to come to another planet in order to realise Nature as a thing in her own right. The diffused meaning, the inscrutable character, which had been both in Tellus and Perelandra since they split off from the Sun, and which would be, in one sense, displaced by the advent of imperial man, yet, in some other sense, not displaced at all, enfolded him on every side and caught him into itself.

THIRTEEN

Darkness fell upon the waves as suddenly as if it had been poured out of a bottle. As soon as the colours and the distances were thus taken away, sound and pain became more emphatic. The world was reduced to a dull ache, and sudden stabs, and the beating of the fish's fins, and the monotonous yet infinitely varied noises of the water. Then he found himself almost falling off the fish, recovered his seat with difficulty, and realised that he had been asleep, perhaps for hours. He foresaw that this danger would continually recur. After some consideration he levered himself painfully out of the narrow saddle behind its head and stretched his body at full length along the fish's back. He parted his legs and wound them about the creature as far as he could and did the same with his arms, hoping that thus he could retain his mount even while sleeping. It was the best he could do. A strange thrilling sensation crept over him, communicated doubtless from the movement of its muscles. It gave him the illusion of sharing in its strong bestial life, as if he were himself becoming a fish.

Long after this he found himself staring into something like a human face. It ought to have terrified him but, as sometimes happens to us in a dream, it did not. It was a bluish-greenish face shining apparently by its own light. The eyes were much larger than those of a man and gave it a goblin appearance. A fringe of corrugated membranes at the sides suggested whiskers. With a shock he realised that he was not dreaming, but awake. The thing was real. He was still lying, sore and wearied, on the body of the fish and this face belonged to something that was swimming alongside him. He remembered the swimming sub-men or mermen whom he had seen before. He was not at all frightened, and he guessed that the creature's reaction to him was the very same as his to it — an uneasy, though not hostile, bewilderment. Each was wholly irrelevant to the other. They met as the branches of different trees meet when the wind brings them together.

Ransom now raised himself once more to a sitting position. He found that the darkness was not complete. His own fish swam in a bath of phosphorescence and so did the stranger at his side. All about him were other blobs and daggers of blue light and he could dimly make out from the shapes which were fish and which were the water-people. Their movements faintly indicated the contours of the waves and introduced some hint of

perspective into the night. He noticed presently that several of the water-people in his immediate neighbourhood seemed to be feeding. They were picking dark masses of something off the water with their webbed frog-like hands and devouring it. As they munched, it hung out of their mouths in bushy and shredded bundles and looked like moustaches. It is significant that it never occurred to him to try to establish any contact with these beings, as he had done with every other animal on Perelandra, nor did they try to establish any with him. They did not seem to be the natural subjects of man as the other creatures were. He got the impression that they simply shared a planet with him as sheep and horses share a field, each species ignoring the other. Later, this came to be a trouble in his mind: but for the moment he was occupied with a more practical problem. The sight of their eating had reminded him that he was hungry and he was wondering whether the stuff they ate were eatable by him. It took him a long time, scooping the water with his fingers, to catch any of it. When at last he did it turned out to be of the same general structure as one of our smaller sea-weeds, and to have little bladders that popped when one pressed them. It was tough and slippery, but not salt like the weed of a Tellurian sea. What it tasted like, he could never properly describe. It is to be noted all through this story that while Ransom was on Perelandra his sense of taste had become something more than it was on Earth: it gave knowledge as well as pleasure, though not a knowledge that can be reduced to words. As soon as he had eaten a few mouthfuls of the seaweed he felt his mind oddly changed. He felt the surface of the sea to be the top of the world. He thought of the floating islands as we think of clouds; he saw them in imagination as they would appear from below — mats of fibre with long streamers hanging down from them, and became startlingly conscious of his own experience in walking on the topside of them as a miracle or a myth. He felt his memory of the Green Lady and all her promised descendants and all the issues which had occupied him ever since he came to Perelandra rapidly fading from his mind, as a dream fades when we wake, or as if it were shouldered aside by a whole world of interests and emotions to which he could give no name. It terrified him. In spite of his hunger he threw the rest of the weed away.

He must have slept again, for the next scene that he remembers was in daylight. The Un-man was still visible ahead, and the shoal of fishes was still spread out between it and him. The birds had abandoned the chase. And now at last a full and prosaic sense of his position descended upon him. It is

a curious flaw in the reason, to judge from Ransom's experience, that when a man comes to a strange planet he at first quite forgets its size. That whole world is so small in comparison with his journey through space that he forgets the distances within it: any two places in Mars, or in Venus, appear to him like places in the same town. But now, as Ransom looked round once more and saw nothing in every direction but golden sky and tumbling waves, the full absurdity of this delusion was borne in upon him. Even if there were continents in Perelandra, he might well be divided from the nearest of them by the breadth of the Pacific or more. But he had no reason to suppose that there were any. He had no reason to suppose that even the floating islands were very numerous, or that they were equally distributed over the surface of the planet. Even if their loose archipelago spread over a thousand square miles, what would that be but a negligible freckling in a landless ocean that rolled for ever round a globe not much smaller than the World of Men? Soon his fish would be tired. Already, he fancied, it was not swimming at its original speed. The Un-man would doubtless torture its mount to swim till it died. But he could not do that. As he was thinking of these things and staring ahead, he saw something that turned his heart cold. One of the other fish deliberately turned out of line, spurted a little column of foam, dived, and reappeared some yards away, apparently drifting. In a few minutes it was out of sight. It had had enough.

And now the experiences of the past day and night began to make a direct assault upon his faith. The solitude of the seas and, still more, the experiences which had followed his taste of the seaweed, had insinuated a doubt as to whether this world in any real sense belonged to those who called themselves its King and Queen. How could it be made for them when most of it, in fact, was uninhabitable by them? Was not the very idea naïve and anthropomorphic in the highest degree? As for the great prohibition, on which so much had seemed to hang — was it really so important? What did these roarers with the yellow foam, and these strange people who lived in them, care whether two little creatures, now far away, lived or did not live on one particular rock? The parallelism between the scenes he had lately witnessed and those recorded in the Book of Genesis, and which had hitherto given him the feeling of knowing by experience what other men only believe, now began to shrink in importance. Need it prove anything more than that similar irrational *taboos* had accompanied the dawn of reason in two different worlds? It was all very well to talk of Maleldil: but

where was Maleldil now? If this illimitable ocean said anything, it said something very different. Like all solitudes it was, indeed, haunted: but not by an anthropomorphic Deity, rather by the wholly inscrutable to which man and his life remained eternally irrelevant. And beyond this ocean was space itself. In vain did Ransom try to remember that he had been in "space" and found it Heaven, tingling with a fulness of life for which infinity itself was not one cubic inch too large. All that seemed like a dream. That opposite mode of thought which he had often mocked and called in mockery The Empirical Bogey, came surging into his mind — the great myth of our century with its gases and galaxies, its light years and evolutions, its nightmare perspectives of simple arithmetic in which everything that can possibly hold significance for the mind becomes the mere by-product of essential disorder. Always till now he had belittled it, had treated with a certain disdain its flat superlatives, its clownish amazement that different things should be of different sizes, its glib munificence of ciphers. Even now, his reason was not quite subdued, though his heart would not listen to his reason. Part of him still knew that the size of a thing is its least important characteristic, that the material universe derived from the comparing and mythopoeic power within him that very majesty before which he was now asked to abase himself, and that mere numbers could not over-awe us unless we lent them, from our own resources, that awfulness which they themselves could no more supply than a banker's ledger. But this knowledge remained an abstraction. Mere bigness and loneliness overbore him.

These thoughts must have taken several hours and absorbed all his attention. He was aroused by what he least expected — the sound of a human voice. Emerging from his reverie he saw that all the fishes had deserted him. His own was swimming feebly: and there a few yards away, no longer fleeing him but moving slowly towards him, was the Un-man. It sat hugging itself, its eyes almost shut up with bruises, its flesh the colour of liver, its leg apparently broken, its mouth twisted with pain.

"Ransom," it said feebly.

Ransom held his tongue. He was not going to encourage it to start that game again.

"Ransom," it said again in a broken voice, "for God's sake speak to me."

He glanced at it in surprise. Tears were on its cheeks.

“Ransom, don’t cold-shoulder me,” it said. “Tell me what has happened. What have they done to us? You — you’re all bleeding. My leg’s broken . . .” its voice died away in a whimper.

“Who are you?” he asked sharply.

“Oh, don’t pretend you don’t know me,” mumbled Weston’s voice. “I’m Weston. You’re Ransom — Elwin Ransom of Leicester, Cambridge, the philologist. We’ve had our quarrels, I know. I’m sorry. I dare say I’ve been in the wrong. Ransom, you’ll not leave me to die in this horrible place, will you?”

“Where did you learn Aramaic?” asked Ransom, keeping his eyes on the other.

“Aramaic?” said Weston’s voice. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. It’s not much of a game to make fun of a dying man.”

“But are you really Weston?” said Ransom, for he began to think that Weston had actually come back.

“Who else should I be?” came the answer, with a burst of weak temper, on the verge of tears.

“Where have you been?” asked Ransom.

Weston — if it was Weston — shuddered. “Where are we now?” he asked presently.

“In Perelandra — Venus, you know,” answered Ransom.

“Have you found the space-ship?” asked Weston.

“I never saw it except at a distance,” said Ransom. “And I’ve no idea where it is now — a couple of hundred miles away for all I know.”

“You mean we’re trapped?” said Weston, almost in a scream. Ransom said nothing and the other bowed his head and cried like a baby.

“Come,” said Ransom at last, “there’s no good taking it like that. Hang it all, you’d not be much better off if you were on Earth. You remember they’re having a war there. The Germans may be bombing London to bits at this moment!” Then seeing the creature still crying, he added, “Buck up, Weston. It’s only death, all said and done. We should have to die some day, you know. We shan’t lack water, and hunger — without thirst — isn’t too bad. As for drowning — well, a bayonet wound, or cancer, would be worse.”

“You mean to say you’re going to leave me,” said Weston.

“I can’t, even if I wanted to,” said Ransom. “Don’t you see I’m in the same position as yourself?”

“You’ll promise not to go off and leave me in the lurch?” said Weston.

“All right, I’ll promise if you like. Where could I go to?”

Weston looked very slowly all round and then urged his fish a little nearer to Ransom’s.

“Where is . . . *it*?” he asked in a whisper. “You know,” and he made meaningless gestures.

“I might ask you the same question,” said Ransom.

“Me?” said Weston. His face was, in one way and another, so disfigured that it was hard to be sure of its expression.

“Have you any idea of what’s been happening to you for the last few days?” said Ransom.

Weston once more looked all round him uneasily.

“It’s all true, you know,” he said at last.

“What’s all true?” said Ransom.

Suddenly Weston turned on him with a snarl of rage. “It’s all very well for *you*,” he said. “Drowning doesn’t hurt and death is bound to come anyway, and all that nonsense. What do *you* know about death? It’s all true, I tell you.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’ve been stuffing myself up with a lot of nonsense all my life,” said Weston. “Trying to persuade myself that it matters what happens to the human race . . . trying to believe that anything you can do will make the universe bearable. It’s all rot, do you see?”

“And something else is truer!”

“Yes,” said Weston, and then was silent for a long time.

“We’d better turn our fishes head on to this,” said Ransom presently, his eyes on the seas, “or we’ll be driven apart.” Weston obeyed without seeming to notice what he did, and for a time the two men were riding very slowly side by side.

“I’ll tell you what’s truer,” said Weston presently.

“What?”

“A little child that creeps upstairs when nobody’s looking and very slowly turns the handle to take one peep into the room where its grandmother’s dead body is laid out — and then runs away and has bad dreams. An enormous grandmother, you understand.”

“What do you mean by saying that’s truer?”

“I mean that child knows something about the universe which all science and all religion is trying to hide.”

Ransom said nothing.

“Lots of things,” said Weston presently. “Children are afraid to go through a churchyard at night, and the grown-ups tell them not to be silly: but the children know better than the grown-ups. People in Central Africa doing beastly things with masks on in the middle of the night — and missionaries and civil servants say it’s all superstition. Well, the blacks know more about the universe than the white people. Dirty priests in back streets in Dublin frightening half-witted children to death with stories about it. You’d say they are unenlightened. They’re not: except that they think there is a way of escape. There isn’t. That is the real universe, always has been, always will be. That’s what it all *means*.”

“I’m not quite clear — —” began Ransom, when Weston interrupted him.

“That’s why it’s so important to live as long as you can. All the good things are now — a thin little rind of what we call life, put on for show, and then — the *real* universe for ever and ever. To thicken the rind by one centimetre — to live one week, one day, one half-hour longer — that’s the only thing that matters. Of course you don’t know it: but every man who is waiting to be hanged knows it. You say ‘What difference does a short reprieve make?’ What difference!!”

“But nobody need go there,” said Ransom.

“I know that’s what you believe,” said Weston. “But you’re wrong. It’s only a small parcel of civilised people who think that. Humanity as a whole knows better. It knows — Homer knew — that *all* the dead have sunk down into the inner darkness: under the rind. All witless, all twittering, gibbering, decaying. Bogeymen. Every savage knows that *all* ghosts hate the living who are still enjoying the rind: just as old women hate girls who still have their good looks. It’s quite right to be afraid of the ghosts. You’re going to be one all the same.”

“You don’t believe in God,” said Ransom.

“Well, now, that’s another point,” said Weston. “I’ve been to church as well as you when I was a boy. There’s more sense in parts of the Bible than you religious people know. Doesn’t it say He’s the God of the living, not of the dead? That’s just it. Perhaps your God does exist — but it makes no difference whether He does or not. No, of course you wouldn’t see it; but

one day you will. I don’t think you’ve got the idea of the rind — the thin outer skin which we call life — really clear. Picture the universe as an infinite globe with this very thin crust on the outside. But remember its thickness is a thickness of *time*. It’s about seventy years thick in the best places. We are born on the surface of it and all our lives we are sinking through it. When we’ve got all the way through then we are what’s called Dead: we’ve got into the dark part inside, the real globe. If your God exists, He’s not in the globe — He’s outside, like a moon. As we pass into the interior we pass out of His ken. He doesn’t follow us in. You would express it by saying He’s not in time — which you think comforting! In other words He stays put: out in the light and air, outside. But we are in time. We ‘move with the times.’ That is, from His point of view, we move *away*, into what He regards as nonentity, where He never follows. That is all there is to us, all there ever was. He may be there in what you call ‘Life,’ or He may not. What difference does it make? *We’re* not going to be there for long!”

“That could hardly be the whole story,” said Ransom. “If the whole universe were like that, then we, being parts of it, would feel at home in such a universe. The very fact that it strikes us as monstrous — —”

“Yes,” interrupted Weston, “that would be all very well if it wasn’t that reasoning itself is only valid as long as you stay in the rind. It has nothing to do with the real universe. Even the ordinary scientists — like what I used to be myself — are beginning to find that out. Haven’t you seen the real meaning of all this modern stuff about the dangers of extrapolation and bent space and the indeterminacy of the atom? They don’t say it in so many words, of course, but what they’re getting to, even before they die nowadays, is what all men get to when they’re dead — the knowledge that reality is neither rational nor consistent nor anything else. In a sense you might say it isn’t there. ‘Real’ and ‘Unreal,’ ‘true’ and ‘false’ — they’re all only on the surface. They give way the moment you press them.”

“If all this were true,” said Ransom, “what would be the point of saying it?”

“Or of anything else?” replied Weston. “The only point in anything is that there isn’t any point. Why do ghosts want to frighten? Because they *are* ghosts. What else is there to do?”

“I get the idea,” said Ransom. “That the account a man gives of the universe, or of any other building, depends very much on where he is standing.”

“But specially,” said Weston, “on whether he’s inside or out. All the things you like to dwell upon are outsides. A planet like our own, or like Perelandra, for instance. Or a beautiful human body. All the colours and pleasant shapes are merely where it ends, where it ceases to be. Inside, what do you get? Darkness, worms, heat, pressure, salt, suffocation, stink.”

They ploughed forward for a few minutes in silence over waves which were now growing larger. The fish seemed to be making little headway.

“Of course you don’t care,” said Weston. “What do you people in the rind care about us? You haven’t been pulled down yet. It’s like a dream I once had, though I didn’t know then how true it was. I dreamed I was lying dead — you know, nicely laid out in the ward in a nursing home with my face settled by the undertaker and big lilies in the room. And then a sort of a person who was all falling to bits — like a tramp, you know, only it was himself not his clothes that was coming to pieces — came and stood at the foot of the bed, just hating me. ‘All right,’ he said, ‘all right. You think you’re mighty fine with your clean sheet and your shiny coffin being got ready. I began like that. We all did. Just wait and see what you come down to in the end.’”

“Really,” said Ransom, “I think you might just as well shut up.”

“Then there’s Spiritualism,” said Weston, ignoring this suggestion. “I used to think it all nonsense. But it isn’t. It’s all true. You’ve noticed that all *pleasant* accounts of the dead are traditional or philosophical? What actual experiment discovers is quite different. Ectoplasm — slimy films coming out of a medium’s belly and making great, chaotic, tumbledown faces. Automatic writing producing reams of rubbish.”

“*Are* you Weston?” said Ransom, suddenly turning upon his companion. The persistent mumbling voice, so articulate that you had to listen to it and yet so inarticulate that you had to strain your ears to follow what it said, was beginning to madden him.

“Don’t be angry,” said the voice. “There’s no good being angry with me. I thought you might be sorry. My God, Ransom, it’s awful. You don’t understand. Right down under layers and layers. Buried alive. You try to connect things and can’t. They take your head off . . . and you can’t even look back on what life was like in the rind, because you know it never did mean anything even from the beginning.”

“What are you?” cried Ransom. “How do you know what death is like? God knows, I’d help you if I could. But give me the facts. Where have you

been these few days?”

“Hush,” said the other suddenly, “what’s that?”

Ransom listened. Certainly there did seem to be a new element in the great concourse of noises with which they were surrounded. At first he could not define it. The seas were very big now and the wind was strong. All at once his companion reached out his hand and clutched Ransom’s arm.

“Oh, my God!” he cried. “Oh, Ransom, Ransom! We shall be killed. Killed and put back under the rind. Ransom, you promised to help me. Don’t let them get me again.”

“Shut up,” said Ransom in disgust, for the creature was wailing and blubbering so that he could hear nothing else: and he wanted very much to identify the deeper note that had mingled with the piping wind and roar of water.

“Breakers,” said Weston, “breakers, you fool! Can’t you hear? There’s a country over there! There’s a rocky coast. Look there — no, to your right. We shall be smashed into a jelly. Look — O God, here comes the dark!”

And the dark came. Horror of death such as he had never known, horror of the terrified creature at his side, descended upon Ransom: finally, horror with no definite object. In a few minutes he could see through the jet-black night the luminous cloud of foam. From the way in which it shot steeply upward he judged it was breaking on cliffs. Invisible birds, with a shriek and flurry, passed low overhead.

“Are you there, Weston?” he shouted. “What cheer? Pull yourself together. All that stuff you’ve been talking is lunacy. Say a child’s prayer if you can’t say a man’s. Repent your sins. Take my hand. There are hundreds of mere boys on Earth facing death this moment. We’ll do very well.”

His hand was clutched in the darkness, rather more firmly than he wished. “I can’t bear it, I can’t bear it,” came Weston’s voice.

“Steady now. None of that,” he shouted back, for Weston had suddenly gripped his arm with both hands.

“I can’t bear it,” came the voice again.

“Hi!” said Ransom. “Let go. What the devil are you doing?” — and as he spoke strong arms had plucked him from the saddle, had wrapped him round in a terrible embrace just below his thighs, and, clutching uselessly at the smooth surface of the fish’s body, he was dragged down. The waters

closed over his head: and still his enemy pulled him down into the warm depth, and down farther yet to where it was no longer warm.

FOURTEEN

“I can’t hold my breath any longer,” thought Ransom. “I can’t. I can’t.” Cold slimy things slid upwards over his agonised body. He decided to stop holding his breath, to open his mouth and die, but his will did not obey this decision. Not only his chest but his temples felt as if they were going to burst. It was idle to struggle. His arms met no adversary and his legs were pinioned. He became aware that they were moving upwards. But this gave him no hope. The surface was too far away, he could not hold out till they reached it. In the immediate presence of death all ideas of the after life were withdrawn from his mind. The mere abstract proposition, “This is a man dying” floated before him in an unemotional way. Suddenly a roar of sound rushed back upon his ears — intolerable boomings and clangings. His mouth opened automatically. He was breathing again. In a pitch darkness full of echoes he was clutching what seemed to be gravel and kicking wildly to throw off the grip that still held his legs. Then he was free and fighting once more: a blind struggle half in and half out of the water on what seemed to be a pebbly beach, with sharper rocks here and there that cut his feet and elbows. The blackness was filled with gasping curses, now in his own voice, now in Weston’s, with yelps of pain, thudding concussions, and the noise of laboured breath. In the end he was astride of the enemy. He pressed its sides between his knees till its ribs cracked and clasped his hands round its throat. Somehow he was able to resist its fierce tearing at his arms — to keep on pressing. Once before he had had to press like this, but that had been on an artery, to save life, not to kill. It seemed to last for ages. Long after the creature’s struggles had ceased he did not dare to relax his grip. Even when he was quite sure that it breathed no longer he retained his seat on its chest and kept his tired hands, though now loosely, on its throat. He was nearly fainting himself, but he counted a thousand before he would shift his posture. Even then he continued to sit on its body. He did not know whether in the last few hours the spirit which had spoken to him was really Weston’s or whether he had been the victim of a ruse. Indeed, it made little difference. There was, no doubt, a confusion of persons in damnation: what Pantheists falsely hoped of Heaven bad men really received in Hell. They were melted down into their Master, as a lead soldier slips down and loses his shape in the ladle held over the gas ring.

The question whether Satan, or one whom Satan has digested, is acting on any given occasion, has in the long run no clear significance. In the meantime, the great thing was not to be tricked again.

There was nothing to be done, then, except to wait for the morning. From the roar of echoes all about him he concluded that they were in a very narrow bay between cliffs. How they had ever made it was a mystery. The morning must be many hours distant. This was a considerable nuisance. He determined not to leave the body till he had examined it by daylight and perhaps taken further steps to make sure that it could not be re-animated. Till then he must pass the time as best as he could. The pebbly beach was not very comfortable, and when he tried to lean back he found a jagged wall. Fortunately he was so tired that for a time the mere fact of sitting still contented him. But this phase passed.

He tried to make the best of it. He determined to give up guessing how the time was going. “The only safe answer,” he told himself, “is to think of the earliest hour you can suppose possible, and then assume the real time is two hours earlier than that.” He beguiled himself by recapitulating the whole story of his adventure in Perelandra. He recited all that he could remember of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Æneid*, the *Chanson de Roland*, *Paradise Lost*, the *Kalevala*, the *Hunting of the Snark*, and a rhyme about Germanic sound-laws which he had composed as a freshman. He tried to spend as long as he could hunting for the lines he could not remember. He set himself a chess problem. He tried to rough out a chapter for a book he was writing. But it was all rather a failure.

These things went on, alternating with periods of dogged inactivity, until it seemed to him that he could hardly remember a time before that night. He could scarcely believe that even to a bored and wakeful man twelve hours could appear so long. And the noise — the gritty, slippery discomfort! It was very odd, now he came to think of it, that this country should have none of those sweet night breezes which he had met everywhere else in Perelandra. It was odd too (but this thought came to him what seemed hours later) that he had not even the phosphorescent wave-crests to feed his eyes on. Very slowly a possible explanation of both facts dawned upon him: and it would also explain why the darkness lasted so long. The idea was too terrible for any indulgence of fear. Controlling himself, he rose stiffly to his feet and began picking his steps along the beach. His progress was very slow: but presently his outstretched arms touched perpendicular rock. He

stood on tiptoe and stretched his hands up as far as he could. They found nothing but rock. “Don’t get the wind up,” he said to himself. He started groping his way back. He came to the Un-man’s body, passed it, and went beyond it round the opposite beach. It curved rapidly, and here, before he had gone twenty steps his hands — which he was holding above his head — met, not a wall, but a roof, of rock. A few paces farther and it was lower. Then he had to stoop. A little later and he had to go on his hands and knees. It was obvious that the roof came down and finally met the beach.

Sick with despair he felt his way back to the body and sat down. The truth was now beyond doubt. There was no good waiting for the morning. There would be no morning here till the end of the world, and perhaps he had already waited a night and a day. The clanging echoes, the dead air, the very smell of the place, all confirmed this. He and his enemy when they sank had clearly, by some hundredth chance, been carried through a hole in the cliffs well below water-level and come up on the beach of a cavern. Was it possible to reverse the process? He went down to the water’s edge — or rather as he groped his way down to where the shingle was wet, the water came to meet him. It thundered over his head and far up behind him, and then receded with a tug which he only resisted by spread-eagling himself on the beach and gripping the stones. It would be useless to plunge into *that* — he would merely have his ribs broken against the opposite wall of the cave. If one had light, and a high place to dive from, it was just conceivable one might get down to the bottom and strike the exit . . . but very doubtful. And anyway, one had no light.

Although the air was not very good he supposed that his prison must be supplied with air from somewhere — but whether from any aperture that he could possibly reach was another matter. He turned at once and began exploring the rock behind the beach. At first it seemed hopeless, but the conviction that caves may lead you anywhere dies hard, and after some time his groping hands found a shelf about three feet high. He stepped up on it. He had expected it to be only a few inches deep but his hands could find no wall before him. Very cautiously he took some paces forward. His right foot touched something sharp. He whistled with the pain and went on even more cautiously. Then he found vertical rock — smooth as high as he could reach. He turned to his right and presently lost it. He turned left and began to go forward again and almost at once stubbed his toe. After nursing it for a moment he went down on hands and knees. He seemed to be among

boulders, but the way was practicable. For ten minutes or so he made fairly good going, pretty steeply upward, sometimes on slippery shingle, sometimes over the tops of the big stones. Then he came to another cliff. There appeared to be a shelf on this about four feet up, but this time a really shallow one. He got on to it somehow and glued himself to the face, feeling out to left and right for further grips.

When he found one and realised that he was now about to attempt some real climbing, he hesitated. He remembered that what was above him might be a cliff which even in daylight and properly clothed he would never dare to attempt: but hope whispered that it might equally well be only seven feet high and that a few minutes of coolness might bring him into those gently winding passages up into the heart of the mountain which had, by now, won such a firm place in his imagination. He decided to go on. What worried him was not, in fact, the fear of falling, but the fear of cutting himself off from the water. Starvation he thought he could face: not thirst. But he went on. For some minutes he did things which he had never done on Earth. Doubtless he was in one way helped by the darkness: he had no real sensation of height and no giddiness. On the other hand, to work by touch alone made crazy climbing. Doubtless if anyone had seen him he would have appeared at one moment to take mad risks and at another to indulge in excessive caution. He tried to keep out of his mind the possibility that he might be climbing merely towards a roof.

After about quarter of an hour he found himself on a wide horizontal surface — either a much deeper shelf or the top of the precipice. He rested here for a while and licked his cuts. Then he got up and felt his way forwards, expecting every moment to meet another rock wall. When, after about thirty paces, he had not done so, he tried shouting and judged from the sound that he was in a fairly open place. Then he continued. The floor was of small pebble and ascended fairly steeply. There were some larger stones but he had learned to curl up his toes as his foot felt for the next pace and he seldom stubbed them now. One minor trouble was that even in this perfect blackness he could not help straining his eyes to see. It gave him a headache and created phantom lights and colours.

This slow uphill trek through darkness lasted so long that he began to fear he was going round in a circle, or that he had blundered into some gallery which ran on for ever beneath the surface of the planet. The steady ascent in some degree reassured him. The starvation for light became very

painful. He found himself thinking about light as a hungry man thinks about food — picturing April hillsides with milky clouds racing over them in blue skies or quiet circles of lamp-light on tables pleasantly littered with books and pipes. By a curious confusion of mind he found it impossible not to imagine that the slope he walked on was not merely dark, but black in its own right, as if with soot. He felt that his feet and hands must be blackened by touching it. Whenever he pictured himself arriving at any light, he also pictured that light revealing a world of soot all around him.

He struck his head sharply against something and sat down half stunned. When he had collected himself he found by groping that the shingle slope had run up into a roof of smooth rock. His heart was very low as he sat there digesting this discovery. The sound of the waves came up faint and melancholy from below and told him that he was now at a great height. At last, though with very little hope, he began walking to his right, keeping contact with the roof by raising his arms. Presently it receded beyond his reach. A long time after that he heard a sound of water. He went on more slowly in great fear of encountering a waterfall. The shingle began to be wet and finally he stood in a little pool. Turning to his left he found, indeed, a waterfall, but it was a tiny stream with no force of water that could endanger him. He knelt in the rippling pool and drank from the fall and put his aching head and weary shoulders under it. Then, greatly refreshed, he tried to work his way up it.

Though the stones were slippery with some kind of moss and many of the pools were deep, it presented no serious difficulties. In about twenty minutes he had reached the top, and as far as he could judge by shouting and noticing the echoes he was now in a very large cave indeed. He took the stream for guidance and proceeded to follow it up. In that featureless dark it was some sort of company. Some real hope — distinct from that mere convention of hope which supports men in desperate situations — began to enter his mind.

It was shortly after this that he began to be worried by the noises. The last faint booming of the sea in the little hole whence he had set out so many hours ago had now died away and the predominant sound was the gentle tinkling of the stream. But he now began to think that he heard other noises mixed with it. Sometimes it would be a dull plump as if something had slipped into one of the pools behind him: sometimes, more mysteriously, a dry rattling sound as if metal were being dragged over the

stones. At first he put it down to imagination. Then he stopped once or twice to listen and heard nothing; but each time when he went on it began again. At last, stopping once more, he heard it quite unmistakably. Could it be that the Un-man had after all come to life and was still following him? But that seemed improbable, for its whole plan had been to escape. It was not so easy to dispose of the other possibility — that these caverns might have inhabitants. All his experience, indeed, assured him that if there were such inhabitants they would probably be harmless, but somehow he could not quite believe that anything which lived in such a place would be agreeable, and a little echo of the Un-man's — or was it Weston's — talk came back to him. "All beautiful on the surface, but down inside — darkness, heat, horror, and stink." Then it occurred to him that if some creature were following him up the stream it might be well for him to leave its banks and wait till the creature had gone past. But if it were hunting him it would presumably hunt by scent; and in any case he would not risk losing the stream. In the end he went on.

Whether through weakness — for he was now very hungry indeed — or because the noises behind made him involuntarily quicken his pace, he found himself unpleasantly hot, and even the stream did not appear very refreshing when he put his feet in it. He began to think that whether he were pursued or not he must have a short rest — but just at that moment he saw the light. His eyes had been mocked so often before that he would not at first believe it. He shut them while he counted a hundred and looked again. He turned round and sat down for several minutes, praying that it might not be a delusion, and looked again. "Well," said Ransom, "if it is a delusion, it's a pretty stubborn one." A very dim, tiny, quivering luminosity, slightly red in colour, was before him. It was too weak to illuminate anything else and in that world of blackness he could not tell whether it was five feet or five miles away. He set out at once, with beating heart. Thank Heaven, the stream appeared to be leading him towards it.

While he thought it was still a long way off he found himself almost stepping into it. It was a circle of light lying on the surface of the water, which thereabouts formed a deepish trembling pool. It came from above. Stepping into the pool he looked up. An irregularly shaped patch of light, now quite distinctly red, was immediately above him. This time it was strong enough to show him the objects immediately around it, and when his eyes had mastered them he perceived that he was looking up a funnel or

fissure. Its lower aperture lay in the roof of his own cavern which must here be only a few feet above his head: its upper aperture was obviously in the floor of a separate and higher chamber whence the light came. He could see the uneven side of the funnel, dimly illuminated, and clothed with pads and streamers of a jelly-like and rather unpleasing vegetation. Down this water was trickling and falling on his head and shoulders in a warm rain. This warmth, together with the red colour of the light, suggested that the upper cave was illuminated by subterranean fire. It will not be clear to the reader, and it was not clear to Ransom when he thought about it afterwards, why he immediately decided to get into the upper cave if he possibly could. What really moved him, he thinks, was the mere hunger for light. The very first glance at the funnel restored dimensions and perspective to his world, and this in itself was like delivery from prison. It seemed to tell him far more than it actually did of his surroundings: it gave him back that whole frame of spatial directions without which a man seems hardly able to call his body his own. After this, any return to the horrible black vacancy, the world of soot and grime, the world without size or distance, in which he had been wandering, was out of the question. Perhaps also he had some idea that whatever was following him would cease to follow if he could get into the lighted cave.

But it was not easy to do. He could not reach the opening of the funnel. Even when he jumped he only just touched the fringe of its vegetation. At last he hit upon an unlikely plan which was the best he could think of. There was just enough light here for him to see a number of larger stones among the gravel, and he set to work to build up a pile in the centre of the pool. He worked rather feverishly and often had to undo what he had done: and he tried it several times before it was really high enough. When at last it was completed and he stood sweating and shaky on the summit the real hazard was still to be run. He had to grip the vegetation on each side above his head, trusting to luck that it would hold, and half jump, half pull himself up as quickly as he could, since if it held at all it would, he felt sure, not hold for long. Somehow or other he managed it. He got himself wedged into the fissure with his back against one side and his feet against the other, like a mountaineer in what is called a chimney. The thick squashy growth protected his skin, and after a few upward struggles he found the walls of the passage so irregular that it could be climbed in the ordinary way. The

heat increased rapidly. “I’m a fool to have come up here,” said Ransom: but even as he said so, he was at the top.

At first he was blinded by the light. When at last he could take in his surroundings he found himself in a vast hall so filled with firelight that it gave him the impression of being hollowed out of red clay. He was looking along the length of it. The floor sloped down to the left side. On his right it sloped upward to what appeared a cliff edge, beyond which was an abyss of blinding brightness. A broad shallow river was flowing down the middle of the cavern. The roof was so high as to be invisible, but the walls soared up into darkness with broad curves like the roots of a beech tree.

He staggered to his feet, splashed across the rivet (which was hot to the touch) and approached the cliff edge. The fire appeared to be thousands of feet below him and he could not see the other side of the pit in which it swelled and roared and writhed. His eyes could only bear it for a second or so, and when he turned away the rest of the cavern seemed dark. The heat of his body was painful. He drew away from the cliff edge and sat down with his back to the fire to collect his thoughts.

They were collected in an unlooked-for way. Suddenly and irresistibly, like an attack by tanks, that whole view of the universe which Weston (if it were Weston) had so lately preached to him, took all but complete possession of his mind. He seemed to see that he had been living all his life in a world of illusion. The ghosts, the damned ghosts, were right. The beauty of Perelandra, the innocence of the Lady, the sufferings of saints, and the kindly affections of men, were all only an appearance and outward show. What he had called the worlds were but the skins of the worlds: a quarter of a mile beneath the surface, and from thence through thousands of miles of dark and silence and infernal fire, to the very heart of each, Reality lived — the meaningless, the un-made, the omnipotent idiocy to which all spirits were irrelevant and before which all efforts were vain. Whatever was following him would come up that wet, dark hole, would presently be excreted by that hideous duct, and then he would die. He fixed his eyes upon the dark opening from which he had himself just emerged. And then—
“I thought as much,” said Ransom.

Slowly, shakily, with unnatural and inhuman movements a human form, scarlet in the firelight, crawled out on to the floor of the cave. It was the Un-man, of course: dragging its broken leg and with its lower jaw sagging open like that of a corpse, it raised itself to a standing position. And then, close

behind it, something else came up out of the hole. First came what looked like branches of trees, and then seven or eight spots of light, irregularly grouped like a constellation. Then a tubular mass which reflected the red glow as if it were polished. His heart gave a great leap as the branches suddenly resolved themselves into long wiry feelers and the dotted lights became the many eyes of a shell-helmeted head and the mass that followed it was revealed as a large roughly cylindrical body. Horrible things followed — angular, many jointed legs, and presently, when he thought the whole body was in sight, a second body came following it and after that a third. The thing was in three parts, united only by a kind of wasp's waist structure — three parts that did not seem to be truly aligned and made it look as if it had been trodden on — a huge, many legged, quivering deformity, standing just behind the Un-man so that the horrible shadows of both danced in enormous and united menace on the wall of rock behind them.

"They want to frighten me," said something in Ransom's brain, and at the same moment he became convinced both that the Un-man had summoned this great earth crawler and also that the evil thoughts which had preceded the appearance of the enemy had been poured into his own mind by the enemy's will. The knowledge that his thoughts could be thus managed from without did not awake terror but rage. Ransom found that he had risen, that he was approaching the Un-man, that he was saying things, perhaps foolish things, in English. "Do you think I'm going to stand *this*?" he yelled. "Get out of my brain. It isn't yours, I tell you! get out of it." As he shouted he had picked up a big, jagged stone from beside the stream. "Ransom," croaked the Un-man, "wait! We're both trapped . . ." but Ransom was already upon it.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, here goes — I mean Amen," said Ransom, and hurled the stone as hard as he could into the Un-man's face. The Un-man fell as a pencil falls, the face smashed out of all recognition. Ransom did not give it a glance but turned to face the other horror. But where had the horror gone? The creature was there, a curiously shaped creature no doubt, but all the loathing had vanished clean out of his mind, so that neither then nor at any other time could he remember it, nor ever understand again why one should quarrel with an animal for having more legs or eyes than oneself. All that he had felt from childhood about insects and reptiles died that moment: died utterly, as hideous music dies when you switch off the wireless. Apparently

it had all, even from the beginning, been a dark enchantment of the enemy's. Once, as he had sat writing near an open window in Cambridge, he had looked up and shuddered to see, as he supposed, a many coloured beetle of unusually hideous shape crawling across his paper. A second glance showed him that it was a dead leaf, moved by the breeze; and instantly the very curves and re-entrants which had made its ugliness turned into its beauties. At this moment he had almost the same sensation. He saw at once that the creature intended him no harm — had indeed no intentions at all. It had been drawn thither by the Un-man, and now stood still, tentatively moving its antennæ. Then, apparently not liking its surroundings, it turned laboriously round and began descending into the hole by which it had come. As he saw the last section of its tripartite body wobble on the edge of the aperture, and then finally tip upward with its torpedo-shaped tail in the air, Ransom almost laughed. "Like an animated corridor train" was his comment.

He turned to the Un-man. It had hardly anything left that you could call a head, but he thought it better to take no risks. He took it by its ankles and lugged it up to the edge of the cliff: then, after resting a few seconds, he shoved it over. He saw its shape black, for a second, against the sea of fire: and then that was the end of it.

He rolled rather than crawled back to the stream and drank deeply. "This may be the end of me or it may not," thought Ransom. "There may be a way out of these caves or there may not. But I won't go another step further to-day. Not if it was to save my life — not to save my life. That's flat. Glory be to God, I'm tired." A second later he was asleep.

FIFTEEN

For the rest of the subterranean journey after his long sleep in the firelit cave, Ransom was somewhat light-headed with hunger and fatigue. He remembers lying still after he woke for what seemed many hours and even debating with himself whether it was worth going on. The actual moment of decision has vanished from his mind. Pictures come back in a chaotic, disjointed fashion. There was a long gallery open to the fire-pit on one side and a terrible place where clouds of steam went up for ever and ever. Doubtless one of the many torrents that roared in the neighbourhood here fell into the depth of the fire. Beyond that were great halls still dimly illuminated and full of unknown mineral wealth that sparkled and danced in the light and mocked his eyes as if he were exploring a hall of mirrors by the help of a pocket torch. It seemed to him also, though this may have been delirium, that he came through a vast cathedral space which was more like the work of art than that of Nature, with two great thrones at one end and chairs on either hand too large for human occupants. If the things were real, he never found any explanation of them. There was a dark tunnel in which a wind from Heaven knows where was blowing and drove sand in his face. There was also a place where he himself walked in darkness and looked down through fathom below fathom of shafts and natural arches and winding gulfs on to a smooth floor lit with a cold green light. And as he stood and looked it seemed to him that four of the great earth-beetles, dwarfed by distance to the size of gnats, and crawling two by two, came slowly into sight. And they were drawing behind them a flat car, and on the car, upright, unshaken, stood a mantled form, huge and still and slender. And driving its strange team it passed on with insufferable majesty and went out of sight. Assuredly the inside of this world was not for man. But it was for something. And it appeared to Ransom that there might, if a man could find it, be some way to renew the old Pagan practice of propitiating the local gods of unknown places in such fashion that it was no offence to God Himself but only a prudent and courteous apology for trespass. That thing, that swathed form in its chariot, was no doubt his fellow creature. It did not follow that they were equals or had an equal right in the under-land. A long time after this came the drumming — the *boom-ba-ba-ba-boom-boom* out of pitch darkness, distant at first, then all around him, then dying

away after endless prolongation of echoes in the black labyrinth. Then came the fountain of cold light — a column, as of water, shining with some radiance of its own, and pulsating, and never any nearer however long he travelled and at last suddenly eclipsed. He did not find what it was. And so, after more strangeness and grandeur and labour than I can tell, there came a moment when his feet slid without warning on clay — a wild grasp — a spasm of terror — and he was spluttering and struggling in deep, swift-flowing water. He thought that even if he escaped being battered to death against the walls of the channel he would presently plunge along with the stream into the pit of fire. But the channel must have been very straight and the current perhaps was less violent than he had supposed. At all events he never touched the sides. He lay helpless, in the end, rushing forward through echoing darkness. It lasted a long time.

You will understand that what with expectation of death, and weariness, and the great noise, he was confused in mind. Looking back on the adventure afterwards it seemed to him that he floated out of blackness into greyness and then into an inexplicable chaos of semi-transparent blues and greens and whites. There was a hint of arches above his head and faintly shining columns, but all vague and all obliterating one another as soon as seen. It looked like a cave of ice, but it was too warm for that. And the roof above him seemed to be itself rippling like water, but this was doubtless a reflection. A moment later and he was rushed out into broad daylight and air and warmth, and rolled head over heels, and deposited, dazzled and breathless, in the shallows of a great pool.

He was now almost too weak to move. Something in the air, and the wide silence which made a background to the lonely crying of birds, told him that he was on a high mountain top. He rolled rather than crawled out of the pool on to sweet blue turf. Looking back whence he had come he saw a river pouring from the mouth of a cave, a cave that seemed indeed to be made of ice. Under it the water was spectral blue, but near where he lay it was warm amber. There was mist and freshness and dew all about him. At his side rose a cliff mantled with streamers of bright vegetation, but gleaming like glass where its own surface showed through. But this he heeded little. There were rich dusters of a grape-like fruit glowing under the little pointed leaves, and he could reach them without getting up. Eating passed into sleeping by a transition he could never remember.

At this point it becomes increasingly difficult to give Ransom's experiences in any certain order. How long he lay beside the river at the cavern mouth eating and sleeping and waking only to eat and sleep again, he has no idea. He thinks it was only a day or two, but from the state of his body when this period of convalescence ended I should imagine it must have been more like a fortnight or three weeks. It was a time to be remembered only in dreams as we remember infancy. Indeed it was a second infancy, in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself: unweaned till he moved from that place. Three impressions of this long Sabbath remain. One is the endless sound of rejoicing water. Another is the delicious life that he sucked from the clusters which almost seemed to bow themselves unasked into his upstretched hands. The third is the song. Now high in air above him, now welling up as if from glens and valleys far below, it floated through his sleep and was the first sound at every waking. It was formless as the song of a bird, yet it was not a bird's voice. As a bird's voice is to a flute, so this was to a cello: low and ripe and tender, full-bellied, rich and golden-brown: passionate too, but not with the passions of men.

Because he was weaned so gradually from this state of rest I cannot give his impressions of the place he lay in, bit by bit, as he came to take it in. But when he was cured and his mind was clear again, this was what he saw. The cliffs out of which his river had broken through the cave were not of ice, but of some kind of translucent rock. Any little splinter broken off them was as transparent as glass, but the cliffs themselves, when you looked at them close, seemed to become opaque about six inches from the surface. If you waded up-stream into the cave and then turned back and looked towards the light, the edges of the arch which formed the cave's mouth were distinctly transparent: and everything looked blue inside the cave. He did not know what happened at the top of these cliffs.

Before him the lawn of blue turf continued level for about thirty paces, and then dropped with a steep slope, leading the river down in a series of cataracts. The slope was covered with flowers which shook continually in a light breeze. It went down a long way and ended in a winding and wooded valley which curled out of sight on his right hand round a majestic slope: but beyond that, lower down — so much lower down as to be almost incredible — one caught the point of mountain tops, and beyond that, fainter yet, the hint of still lower valleys, and then a vanishing of everything

in golden haze. On the opposite side of this valley the earth leaped up in great sweeps and folds of almost Himalayan height to the red rocks. They were not red like Devonshire cliffs: they were true rose-red, as if they had been painted. Their brightness astonished him, and so did the needle-like sharpness of their spires, until it occurred to him that he was in a young world and that these mountains might, geologically speaking, be in their infancy. Also, they might be farther off than they looked.

To his left and behind him the crystal cliffs shut off his view. To his right they soon ended and beyond them the ground rose to another and nearer peak — a much lower one than those he saw across the valley. The fantastic steepness of all the slopes confirmed his idea that he was on a very young mountain.

Except for the song it was all very still. When he saw birds flying they were usually a long way below him. On the slopes to his right and, less distinctly, on the slope of the great *massif* which faced him, there was a continual tippling effect which he could not account for. It was like water flowing: but since, if it were a stream on the remoter mountain, it would have to be a stream two or three miles wide, this seemed improbable.

In trying to put the completed picture together I have omitted something which, in fact, made it a long job for Ransom to get that picture. The whole place was subject to mists. It kept on vanishing in a veil of saffron or very pale gold and reappearing again — almost as if the golden sky-roof, which indeed looked only a few feet above the mountain-tops, were opening and pouring down riches upon the world.

Day by day as he came to know more of the place, Ransom also came to know more of the state of his own body. For a long time he was too stiff almost to move and even an incautious breath made him wince. It healed, however, surprisingly quickly. But just as a man who has had a fall only discovers the real hurt when the minor bruises and cuts are less painful, so Ransom was nearly well before he detected his most serious injury. It was a wound in his heel. The shape made it quite clear that the wound had been inflicted by human teeth — the nasty, blunt teeth of our own species which crush and grind more than they cut. Oddly enough, he had no recollection of this particular bite in any of his innumerable tussles with the Un-man. It did not look unhealthy, but it was still bleeding. It was not bleeding at all fast, but nothing he could do would stop it. But he worried very little about this. Neither the future nor the past really concerned him at this period.

Wishing and fearing were modes of consciousness for which he seemed to have lost the faculty.

Nevertheless there came a day when he felt the need of some activity and yet did not feel ready to leave the little lair between the pool and the cliff which had become like a home. He employed that day in doing something which may appear rather foolish and yet at the time it seemed to him that he could hardly omit it. He had discovered that the substance of the translucent cliffs was not very hard. Now he took a sharp stone of a different kind, and cleared a wide space on the cliff wall of vegetation. Then he made measurements and spaced it all out carefully and after a few hours had produced the following. The language was Old Solar but the letters were Roman.

WITHIN THESE CAVES WAS BURNED
THE BODY
OF
EDWARD ROLLES WESTON
A LEARNED HNAU OF THE WORLD WHICH THOSE WHO INHABIT IT
CALL TELLUS
BUT THE ELDILA
THULCANDRA
HE WAS BORN WHEN TELLUS HAD COMPLETED
ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINETY-SIX
REVOLUTIONS
ABOUT ARBOL
SINCE THE TIME WHEN
MALELDIL
BLESSED BE HE
WAS BORN AS A HNAU IN THULCANDRA
HE STUDIED THE PROPERTIES OF BODIES
AND FIRST OF THE TELLURIANS TRAVELLED THROUGH DEEP HEAVEN TO MALACANDRA
AND TO PERELANDRA
WHERE HE GAVE UP HIS WILL AND REASON
TO THE BENT ELDIL

WHEN TELLUS WAS MAKING
THE ONE THOUSANDTH NINE HUNDREDTH AND FORTY-SECOND
REVOLUTION AFTER THE BIRTH OF MALELDIL
BLESSED BE HE.

"That was a tomfool thing to do," said Ransom to himself contentedly as he lay down again. "No one will ever read it. But there ought to be some record. He was a great physicist after all. Anyway, it has given me some exercise." He yawned prodigiously and settled down to yet another twelve hours of sleep.

The next day he was better and began taking little walks, not going down but strolling to and fro on the hillside on each side of the cave. The following day he was better still. But on the third day he was well, and ready for adventures.

He set out very early in the morning and began to follow the watercourse down the hill. The slope was very steep but there were no outcroppings of rock and the turf was soft and springy and to his surprise he found that the descent brought no weariness to his knees. When he had been going about half an hour and the peaks of the opposite mountain were now too high to see and the crystal cliffs behind him were only a distant glare, he came to a new kind of vegetation. He was approaching a forest of little trees whose trunks were only about two and a half feet high; but from the top of each trunk there grew long streamers which did not rise in the air but flowed in the wind downhill and parallel to the ground. Thus, when he went in among them, he found himself wading knee deep and more in a continually rippling sea of them — a sea which presently tossed all about him as far as his eye could reach. It was blue in colour, but far lighter than the blue of the turf — almost a Cambridge blue at the centre of each streamer, but dying away at their tasselled and feathery edges into a delicacy of bluish grey which it would take the subtlest effects of smoke and cloud to rival in our world. The soft, almost impalpable, caresses of the long thin leaves on his flesh, the low, singing, rustling, whispering music, and the frolic movement all about him, began to set his heart beating with that almost formidable sense of delight which he had felt before in Perelandra. He realised that these dwarf forests — these ripple-trees as he now christened them — were

the explanation of that water-like movement he had seen on the farther slopes.

When he was tired he sat down and found himself at once in a new world. The streamers now flowed above his head. He was in a forest made for dwarfs, a forest with a blue transparent roof, continually moving and casting an endless dance of lights and shades upon its mossy floor. And presently he saw that it was indeed made for dwarfs. Through the moss, which here was of extraordinary fineness, he saw the hithering and thithering of what at first he took for insects but what proved, on closer inspection, to be tiny mammals. There were many mountain mice, exquisite scale models of those he had seen on the Forbidden Island, each about the size of a bumble bee. There were little miracles of grace which looked more like horses than anything he had yet seen on this world, though they resembled proto-hippos rather than his modern representative.

“How can I avoid treading on thousands of these?” he wondered. But they were not really very numerous and the main crowd of them seemed to be all moving away on his left. When he made to rise he noticed that there were already very few of them in sight.

He continued to wade down through the rippling streamers (it was like a sort of vegetable surf-bathing) for about an hour longer. Then he came into woods and presently to a river with a rocky course flowing across his path to the right. He had, in fact, reached the wooded valley, and knew that the ground which sloped upwards through trees on the far side of the water was the beginning of the great ascent. Here was amber shade and solemn height under the forest roof, and rocks wet with cataracts, and, over all, the noise of that deep singing. It was so loud now and so full of melody that he went down-stream, a little out of his way, to look for its origin. This brought him almost at once out of stately aisles and open glades into a different kind of wood. Soon he was pressing his way through thornless thickets, all in bloom. His head was covered with the petals that showered on it, his sides gilded with pollen. Much that his fingers touched was gummy and at each pace his contact with soil and bush appeared to wake new odours that darted into his brain and there begot wild and enormous pleasures. The noise was very loud now and the thicket very dense so that he could not see a yard ahead, when the music stopped suddenly. There was a sound of rustling and broken twigs and he made hastily in that direction, but found nothing. He had almost decided to give up the search when the song began

again a little farther away. Once more he made after it; once more the creature stopped singing and evaded him. He must have played thus at hide-and-seek with it for the best part of an hour before his search was rewarded.

Treading delicately during one of the loudest bursts of music he at last saw through the flowery branches a black something. Standing still whenever it stopped singing, and advancing with great caution whenever it began again, he stalked it for ten minutes. At last it was in full view, and singing, and ignorant that it was watched. It sat upright like a dog, black and sleek and shiny, but its shoulders were high above Ransom's head, and the forelegs on which they were pillared were like young trees and the wide soft pads on which they rested were large as those of a camel. The enormous rounded belly was white, and far up above the shoulders the neck rose like that of a horse. The head was in profile from where Ransom stood — the mouth wide open as it sang of joy in thick-coming trills, and the music almost visibly rippled in its glossy throat. He stared in wonder at the wide liquid eyes and the quivering, sensitive nostrils. Then the creature stopped, saw him, and darted away, and stood, now a few paces distant, on all four legs, not much smaller than a young elephant, swaying a long bushy tail. It was the first thing in Perelandra which seemed to show any fear of man. Yet it was not fear. When he called to it it came nearer. It put its velvet nose into his hand and endured his touch; but almost at once it darted back and, bending its long neck, buried its head in its paws. He could make no headway with it, and when at length it retreated out of sight he did not follow it. To do so would have seemed an injury to its fawn-like shyness, to the yielding softness of its expression, its evident wish to be for ever a sound and only a sound in the thickest centre of untravelled woods. He resumed his journey: a few seconds later the song broke out behind him, louder and lovelier than before, as if in a pæan of rejoicing at its recovered privacy.

Ransom now addressed himself seriously to the ascent of the great mountain and in a few minutes emerged from the woods on to its lower slopes. He continued ascending so steeply that he used hands as well as feet for about half an hour and was puzzled to find himself doing it with almost no fatigue. Then he came once more into a region of ripple-trees. This time the wind was blowing the streamers not down the mountain-side but up it, so that his course had to the eye the astonishing appearance of lying through a wide blue waterfall which flowed the wrong way, curving and foaming

towards the heights. Whenever the wind failed for a second or two the extreme ends of the streamers began to curl back under the influence of gravitation, so that it looked as if the heads of the waves were being flung back by a high wind. He continued going up through this for a long time, never feeling any real need for rest but resting occasionally none the less. He was now so high that the crystal cliffs from which he had set out appeared on a level with him as he looked back across the valley. He now saw that the land leaped up beyond them into a whole waste of the same translucent formation which ended in a kind of glassy tableland. Under the naked sun of our own planet this would have been too bright to look at: here, it was a tremulous dazzle changing every moment under the undulations which the Perelandrian sky receives from the ocean. To the left of this tableland were some peaks of greenish rock. He went on. Little by little the peaks and the tableland sank and grew smaller, and presently there arose beyond them an exquisite haze like vaporised amethyst and emerald and gold, and the edge of this haze rose as he rose, and became at last the horizon of the sea, high lifted above the hills. And the sea grew ever larger and the mountains less, and the horizon of the sea rose and rose till all the lower mountains behind him seemed to be lying at the bottom of a great bowl of sea; but ahead, the interminable slope, now blue, now violet, now flickering with the smoke-like upward movement of the ripple-trees, soared up and up to the sky. And now the wooded valley in which he had met the singing beast was invisible and the mountain from which he had set out looked no more than a little swell on the slope of the great mountain, and there was not a bird in the air, nor any creature underneath the streamers, and still he went on unwearied, but always bleeding a little from his heel. He was not lonely nor afraid. He had no desires and did not even think about reaching the top nor why he should reach it. To be always climbing this was not, in his present mood, a process but a state, and in that state of life he was content. It did once cross his mind that he had died and felt no weariness because he had no body. The wound in his heel convinced him that this was not so; but if it had been so indeed, and these had been trans-mortal mountains, his journey could hardly have been more great and strange.

That night he lay on the slopes between the stems of the ripple-trees with the sweet-scented, wind-proof, delicately-whispering roof above his head, and when morning came he resumed his journey. At first he climbed

through dense mists. When these parted, he found himself so high that the concave of the sea seemed to close him in on every side but one: and on that one he saw the rose-red peaks, no longer very distant, and a pass between the two nearest ones through which he caught a glimpse of something soft and flushed. And now he began to feel a strange mixture of sensations — a sense of perfect duty to enter that secret place which the peaks were guarding combined with an equal sense of trespass. He dared not go up that pass: he dared not do otherwise. He looked to see an angel with a flaming sword: he knew that Maleldil bade him go on. “This is the holiest and the most unholy thing I have ever done,” he thought; but he went on. And now he was right in the pass. The peaks on either hand were not of red rock. Cores of rock they must have had; but what he saw were great matterhorns clothed in flowers — a flower shaped something like a lily but tinted like a rose. And soon the ground on which he trod was carpeted with the same flowers and he must crush them as he walked; and here at last his bleeding left no visible trace.

From the neck between the two peaks he looked a little down, for the top of the mountain was a shallow cup. He saw a valley, a few acres in size, as secret as a valley in the top of a cloud: a valley pure rose-red, with ten or twelve of the glowing peaks about it, and in the centre a pool, married in pure unrippled clearness to the gold of the sky. The lilies came down to its very edge and lined all its bays and headlands. Yielding without resistance to the awe which was gaining upon him, he walked forward with slow paces and bowed head. There was something white near the water’s edge. An altar? A patch of white lilies among the red? A tomb? But whose tomb? No, it was not a tomb but a coffin, open and empty, and its lid lying beside it.

Then of course he understood. This thing was own brother to the coffin-like chariot in which the strength of angels had brought him from Earth to Venus. It was prepared for his return. If he had said, “It is for my burial,” his feelings would not have been very different. And while he thought of this he became gradually aware that there was something odd about the flowers at two places in his immediate neighbourhood. Next, he perceived that the oddity was an oddity in the light; thirdly, that it was in the air as well as on the ground. Then, as the blood pricked his veins and a familiar, yet strange, sense of diminished being possessed him, he knew that he was in the presence of two eldila. He stood still. It was not for him to speak.

SIXTEEN

A clear voice like a chime of remote bells, a voice with no blood in it, spoke out of the air and sent a tingling through his frame.

"They have already set foot on the sand and are beginning to ascend," it said.

"The small one from Thulcandra is already here," said a second voice.

"Look on him, beloved, and love him," said the first. "He is indeed but breathing dust and a careless touch would unmake him. And in his best thoughts there are such things mingled as, if we thought them, our light would perish. But he is in the body of Maleldil and his sins are forgiven. His very name in his own tongue is Elwin, the friend of the eldila."

"How great is your knowledge!" said the second voice.

"I have been down into the air of Thulcandra," said the first, "which the small ones call Tellus. A thickened air as full of the Darkened as Deep Heaven is of the Light Ones. I have heard the prisoners there talking in their divided tongues and Elwin has taught me how it is with them."

From these words Ransom knew the speaker was the Oyarsa of Malacandra, the great archon of Mars. He did not, of course, recognise the voice, for there is no difference between one eldil's voice and another's. It is by art, not nature, that they affect human ear-drums and their words owe nothing to lungs or lips.

"If it is good, Oyarsa," said Ransom, "tell me who is this other."

"It is Oyarsa," said Oyarsa, "and here that is not my name. In my own sphere I am Oyarsa. Here I am only Malacandra."

"I am Perelandra," said the other voice.

"I do not understand," said Ransom. "The Woman told me there were no eldila in this world."

"They have not seen my face till to-day," said the second voice, "except as they see it in the water and the roof-heaven, the islands, the caves, and the trees. I was not set to rule them, but while they were young I ruled all else. I rounded this ball when it first arose from Arbol. I spun the air about it and wove the roof. I built the Fixed Island and this, the holy mountain, as Maleldil taught me. The beasts that sing and the beasts that fly and all that swims on my breast and all that creeps and tunnels within me down to the centre has been mine. And to-day all this is taken from me. Blessed be He."

“The small one will not understand you,” said the Lord of Malacandra. “He will think that this is a grievous thing in your eyes.”

“He does not say this, Malacandra.”

“No. That is another strange thing about the children of Adam.”

There was a moment’s silence and then Malacandra addressed Ransom. “You will think of this best if you think of it in the likeness of certain things from your own world.”

“I think I understand,” said Ransom, “for one of Maleldil’s sayers has told us. It is like when the children of a great house come to their full age. Then those who administered all their riches, and whom perhaps they have never seen, come and put all in their hands and give up their keys.”

“You understand well,” said Perelandra. “Or like when the singing beast leaves the dumb dam who suckled him.”

“The singing beast?” said Ransom. “I would gladly hear more of this.”

“The beasts of that kind have no milk and always what they bring forth is suckled by the she-beast of another kind. She is great and beautiful and dumb, and till the young singing beast is weaned it is among her whelps and is subject to her. But when it is grown it becomes the most delicate and glorious of all beasts and goes from her. And she wonders at its song.”

“Why has Maleldil made such a thing?” said Ransom.

“That is to ask why Maleldil has made me,” said Perelandra. “But now it is enough to say that from the habits of these two beasts much wisdom will come into the minds of my King and my Queen and their children. But the hour is upon us, and this is enough.”

“What hour?” asked Ransom.

“To-day is the morning day,” said one or other or both the voices. But there was something much more than sound about Ransom and his heart began beating fast.

“The morning . . . do you mean . . .?” he asked. “Is all well? Has the Queen found the King?”

“The world is born to-day,” said Malacandra. “To-day for the first time two creatures of the low worlds, two images of Maleldil that breathe and breed like the beasts, step up that step at which your parents fell, and sit in the throne of what they were meant to be. It was never seen before. Because it did not happen in your world a greater thing happened, but not this. Because the greater thing happened in Thulcandra, this and not the greater thing happens here.”

“Elwin is falling to the ground,” said the other voice.

“Be comforted,” said Malacandra. “It is no doing of yours. You are not great, though you could have prevented a thing so great that Deep Heaven sees it with amazement. Be comforted, small one, in your smallness. He lays no merit on you. Receive and be glad. Have no fear, lest your shoulders be bearing this world. Look! it is beneath your head and carries you.”

“Will they come here?” asked Ransom some time later.

“They are already well up the mountain’s side,” said Perelandra. “And our hour is upon us. Let us prepare our shapes. We are hard for them to see while we remain in ourselves.”

“It is very well said,” answered Malacandra. “But in what form shall we show ourselves to do them honour?”

“Let us appear to the small one here,” said the other. “For he is a man and can tell us what is pleasing to their senses.”

“I can see — I can see *something* even now,” said Ransom.

“Would you have the King strain his eyes to see those who come to do him honour?” said the archon of Perelandra. “But look on this and tell us how it deals with you.”

The very faint light — the almost imperceptible alteration in the visual field — which betokens an eldil vanished suddenly. The rosy peaks and the calm pool vanished also. A tornado of sheer monstrosities seemed to be pouring over Ransom. Darting pillars filled with eyes, lightning pulsations of flame, talons and beaks and billowy masses of what suggested snow, volleyed through cubes and heptagons into an infinite black void. “Stop it . . . stop it,” he yelled, and the scene cleared. He gazed round blinking on the field of lilies, and presently gave the eldila to understand that this kind of appearance was not suited to human sensations. “Look then on this,” said the voices again. And he looked with some reluctance, and far off between the peaks on the other side of the little valley there came rolling wheels. There was nothing but that — concentric wheels moving with a rather sickening slowness one inside the other. There was nothing terrible about them if you could get used to their appalling size, but there was also nothing significant. He bade them to try yet a third time. And suddenly two human figures stood before him on the opposite side of the lake.

They were taller than the Sorns, the giants whom he had met in Mars. They were perhaps thirty feet high. They were burning white like white-hot iron. The outline of their bodies when he looked at it steadily against the red

landscape seemed to be faintly, swiftly undulating as though the permanence of their shape, like that of waterfalls or flames, co-existed with a rushing movement of the matter it contained. For a fraction of an inch inward from this outline the landscape was just visible through them: beyond that they were opaque.

Whenever he looked straight at them they appeared to be rushing towards him with enormous speed: whenever his eyes took in their surroundings he realised that they were stationary. This may have been due in part to the fact that their long and sparkling hair stood out straight behind them as if in a great wind. But if there were a wind it was not made of air, for no petal of the flowers was shaken. They were not standing quite vertically in relation to the floor of the valley: but to Ransom it appeared (as it had appeared to me on Earth when I saw one) that the eldils were vertical. It was the valley — it was the whole world of Perelandra — which was aslant. He remembered the words of Oyarsa long ago in Mars, “I am not *here* in the same way that you are *here*.” It was borne in upon him that the creatures were really moving, though not moving in relation to him. This planet which inevitably seemed to him while he was in it an unmoving world — *the* world, in fact — was to them a thing moving through the heavens. In relation to their own celestial frame of reference they were rushing forward to keep abreast of the mountain valley. Had they stood still, they would have flashed past him too quickly for him to see, doubly dropped behind by the planet’s spin on its own axis and by its onward march around the Sun.

Their bodies, he said, were white. But a flush of diverse colours began at about the shoulders and streamed up the necks and flickered over face and head and stood out around the head like plumage or a halo. He told me he could in a sense remember these colours — that is, he would know them if he saw them again — but that he cannot by any effort call up a visual image of them nor give them any name. The very few people with whom he and I can discuss these matters all give the same explanation. We think that when creatures of the hypersomatic kind choose to “appear” to us, they are not in fact affecting our retina at all, but directly manipulating the relevant parts of our brain. If so, it is quite possible that they can produce there the sensations we *should* have if our eyes were capable of receiving those colours in the spectrum which are actually beyond their range. The “plumage” or halo of the one eldil was extremely different from that of the

other. The Oyarsa of Mars shone with cold and morning colours, a little metallic — pure, hard, and bracing. The Oyarsa of Venus glowed with a warm splendour, full of the suggestion of teeming vegetable life.

The faces surprised him very much. Nothing less like the “angel” of popular art could well be imagined. The rich variety, the hint of undeveloped possibilities, which make the interest of human faces, were entirely absent. One single, changeless expression — so clear that it hurt and dazzled him — was stamped on each and there was nothing else there at all. In that sense their faces were as “primitive,” as unnatural, if you like, as those of archaic statues from *Æ*gina. What this one thing was he could not be certain. He concluded in the end that it was charity. But it was terrifyingly different from the expression of human charity, which we always see either blossoming out of, or hastening to descend into, natural affection. Here there was no affection at all: no least lingering memory of it even at ten million years’ distance, no germ from which it could spring in any future, however remote. Pure, spiritual, intellectual love shot from their faces like barbed lightning. It was so unlike the love we experience that its expression could easily be mistaken for ferocity.

Both the bodies were naked, and both were free from any sexual characteristics, either primary or secondary. That, one would have expected. But whence came this curious difference between them? He found that he could point to no single feature wherein the difference resided, yet it was impossible to ignore. One could try — Ransom has tried a hundred times — to put it into words. He has said that Malacandra was like rhythm and Perelandra like melody. He has said that Malacandra affected him like a quantitative, Perelandra like an accentual, metre. He thinks that the first held in his hand something like a spear, but the hands of the other were open, with the palms towards him. But I don’t know that any of these attempts has helped me much. At all events what Ransom saw at that moment was the real meaning of gender. Everyone must sometimes have wondered why in nearly all tongues certain inanimate objects are masculine and others feminine. What is masculine about a mountain or feminine about certain trees? Ransom has cured me of believing that this is a purely morphological phenomenon, depending on the form of the word. Still less is gender an imaginative extension of sex. Our ancestors did not make mountains masculine because they projected male characteristics into them. The real process is the reverse. Gender is a reality, and a more fundamental

reality than sex. Sex is, in fact, merely the adaptation to organic life of a fundamental polarity which divides all created beings. Female sex is simply one of the things that have feminine gender; there are many others, and Masculine and Feminine meet us on planes of reality where male and female would be simply meaningless. Masculine is not attenuated male, nor feminine attenuated female. On the contrary, the male and female of organic creatures are rather faint and blurred reflections of masculine and feminine. Their reproductive functions, their differences in strength and size, partly exhibit, but partly also confuse and misrepresent, the real polarity. All this Ransom saw, as it were, with his own eyes. The two white creatures were sexless. But he of Malacandra was masculine (not male); she of Perelandra was feminine (not female). Malacandra seemed to him to have the look of one standing armed, at the ramparts of his own remote archaic world, in ceaseless vigilance, his eyes ever roaming the earth-ward horizon whence his danger came long ago. “A sailor’s look,” Ransom once said to me; “you know . . . eyes that are impregnated with distance.” But the eyes of Perelandra opened, as it were, inward, as if they were the curtained gateway to a world of waves and murmurings and wandering airs, of life that rocked in winds and splashed on mossy stones and descended as the dew and arose sunward in thin-spun delicacy of mist. On Mars the very forests are of stone; in Venus the lands swim. For now he thought of them no more as Malacandra and Perelandra. He called them by their Tellurian names. With deep wonder he thought to himself, “My eyes have seen Mars and Venus. I have seen Ares and Aphrodite.” He asked them how they were known to the old poets of Tellus. When and from whom had the children of Adam learned that Ares was a man of war and that Aphrodite rose from the sea foam? Earth has been besieged, an enemy-occupied territory, since before history began. The gods have had no commerce there. How then do we know of them? It comes, they told him, a long way round and through many stages. There is an environment of minds as well as of space. The universe is one — a spider’s web wherein each mind lives along every line, a vast whispering gallery where (save for the direct action of Maleldil) though no news travels unchanged yet no secret can be rigorously kept. In the mind of the fallen Archon under whom our planet groans, the memory of Deep Heaven and the gods with whom he once consorted is still alive. Nay, in the very matter of our world, the traces of the celestial commonwealth are not quite lost. Memory passes through the womb and hovers in the air. The

Muse is a real thing. A faint breath, as Virgil says, reaches even the late generations. Our mythology is based on a solider reality than we dream: but it is also at an almost infinite distance from that base. And when they told him this, Ransom at last understood why mythology was what it was — gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility. His cheeks burned on behalf of our race when he looked on the true Mars and Venus and remembered the follies that have been talked of them on Earth. Then a doubt struck him.

"But do I see you as you really are?" he asked.

"Only Maleldil sees any creature as it really is," said Mars.

"How do you see one another?" asked Ransom.

"There are no holding places in your mind for an answer to that."

"Am I then seeing only an appearance? Is it not real at all?"

"You see only an appearance, small one. You have never seen more than an appearance of anything — not of Arbol, nor of a stone, nor of your own body. This appearance is as true as what you see of those."

"But . . . there were those other appearances."

"No. There was only the failure of appearance."

"I don't understand," said Ransom. "Were all those other things — the wheels and the eyes — more real than this or less?"

"There is no meaning in your question," said Mars. "You can see a stone, if it is a fit distance from you and if you and it are moving at speeds not too different. But if one throws the stone at your eye, what then is the appearance?"

"I should feel pain and perhaps see splintered light," said Ransom. "But I don't know that I should call that an appearance of the stone."

"Yet it would be the true operation of the stone. And there is your question answered. We are now at the right distance from you."

"And were you nearer in what I first saw?"

"I do not mean that kind of distance."

"And then," said Ransom, still pondering, "there is what I had thought was your wonted appearance — the very faint light, Oyarsa, as I used to see it in your own world. What of that?"

"That is enough appearance for us to speak to you by. No more was needed between us: no more is needed now. It is to honour the King that we would now appear more. That light is the overflow or echo into the world of

your senses of vehicles made for appearance to one another and to the greater eldila.”

At this moment Ransom suddenly noticed an increasing disturbance of sound behind his back — of unco-ordinated sound, husky and pattering noises which broke in on the mountain silence and the crystal voices of the gods with a delicious note of warm animality. He glanced round. Romping, prancing, fluttering, gliding, crawling, waddling, with every kind of movement — in every kind of shape and colour and size — a whole zoo of beasts and birds was pouring into a flowery valley through the passes between the peaks at his back. They came mostly in their pairs, male and female together, fawning upon one another, climbing over one another, diving under one another’s bellies, perching upon one another’s backs. Flaming plumage, gilded beaks, glossy flanks, liquid eyes, great red caverns of whinneying or of bleating mouths, and thickets of switching tails, surrounded him on every side. “A regular Noah’s Ark!” thought Ransom, and then, with sudden seriousness. “But there will be no ark needed in this world.”

The song of four singing beasts rose in almost deafening triumph above the restless multitude. The great eldil of Perelandra kept back the creatures to the hither side of the pool, leaving the opposite side of the valley empty except for the coffin-like object. Ransom was not clear whether Venus spoke to the beasts or even whether they were conscious of her presence. Her connection with them was perhaps of some subtler kind — quite different from the relations he had observed between them and the Green Lady. Both the eldila were now on the same side of the pool with Ransom. He and they and all the beasts were facing in the same direction. The thing began to arrange itself. First, on the very brink of the pool, were the eldila, standing: between them, and a little back, was Ransom, still sitting among the lilies. Behind him the four singing beasts, sitting up on their haunches like fire-dogs, and proclaiming joy to all ears. Behind these again, the other animals. The sense of ceremony deepened. The expectation became intense. In our foolish human fashion he asked a question merely for the purpose of breaking it. “How can they climb to here and go down again and yet be off this island before nightfall?” Nobody answered him. He did not need an answer, for somehow he knew perfectly well that *this* island had never been forbidden them, and that one purpose in forbidding the other had been to

lead them to this their destined throne. Instead of answering, the gods said, “Be still.”

Ransom’s eyes had grown so used to the tinted softness of Perelandrian daylight — and specially since his journey in the dark guts of the mountain — that he had quite ceased to notice its difference from the daylight of our own world. It was, therefore, with a shock of double amazement that he now suddenly saw the peaks on the far side of the valley showing really dark against what seemed a terrestrial dawn. A moment later sharp, well-defined shadows — long, like the shadows at early morning — were streaming back from every beast and every unevenness of the ground and each lily had its light and its dark side. Up and up came the light from the mountain slope. It filled the whole valley. The shadows disappeared again. All was in a pure daylight that seemed to come from nowhere in particular. He knew ever afterwards what is meant by a light “resting on” or “overshadowing” a holy thing, but not emanating from it. For as the light reached its perfection and settled itself, as it were, like a lord upon his throne or like wine in a bowl, and filled the whole flowery cup of the mountain top, every cranny, with its purity, the holy thing, Paradise itself in its two Persons, Paradise walking hand in hand, its two bodies shining in the light like emeralds yet not themselves too bright to look at, came in sight in the cleft between two peaks, and stood a moment with its male right hand lifted in regal and pontificial benediction, and then walked down and stood on the far side of the water. And the gods kneeled and bowed their huge bodies before the small forms of that young King and Queen.

SEVENTEEN

There was great silence on the mountain top and Ransom also had fallen down before the human pair. When at last he raised his eyes from the four blessed feet, he found himself involuntarily speaking though his voice was broken and his eyes dimmed. “Do not move away, do not raise me up,” he said. “I have never before seen a man or a woman. I have lived all my life among shadows and broken images. Oh, my Father and my Mother, my Lord and my Lady, do not move, do not answer me yet. My own father and mother I have never seen. Take me for your son. We have been alone in my world for a great time.”

The eyes of the Queen looked upon him with love and recognition, but it was not of the Queen that he thought most. It was hard to think of anything but the King. And how shall I — I who have not seen him — tell you what he was like? It was hard even for Ransom to tell me of the King’s face. But we dare not withhold the truth. It was that face which no man can say he does not know. You might ask how it was possible to look upon it and not to commit idolatry, not to mistake it for that of which it was the likeness. For the resemblance was, in its own fashion, infinite, so that almost you could wonder at finding no sorrows in his brow and no wounds in his hands and feet. Yet there was no danger of mistaking, not one moment of confusion, no least sally of the will towards forbidden reverence. Where likeness was greatest, mistake was least possible. Perhaps this is always so. A clever wax-work can be made so like a man that for a moment it deceives us: the great portrait which is far more deeply like him does not. Plaster images of the Holy One may before now have drawn to themselves the adoration they were meant to arouse for the reality. But here, where His live image, like Him within and without, made by His own bare hands out of the depth of divine artistry, His masterpiece of self-portraiture coming forth from His workshop to delight all worlds, walked and spoke before Ransom’s eyes, it could never be taken for more than an image. Nay, the very beauty of it lay in the certainty that it was a copy, like and not the same, an echo, a rhyme, an exquisite reverberation of the uncreated music prolonged in a created medium.

Ransom was lost for a while in the wonder of these things, so that when he came to himself he found that Perelandra was speaking, and what he

heard seemed to be the end of a long oration. “The floating lands and the firm lands,” she was saying, “the air and the curtains at the gates of Deep Heaven, the seas and the Holy Mountain, the rivers above and the rivers of under-land, the fire, the fish, the birds, the beasts, and the others of the waves whom yet you know not; all these Maleldil puts into your hand from this day forth as far as you live in time and farther. My word henceforth is nothing: your word is law unchangeable and the very daughter of the Voice. In all that circle which this world runs about Arbol, you are Oyarsa. Enjoy it well. Give names to all creatures, guide all natures to perfection. Strengthen the feebler, lighten the darker, love all. Hail and be glad, oh man and woman, Oyarsa-Perelendri, the Adam, the Crown, Tor and Tinidril, Baru and Baru’ah, Ask and Embla, Yatsur and Yatsurah, dear to Maleldil. Blessed be He!”

When the King spoke in answer, Ransom looked up at him again. He saw that the human pair were now seated on a low bank that rose near the margin of the pool. So great was the light, that they cast clear reflections in the water as they might have done in our own world.

“We give you thanks, fair foster mother,” said the King, “and specially for this world in which you have laboured for long ages as Maleldil’s very hand that all might be ready for us when we woke. We have not known you till to-day. We have often wondered whose hand it was that we saw in the long waves and the bright islands and whose breath delighted us in the wind at morning. For though we were young then, we saw dimly that to say ‘It is Maleldil’ was true, but not all the truth. This world we receive: our joy is the greater because we take it by your gift as well as by His. But what does He put into your mind to do henceforward?”

“It lies in your bidding, Tor-Oyarsa,” said Perelandra, “whether I now converse in Deep Heaven only or also in that part of Deep Heaven which is to you a World.”

“It is very much our will,” said the King, “that you remain with us, both for the love we bear you and also that you may strengthen us with counsel and even with your operations. Not till we have gone many times about Arbol shall we grow up to the full management of the dominion which Maleldil puts into our hands: nor are we yet ripe to steer the world through Heaven nor to make rain and fair weather upon us. If it seems good to you, remain.”

“I am content,” said Perelandra.

While this dialogue proceeded, it was a wonder that the contrast between the Adam and the eldils was not a discord. On the one side, the crystal, bloodless voice, and the immutable expression of the snow-white face; on the other the blood coursing in the veins, the feeling trembling on the lips and sparkling in the eyes, the might of the man's shoulders, the wonder of the woman's breasts, a splendour of virility and richness of womanhood unknown on earth, a living torrent of perfect animality — yet when these met, the one did not seem rank nor the other spectral. *Animal rationale* — an animal, yet also a reasonable soul: such, he remembered, was the old definition of Man. But he had never till now seen the reality. For now he saw this living Paradise, the Lord and Lady, as the resolution of discords, the bridge that spans what would else be a chasm in creation, the keystone of the whole arch. By entering that mountain valley they had suddenly united the warm multitude of the brutes behind him with the transcorporeal intelligences at his side. They closed the circle, and with their coming all the separate notes of strength or beauty which that assembly had hitherto struck became one music. But now the King was speaking again.

"And as it is not Maleldil's gift simply," he said, "but also Maleldil's gift through you, and thereby the richer, so it is not through you only, but through a third, and thereby the richer again. And this is the first word I speak as Tor-Oyarsa-Perelendri; that in our world, as long as it is a world, neither shall morning come nor night but that we and all our children shall speak to Maleldil of Ransom the man of Thulcandra and praise him to one another. And to you, Ransom, I say this, that you have called us Lord and Father, Lady and Mother. And rightly, for this is our name. But in another fashion we call you Lord and Father. For it seems to us that Maleldil sent you into our world at that day when the time of our being young drew to its end, and from it we must now go up or go down, into corruption or into perfection. Maleldil has taken us where He meant us to be: but of Maleldil's instruments in this, you were the chief."

They made him go across the water to them, wading, for it came only to his knees. He would have fallen at their feet but they would not let him. They rose to meet him and both kissed him, mouth to mouth and heart to heart as equals embrace. They would have made him sit between them, but when they saw that this troubled him they let it be. He went and sat down on the level ground, below them, and a little to the left. From there he faced

the assembly — the huge shapes of the gods and the concourse of beasts. And then the Queen spoke.

"As soon as you had taken away the Evil One," she said, "and I awoke from sleep, my mind was cleared. It is a wonder to me, Piebald, that for all those days you and I could have been so young. The reason for not yet living on the Fixed Land is now so plain. How could I wish to live there except because it was Fixed? And why should I desire the Fixed except to make sure — to be able on one day to command where I should be the next and what should happen to me? It was to reject the wave — to draw my hands out of Maleldil's, to say to Him, 'Not thus, but thus' — to put in our own power what times should roll towards us . . . as if you gathered fruits together to-day for to-morrow's eating instead of taking what came. That would have been cold love and feeble trust. And out of it how could we ever have climbed back into love and trust again?"

"I see it well," said Ransom. "Though in my world it would pass for folly. We have been evil so long" — and then he stopped, doubtful of being understood and surprised that he had used a word for *evil* which he had not hitherto known that he knew, and which he had not heard either in Mars or in Venus.

"We know these things now," said the King, seeing Ransom's hesitation. "All this, all that happened in your world, Maleldil has put into our mind. We have learned of evil, though not as the Evil One wished us to learn. We have learned better than that, and know it more, for it is waking that understands sleep and not sleep that understands waking. There is an ignorance of evil that comes from being young: there is a darker ignorance that comes from doing it, as men by sleeping lose the knowledge of sleep. You are more ignorant of evil in Thulcandra now than in the days before your Lord and Lady began to do it. But Maleldil has brought us out of the one ignorance, and we have not entered the other. It was by the Evil One himself that he brought us out of the first. Little did that dark mind know the errand on which he really came to Perelandra!"

"Forgive me, my Father, if I speak foolishly," said Ransom. "I see how evil has been made known to the Queen, but not how it was made known to you."

Then unexpectedly the King laughed. His body was very big and his laugh was like an earthquake in it, loud and deep and long, till in the end Ransom laughed too, though he had not seen the joke, and the Queen

laughed as well. And the birds began clapping their wings and the beasts wagging their tails, and the light seemed brighter and the pulse of the whole assembly quickened, and new modes of joy that had nothing to do with mirth as we understand it passed into them all, as it were from the very air, or as if there were dancing in Deep Heaven. Some say there always is.

"I know what he is thinking," said the King, looking upon the Queen. "He is thinking that you suffered and strove and I have a world for my reward." Then he turned to Ransom and continued. "You are right," he said, "I know now what they say in your world about justice. And perhaps they say well, for in that world things always fall below justice. But Maleldil always goes above it. All is gift. I am Oyarsa not by His gift alone but by our foster mother's, not by hers alone but by yours, not by yours alone but my wife's — nay, in some sort, by gift of the very beasts and birds. Through many hands, enriched with many different kinds of love and labour, the gift comes to me. It is the Law. The best fruits are plucked for each by some hand that is not his own."

"That is not the whole of what happened, Piebald," said the Queen. "The King has not told you all. Maleldil drove him far away into a green sea where forests grow up from the bottom through the waves. . . ."

"Its name is Lur," said the King.

"Its name is Lur," repeated the eldila. And Ransom realised that the King had uttered not an observation but an enactment.

"And there in Lur (it is far hence)," said the Queen, "strange things befell him."

"Is it good to ask about these things?" said Ransom.

"There were many things," said Tor the King. "For many hours I learned the properties of shapes by drawing lines in the turf of a little island on which I rode. For many hours I learned new things about Maleldil and about His Father and the Third One. We knew little of this while we were young. But after that He showed me in a darkness what was happening to the Queen. And I knew it was possible for her to be undone. And then I saw what had happened in your world, and how your Mother fell and how your Father went with her, doing her no good thereby and bringing the darkness upon all their children. And then it was before me like a thing coming towards my hand . . . what I should do in like case. There I learned of evil and good, of anguish and joy."

Ransom had expected the King to relate his decision, but when the King's voice died away into thoughtful silence he had not the assurance to question him.

"Yes . . ." said the King, musing. "Though a man were to be torn in two halves . . . though half of him turned into earth. . . . The living half must still follow Maleldil. For if it also lay down and became earth, what hope would there be for the whole? But while one half lived, through it He might send life back into the other." Here he paused for a long time, and then spoke again somewhat quickly. "He gave me no assurance. No fixed land. Always one must throw oneself into the wave." Then he cleared his brow and turned to the eldila and spoke in a new voice.

"Certainly, oh foster mother," he said. "We have much need of counsel for already we feel that growing up within our bodies which our young wisdom can hardly overtake. They will not always be bodies bound to the low worlds. Hear the second word that I speak as Tor-Oyarsa-Perelendri. While this World goes about Arbol ten thousand times, we shall judge and hearten our people from this throne. Its name is Tai Harendrimar, The Hill of Life."

"Its name is Tai Harendrimar," said the eldila.

"On the Fixed Land which once was forbidden," said Tor the King, "we will make a great place to the splendour of Maleldil. Our sons shall bend the pillars of rock into arches — —"

"What are arches?" said Tinidril the Queen.

"Arches" said Tor the King, "are when pillars of stone throw out branches like trees and knit their branches together and bear up a great dome as of leafage, but the leaves shall be shaped stones. And there our sons will make images."

"What are images?" said Tinidril.

"Splendour of Deep Heaven!" cried the King with a great laugh. "It seems there are too many new words in the air. I had thought these things were coming out of your mind into mine, and lo! you have not thought them at all. Yet I think Maleldil passed them to me through you, none the less. I will show you images, I will show you houses. It may be that in this matter our natures are reversed and it is you who beget and I who bear. But let us speak of plainer matters. We will fill this world with our children. We will know this world to the centre. We will make the nobler of the beasts so wise that they will become *hnau* and speak: their lives shall awake to a new life

in us as we awake in Maleldil. When the time is ripe for it and the ten thousand circlings are nearly at an end, we will tear the sky curtain and Deep Heaven shall become familiar to the eyes of our sons as the trees and the waves to ours."

"And what after this, Tor-Oyarsa?" said Malacandra.

"Then it is Maleldil's purpose to make us free of Deep Heaven. Our bodies will be changed, but not all changed. We shall be as the eldila, but not all as the eldila. And so will all our sons and daughters be changed in the time of their ripeness, until the number is made up which Maleldil read in His Father's mind before times flowed."

"And that," said Ransom, "will be the end?"

Tor the King stared at him.

"The end?" he said. "Who spoke of an end?"

"The end of your world, I mean," said Ransom.

"Splendour of Heaven!" said Tor. "Your thoughts are unlike ours. About that time we shall be not far from the beginning of all things. But there will be one matter to settle before the beginning rightly begins."

"What is that?" asked Ransom.

"Your own world," said Tor, "Thulcandra. The siege of your world shall be raised, the black spot cleared away, before the real beginning. In those days Maleldil will go to war — in us, and in many who once were *hnau* on your world, and in many from far off and in many eldila, and, last of all, in Himself unveiled, He will go down to Thulcandra. Some of us will go before. It is in my mind, Malacandra, that thou and I will be among those. We shall fall upon your moon, wherein there is a secret evil, and which is as the shield of the Dark Lord of Thulcandra — scarred with many a blow. We shall break her. Her light shall be put out. Her fragments shall fall into your world and the seas and the smoke shall arise so that the dwellers in Thulcandra will no longer see the light of Arbol. And as Maleldil Himself draws near, the evil things in your world shall show themselves stripped of disguise so that plagues and horrors shall cover your lands and seas. But in the end all shall be cleansed, and even the memory of your Black Oyarsa blotted out, and your world shall be fair and sweet and reunited to the field of Arbol and its true name shall be heard again. But can it be, Friend, that no rumour of all this is heard in Thulcandra? Do your people think that their Dark Lord will hold his prey forever?"

“Most of them,” said Ransom, “have ceased to think of such things at all. Some of us still have the knowledge: but I did not at once see what you were talking of, because what you call the beginning we are accustomed to call the Last Things.”

“I do not call it the beginning,” said Tor the King. “It is but the wiping out of a false start in order that the world may *then* begin. As when a man lies down to sleep, if he finds a twisted root under his shoulder he will change his place — and after that his real sleep begins. Or as a man setting foot on an island, may make a false step. He steadies himself and after that his journey begins. You would not call that steadying of himself a last thing?”

“And is the whole story of my race no more than this?” said Ransom.

“I see no more than beginnings in the history of the Low Worlds,” said Tor the King. “And in yours a failure to begin. You talk of evenings before the day has dawned. I set forth even now on ten thousand years of preparation — I, the first of my race, my race the first of races, to begin. I tell you that when the last of my children has ripened and ripeness has spread from them to all the Low Worlds, it will be whispered that the morning is at hand.”

“I am full of doubts and ignorance,” said Ransom. “In our world those who know Maleldil at all believe that His coming down to us and being a man is the central happening of all that happens. If you take that from me, Father, whither will you lead me? Surely not to the enemy’s talk which thrusts my world and my race into a remote corner and gives me a universe with no centre at all, but millions of worlds that lead nowhere or (what is worse) to more and more worlds for ever, and comes over me with numbers and empty spaces and repetitions and asks me to bow down before bigness. Or do you make your world the centre? But I am troubled. What of the people on Malacandra? Would they also think that their world was the centre? I do not even see how your world can rightly be called yours. You were made yesterday and it is from of old. The most of it is water where you cannot live. And what of the things beneath its crust? And of the great spaces with no world at all? Is the enemy easily answered when He says that all is without plan or meaning? As soon as we think we see one it melts away into nothing, or into some other plan that we never dreamed of, and what was the centre becomes the rim, till we doubt if any shape or plan or pattern was ever more than a trick of our own eyes, cheated with hope, or

tired with too much looking. To what is all driving? What is the morning you speak of? What is it the beginning of?”

“The beginning of the Great Game, of the Great Dance,” said Tor. “I know little of it as yet. Let the eldila speak.”

The voice that spoke next seemed to be that of Mars, but Ransom was not certain. And who spoke after that, he does not know at all. For in the conversation that followed — if it can be called a conversation — though he believes that he himself was sometimes the speaker, he never knew which words were his or another’s, or even whether a man or an eldil was talking. The speeches followed one another — if, indeed, they did not all take place at the same time — like the parts of a music into which all five of them had entered as instruments or like a wind blowing through five trees that stand together on a hilltop.

“We would not talk of it like that,” said the first voice. “The Great Dance does not wait to be perfect until the peoples of the Low Worlds are gathered into it. We speak not of when it will begin. It has begun from before always. There was no time when we did not rejoice before His face as now. The dance which we dance is at the centre and for the dance all things were made. Blessed be He!”

Another said, “Never did He make two things the same; never did He utter one word twice. After earths, not better earths but beasts; after beasts, not better beasts but spirits. After a falling, not recovery but a new creation. Out of the new creation, not a third but the mode of change itself is changed for ever. Blessed be He!”

And another said, “It is loaded with justice as a tree bows down with fruit. All is righteousness and there is no equality. Not as when stones lie side by side, but as when stones support and are supported in an arch, such is His order; rule and obedience, begetting and bearing, heat glancing down, life growing up. Blessed be He!”

One said, “They who add years to years in lumpish aggregation, or miles to miles and galaxies to galaxies, shall not come near His greatness. The day of the fields of Arbol will fade and the days of Deep Heaven itself are numbered. Not thus is He great. He dwells (all of Him dwells) within the seed of the smallest flower and is not cramped: Deep Heaven is inside Him who is inside the seed and does not distend Him. Blessed be He!”

“The edge of each nature borders on that whereof it contains no shadow or similitude. Of many points one line; of many lines one shape; of many

shapes one solid body; of many senses and thoughts one person; of three persons, Himself. As is the circle to the sphere, so are the ancient worlds that needed no redemption to that world wherein He was born and died. As is a point to a line, so is that world to the far-off fruits of its redeeming. Blessed be He!"

"Yet the circle is not less round than the sphere, and the sphere is the home and fatherland of circles. Infinite multitudes of circles lie enclosed in every sphere, and if they spoke they would say, For us were spheres created. Let no mouth open to gainsay them. Blessed be He!"

"The peoples of the ancient worlds who never sinned, for whom He never came down, are the peoples for whose sake the Low Worlds were made. For though the healing what was wounded and the straightening what was bent is a new dimension of glory, yet the straight was not made that it might be bent nor the whole that it might be wounded. The ancient peoples are at the centre. Blessed be He!"

"All which is not itself the Great Dance was made in order that He might come down into it. In the Fallen World He prepared for Himself a body and was united with the Dust and made it glorious for ever. This is the end and final cause of all creating, and the sin whereby it came is called Fortunate and the world where this was enacted is the centre of worlds. Blessed be He!"

"The Tree was planted in that world but the fruit has ripened in this. The fountain that sprang with mingled blood and life in the Dark World, flows here with life only. We have passed the first cataracts, and from here onward the stream flows deep and turns in the direction of the sea. This is the Morning Star which He promised to those who conquer; this is the centre of worlds. Till now, all has waited. But now the trumpet has sounded and the army is on the move. Blessed be He!"

"Though men or angels rule them, the worlds are for themselves. The waters you have not floated on, the fruit you have not plucked, the caves into which you have not descended and the fire through which your bodies cannot pass, do not await your coming to put on perfection, though they will obey you when you come. Times without number I have circled Arbol while you were not alive, and those times were not desert. Their own voice was in them, not merely a dreaming of the day when you should awake. They also were at the centre. Be comforted, small immortals. You are not the voice that all things utter, nor is there eternal silence in the places where

you cannot come. No feet have walked, nor shall, on the ice of Glund; no eye looked up from beneath on the Ring of Lurga, and Iron-plain in Neruval is chaste and empty. Yet it is not for nothing that the gods walk ceaselessly around the fields of Arbol. Blessed be He!”

“That Dust itself which is scattered so rare in Heaven, whereof all worlds, and the bodies that are not worlds, are made, is at the centre. It waits not till created eyes have seen it or hands handled it, to be in itself a strength and splendour of Maleldil. Only the least part has served, or ever shall, a beast, a man, or a god. But always, and beyond all distances, before they came and after they are gone and where they never come, it is what it is and utters the heart of the Holy One with its own voice. It is farthest from Him of all things, for it has no life, nor sense, nor reason; it is nearest to Him of all things for without intervening soul, as sparks fly out of fire, He utters in each grain of it the unmixed image of His energy. Each grain, if it spoke, would say, I am at the centre; for me all things were made. Let no mouth open to gainsay it. Blessed be He!”

“Each grain is at the centre. The Dust is at the centre. The Worlds are at the centre. The beasts are at the centre. The ancient peoples are there. The race that sinned is there. Tor and Tinidril are there. The gods are there also. Blessed be He!”

“Where Maleldil is, there is the centre. He is in every place. Not some of Him in one place and some in another, but in each place the whole Maleldil, even in the smallness beyond thought. There is no way out of the centre save into the Bent Will which casts itself into the Nowhere. Blessed be He!”

“Each thing was made for Him. He is the centre. Because we are with Him, each of us is at the centre. It is not as in a city of the Darkened World where they say that each must live for all. In His city all things are made for each. When He died in the Wounded World He died not for men, but for each man. If each man had been the only man made, He would have done no less. Each thing, from the single grain of Dust to the strongest eldil, is the end and the final cause of all creation and the mirror in which the beam of His brightness comes to rest and so returns to Him. Blessed be He!”

“In the plan of the Great Dance plans without number interlock, and each movement becomes in its season the breaking into flower of the whole design to which all else had been directed. Thus each is equally at the centre and none are there by being equals, but some by giving place and some by receiving it, the small things by their smallness and the great by their

greatness, and all the patterns linked and looped together by the unions of a kneeling with a sceptred love. Blessed be He!”

“He has immeasurable use for each thing that is made, that His love and splendour may flow forth like a strong river which has need of a great watercourse and fills alike the deep pools and the little crannies, that are filled equally and remain unequal; and when it has filled them brim full it flows over and makes new channels. We also have need beyond measure of all that He has made. Love me, my brothers, for I am infinitely necessary to you and for your delight I was made. Blessed be He!”

“He has no need at all of anything that is made. An eldil is not more needful to Him than a grain of the Dust: a peopled world no more needful than a world that is empty: but all needless alike, and what all add to Him is nothing. We also have no need of anything that is made. Love me, my brothers, for I am infinitely superfluous, and your love shall be like His, born neither of your need nor of my deserving, but a plain bounty. Blessed be He!”

“All things are by Him and for Him. He utters Himself also for His own delight and sees that He is good. He is His own begotten and what proceeds from Him is Himself. Blessed be He!”

“All that is made seems planless to the darkened mind, because there are more plans than it looked for. In these seas there are islands where the hairs of the turf are so fine and so closely woven together that unless a man looked long at them he would see neither hairs nor weaving at all, but only the same and the flat. So with the Great Dance. Set your eyes on one movement and it will lead you through all patterns and it will seem to you the master movement. But the seeming will be true. Let no mouth open to gainsay it. There seems no plan because it is all plan: there seems no centre because it is all centre. Blessed be He!”

“Yet this seeming also is the end and final cause for which He spreads out Time so long and Heaven so deep; lest if we never met the dark, and the road that leads no-whither, and the question to which no answer is imaginable, we should have in our minds no likeness of the Abyss of the Father, into which if a creature drop down his thoughts for ever he shall hear no echo return to him. Blessed, blessed, blessed be He!”

And now, by a transition which he did not notice, it seemed that what had begun as speech was turned into sight, or into something that can be remembered only as if it were seeing. He thought he saw the Great Dance.

It seemed to be woven out of the intertwining undulation of many cords or bands of light, leaping over and under one another and mutually embraced in arabesques and flower-like subtleties. Each figure as he looked at it became the master-figure or focus of the whole spectacle, by means of which his eye disentangled all else and brought it into unity — only to be itself entangled when he looked to what he had taken for mere marginal decorations and found that there also the same hegemony was claimed, and the claim made good, yet the former pattern not thereby dispossessed but finding in its new subordination a significance greater than that which it had abdicated. He could see also (but the word “seeing” is now plainly inadequate) wherever the ribbons or serpents of light intersected, minute corpuscles of momentary brightness: and he knew somehow that these particles were the secular generalities of which history tells — peoples, institutions, climates of opinion, civilisations, arts, sciences, and the like — ephemeral coruscations that piped their short song and vanished. The ribbons or cords themselves, in which millions of corpuscles lived and died, were things of some different kind. At first he could not say what. But he knew in the end that most of them were individual entities. If so, the time in which the Great Dance proceeds is very unlike time as we know it. Some of the thinner and more delicate cords were beings that we call short-lived: flowers and insects, a fruit or a storm of rain, and once (he thought) a wave of the sea. Others were such things as we also think lasting: crystals, rivers, mountains, or even stars. Far above these in girth and luminosity and flashing with colours from beyond our spectrum were the lines of the personal beings, and yet as different from one another in splendour as all of them from all the previous class. But not all the cords were individuals: some were universal truths or universal qualities. It did not surprise him then to find that these and the persons were both cords and both stood together as against the mere atoms of generality which lived and died in the clashing of their streams: but afterwards, when he came back to earth, he wondered. And by now the thing must have passed altogether out of the region of sight as we understand it. For he says that the whole solid figure of these enamoured and inter-inanimated circlings was suddenly revealed as the mere superficies of a far vaster pattern in four dimensions, and that figure as the boundary of yet others in other worlds: till suddenly as the movement grew yet swifter, the interweaving yet more ecstatic, the relevance of all to all yet more intense, as dimension was added to

dimension and that part of him which could reason and remember was dropped farther and farther behind that part of him which saw, even then, at the very zenith of complexity, complexity was eaten up and faded, as a thin white cloud fades into the hard blue burning of the sky, and a simplicity beyond all comprehension, ancient and young as spring, illimitable, pellucid, drew him with cords of infinite desire into its own stillness. He went up into such a quietness, a privacy, and a freshness that at the very moment when he stood farthest from our ordinary mode of being he had the sense of stripping off encumbrances and awaking from trance, and coming to himself. With a gesture of relaxation he looked about him. . . .

The animals had gone. The two white figures had disappeared. Tor and Tinidril and he were alone, in ordinary Perelandrian daylight, early in the morning.

"Where are the beasts?" said Ransom.

"They have gone about their small affairs," said Tinidril. "They have gone to bring up their whelps and lay their eggs, to build their nests and spin their webs and dig their burrows, to sing and play and to eat and drink."

"They did not wait long," said Ransom, "for I feel it is still early in the morning."

"But not the same morning," said Tor.

"We have been here long, then?" asked Ransom.

"Yes," said Tor. "I did not know it till now. But we have accomplished one whole circle about Arbol since we met on this mountain top."

"A year?" said Ransom. "A whole year? O Heavens, what may by now have happened in my own dark world! Did you know, Father, that so much time was passing?"

"I did not feel it pass," said Tor. "I believe the waves of time will often change for us henceforward. We are coming to have it in our own choice whether we shall be above them and see many waves together or whether we shall reach them one by one as we used to."

"It comes into my mind," said Tinidril, "that to-day, now that the year has brought us back to the same place in Heaven, the eldils are coming for Piebald to take him back to his own world."

"You are right, Tinidril," said Tor. Then he looked at Ransom and said, "There is a red dew coming up out of your foot, like a little spring."

Ransom looked down and saw that his heel was still bleeding. “Yes,” he said, “it is where the Evil One bit me. The redness is of *Hrû* (blood).”

“Sit down, friend,” said Tor, “and let me wash your foot in this pool.” Ransom hesitated but the King compelled him. So presently he sat on the little bank and the King kneeled before him in the shallow water and took the injured foot in his hand. He paused as he looked at it.

“So this is *hrû*,” he said at last. “I have never seen such a fluid before. And this is the substance wherewith Maleldil remade the worlds before any world was made.”

He washed the foot for a long time but the bleeding did not stop. “Does it mean that Piebald will die?” said Tinidril at last.

“I do not think so,” said Tor. “I think that any of his race who has breathed the air that he has breathed and drunk the waters that he has drunk since he came to the Holy Mountain will not find it easy to die. Tell me, Friend, was it not so in your world that after they had lost their paradise the men of your race did not learn to die quickly?”

“I had heard,” said Ransom, “that those first generations were long livers, but most take it for only a Story or a Poetry and I had not thought of the cause.”

“Oh!” said Tinidril suddenly. “The eldila are come to take him.”

Ransom looked round and saw, not the white manlike forms in which he had last seen Mars and Venus, but only the almost invisible lights. The King and Queen apparently recognised the spirits in this guise also: as easily, he thought, as an earthly King would recognise his acquaintance even when they were not in court dress.

The King released Ransom’s foot and all three of them went towards the white casket. Its covering lay beside it on the ground. All felt an impulse to delay.

“What is this that we feel, Tor?” said Tinidril.

“I don’t know,” said the King. “One day I will give it a name. This is not a day for making names.”

“It is like a fruit with a very thick shell,” said Tinidril. “The joy of our meeting when we meet again in the Great Dance is the sweet of it. But the rind is thick — more years thick than I can count.”

“You see now,” said Tor, “what that Evil One would have done to us. If we had listened to him we should now be trying to get at that sweet without biting through the shell.”

“And so it would not be ‘That sweet’ at all,” said Tinidril.

“It is now his time to go,” said the tingling voice of an eldil. Ransom found no words to say as he laid himself down in the casket. The sides rose up high above him like walls: beyond them, as if framed in a coffin-shaped window, he saw the golden sky and the faces of Tor and Tinidril. “You must cover my eyes,” he said presently: and the two human forms went out of sight for a moment and returned. Their arms were full of the rose-red lilies. Both bent down and kissed him. He saw the King’s hand lifted in blessing and then never saw anything again in that world. They covered his face with the cool petals till he was blinded in a red sweet-smelling cloud.

“Is all ready?” said the King’s voice. “Farewell, Friend and Saviour, farewell,” said both voices. “Farewell till we three pass out of the dimensions of time. Speak of us always to Maleldil as we speak always of you. The splendour, the love, and the strength be upon you.”

Then came the great cumbrous noise of the lid being fastened on above him. Then, for a few seconds, noises without, in the world from which he was eternally divided. Then his consciousness was engulfed.

THE END

THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH (1945)



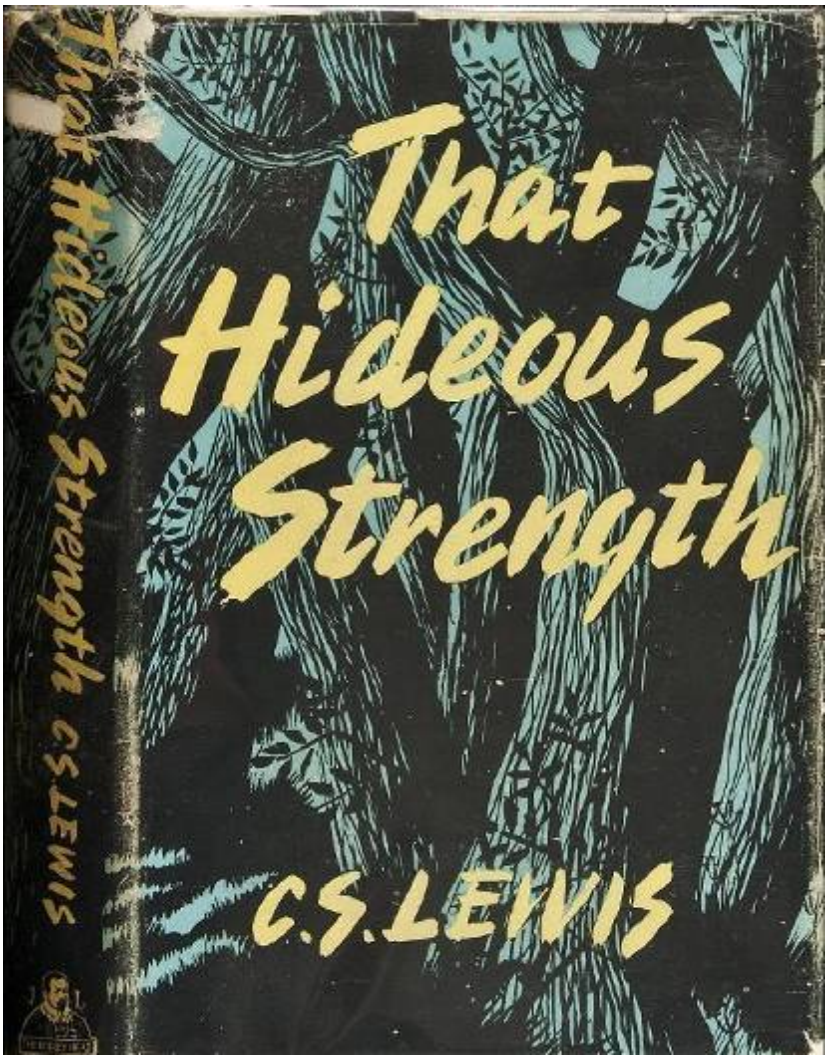
A MODERN FAIRY-TALE FOR GROWN-UPS

The final instalment of Lewis' Space Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* was released in 1945 and once again features the philologist Elwin Ransom. Unlike the principal events of the previous two novels, the narrative takes place on Earth rather than in space or on other planets in the solar system. The novel's title is taken from a poem written by David Lyndsay in 1555, *Ane Dialog betuix Experience and ane Courteou*r, also known as *The Monarche*: "The shadow of that hyddeous strength, sax myle and more it is of length", referring to the biblical Tower of Babel.

The plot concerns an ostensibly scientific institute, the N.I.C.E., which serves as a front for sinister supernatural forces. *That Hideous Strength* was heavily influenced by the writing of Lewis' friend and fellow Inkling Charles Williams and is noted for its marked dystopian style. In the book's preface Lewis also acknowledges science-fiction writer Olaf Stapledon and his work.

Written during the final period of World War II, the novel takes places during an undetermined year "after the end of the war". Mark Studdock is a young academic that has just become a Senior Fellow in sociology at Bracton College in the University of Edgestow. The fellows of Bracton are debating the sale of a portion of college land to the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.), whose staff already includes members of the college faculty. The sale is controversial as the land in question, Bragdon Wood, is an ancient woodland believed to be the resting place of Merlin. After the deal is struck, an N.I.C.E. insider called Lord Feverstone proposes a possible post for Mark at the Institute.

Mark's wife Jane, a PhD student at the university, has suffered a peculiar nightmare involving a severed head. She meets Mrs. Dimble, the wife of one of her former tutors, who is being evicted due to sale of land to the N.I.C.E. When Jane talks about her dreams, Mrs. Dimble leads her to seek counsel from a Miss Ironwood, who lives in the Manor in the nearby town of St. Anne's.



The first edition

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PREFACE

I have called this a fairy-tale in the hope that no one who dislikes fantasy may be misled by the first two chapters into reading further, and then complain of his disappointment. If you ask why — intending to write about magicians, devils, pantomime animals, and planetary angels — I nevertheless begin with such humdrum scenes and persons, I reply that I am following the traditional fairy-tale. We do not always notice its method, because the cottages, castles, woodcutters, and petty kings with which a fairy-tale opens have become for us as remote as the witches and ogres to which it proceeds. But they were not remote at all to the men who made and first enjoyed the stories. They were, indeed, more realistic and commonplace than Bracton College is to me: for many German peasants had actually met cruel stepmothers, whereas I have never, in any university, come across a college like Bracton.

This is a "tall story" about devilry, though it has behind it a serious "point" which I have tried to make in my *Abolition of Man*. In the story the outer rim of that devilry had to be shown touching the life of some ordinary and respectable profession. I selected my own profession, not, of course, because I think fellows of colleges more likely to be thus corrupted than anyone else, but because my own profession is naturally that which I know best. A very small university is imagined because that has certain conveniences for fiction. Edgestow has no resemblance, save for its smallness, to Durham — a university with which the only connection I have ever had was entirely pleasant.

I believe that one of the central ideas of this tale came into my head from conversations I had with a scientific colleague, some time before I met a rather similar suggestion in the works of Mr. Olaf Stapledon. If I am mistaken in this, Mr. Stapledon is so rich in invention that he can well afford to lend; and I admire his invention (though not his philosophy) so much that I should feel no shame to borrow.

Those who would like to learn further about Numinor and the True West must (alas!) await the publication of much that still exists only in the MSS. of my friend, Professor J. R. R. Tolkien.

The period of this story is vaguely "after the war." It concludes the Trilogy of which *Out of the Silent Planet* was the first part, and *Perelandra*

the second, but can be read on its own.

C. S. LEWIS.

Magdalen College, Oxford.

ONE

Sale of College Property

I

“Matrimony was ordained, thirdly,” said Jane Studdock to herself, “for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other.” She had not been to church since her schooldays until she went there six months ago to be married, and the words of the service had stuck in her mind.

Through the open door she could see the tiny kitchen of the flat and hear the loud, ungentle tick-tick of the clock. She had just left the kitchen and knew how tidy it was. The breakfast things were washed up, the tea towels were hanging above the stove, and the floor was mopped. The beds were made and the rooms “done.” She had just returned from the only shopping she need do that day, and it was still a minute before eleven. Except for getting her own lunch and tea there was nothing that had to be done till six o’clock, even supposing that Mark was really coming home for dinner. But there was a College meeting to-day. Almost certainly Mark would ring up about tea-time to say that the meeting was taking longer than he had expected and that he would have to dine in College. The hours before her were as empty as the flat. The sun shone and the clock ticked.

“Mutual society, help, and comfort,” said Jane bitterly. In reality marriage had proved to be the door out of a world of work and comradeship and laughter and innumerable things to do, into something like solitary confinement. For some years before their marriage she had never seen so little of Mark as she had done in the last six months. Even when he was at home he hardly ever talked. He was always either sleepy or intellectually preoccupied. While they had been friends, and later when they were lovers, life itself had seemed too short for all they had to say to each other. But now . . . why had he married her? Was he still in love? If so, “being in love” must mean totally different things to men and women. Was it the crude truth that all the endless talks which had seemed to her, before they were married, the very medium of love itself, had never been to him more than a preliminary?

“Here I am, starting to waste another morning, mooning,” said Jane to herself sharply. “I *must* do some work.” By work she meant her doctorate thesis on Donne. She had always intended to continue her own career as a scholar after she was married: that was one of the reasons why they were to have no children, at any rate for a long time yet. Jane was not perhaps a very original thinker, and her plan had been to lay great stress on Donne’s “triumphant vindication of the body.” She still believed that if she got out all her note-books and editions and really sat down to the job she could force herself back into her lost enthusiasm for the subject. But before she did so — perhaps in order to put off the moment of beginning — she turned over a newspaper which was lying on the table and glanced at a picture on the back page.

The moment she saw the picture, she remembered her dream. She remembered not only the dream but the measureless time after she had crept out of bed and sat waiting for the first hint of morning, afraid to put on the light for fear Mark should wake up and fuss, yet feeling offended by the sound of his regular breathing. He was an excellent sleeper. Only one thing ever seemed able to keep him awake after he had gone to bed, and even that did not keep him awake for long.

The terror of this dream, like the terror of most dreams, evaporates in the telling, but it must be set down for the sake of what came afterwards.

She had begun by dreaming simply of a face. It was a foreign-looking face, bearded and rather yellow, with a hooked nose. Its expression was frightening because it was frightened. The mouth sagged open and the eyes stared as she had seen other men’s eyes stare for a second or two when some sudden shock had occurred. But this face seemed to be meeting a shock that lasted for hours. Then gradually she became aware of more. The face belonged to a man who was sitting hunched up in one corner of a little square room with white-washed walls — waiting, she thought, for those who had him in their power, to come in and do something horrible to him. At last the door was opened and a rather good-looking man with a pointed grey beard came in. The prisoner seemed to recognise him as an old acquaintance and they sat down together and began to talk. In all the dreams which Jane had hitherto dreamed, one either understood what the dream-people were saying or else one did not hear it. But in this dream — and that helped to make its extraordinary realism — the conversation was in French and Jane understood bits of it, but by no means all, just as she would have

done in real life. The visitor was telling the prisoner something which he apparently intended him to regard as good news. And the prisoner at first looked up with a gleam of hope in his eye and said "*Tiens . . . ah . . . ça marche*": but then he wavered and changed his mind. The visitor continued in a low, fluent voice to press his point. He was a good-looking man in his rather cold way, but he wore pince-nez, and these kept on catching the light so as to make his eyes invisible. This, combined with the almost unnatural perfection of his teeth, somehow gave Jane a disagreeable impression. And this was increased by the growing distress, and finally the terror, of the prisoner. She could not make out what it was that the visitor was proposing to him, but she did discover that the prisoner was under sentence of death. Whatever the visitor was offering him was something that frightened him more than that. At this point the dream abandoned all pretence to realism and became ordinary nightmare. The visitor, adjusting his pince-nez and still smiling his cold smile, seized the prisoner's head between his two hands. He gave it a sharp turn — just as Jane had last summer seen men give a sharp turn to the helmet on a diver's head. The visitor unscrewed the prisoner's head and took it away. Then all became confused. The head was still the centre of the dream, but it was quite a different head now — a head with a reddish-white beard all covered with earth. It belonged to an old man whom some people were digging up in a kind of churchyard — a sort of ancient British, druidical kind of man, in a long mantle. Jane didn't mind this much at first because she thought it was a corpse. Then suddenly she noticed that this ancient thing was coming to life. "Look out!" she cried in her dream. "He's alive. Stop! stop! You're waking him." But they did not stop. The old, buried man sat up and began talking in something that sounded vaguely like Spanish. And this for some reason, frightened Jane so badly that she woke up.

That was the dream — no worse, if also no better, than many another nightmare. But it was not the mere memory of a nightmare that made the sitting-room of the flat swim before Jane's eyes and caused her to sit down quickly for fear she should fall. The trouble was elsewhere. There, on the back page of the newspaper, was the head she had seen in the nightmare: the first head (if there had been two of them) — the head of the prisoner. With extreme reluctance she took up the paper. EXECUTION OF ALCASAN was the headline, and beneath it, SCIENTIST BLUEBEARD GOES TO GUILLOTINE. She remembered having vaguely followed the

case. Alcasan was a distinguished radiologist in a neighbouring country — an Arab by descent, they said — who had cut short an otherwise brilliant career by poisoning his wife. So that was the origin of her dream. She must have looked at this photo in the paper — the man certainly had a very unpleasant face — before going to bed. But no: that couldn't be it. It was this morning's paper. But of course there must have been some earlier picture which she had seen and forgotten — probably weeks ago when the trial began. It was silly to have let it give her such a turn. And now for Donne. Let's see, where were we? The ambiguous passage at the end of *Love's Alchymie*,

Hope not for minde in women; at their best
Sweetnesse and wit, they are but *Mummy* possest.

"Hope not for mind in women." Did any men really *want* mind in women? But that wasn't the point. "I *must* get back my power of concentrating," said Jane: and then, "Was there a previous picture of Alcasan? Supposing . . ."

Five minutes later she swept all her books away, went to the mirror, put on her hat, and went out. She was not quite sure where she was going. Anywhere, to be out of that room, that flat, that whole house.

II

Mark himself, meanwhile, was walking down to Bracton College, and thinking of a very different matter. He did not notice at all the morning beauty of the little street that led him from the sandy hillside suburb where he and Jane lived down into the central and academic part of Edgestow.

Though I am Oxford bred and very fond of Cambridge, I think that Edgestow is more beautiful than either. For one thing it is so small. No maker of cars or sausages or marmalades has yet come to industrialise the country town which is the setting of the university, and the university itself is tiny. Apart from Bracton and from the nineteenth-century women's college beyond the railway, there are only two colleges; Northumberland which stands below Bracton on the river Wynd, and Duke's opposite the Abbey. Bracton takes no undergraduates. It was founded in 1300 for the support of ten learned men whose duties were to pray for the soul of Henry de Bracton and to study the laws of England. The number of Fellows has

gradually increased to forty, of whom only six (apart from the Bacon Professor) now study Law and of whom none, perhaps, prays for the soul of Bracton. Mark Studdock was himself a Sociologist and had been elected to a fellowship in that subject five years ago. He was beginning to find his feet. If he had felt any doubt on that point (which he did not) it would have been laid to rest when he found himself meeting Curry just outside the post office, and seen how natural Curry found it that they should walk to College together and discuss the agenda for the meeting. Curry was the sub-warden of Bracton.

"Yes," said Curry. "It will take the hell of a time. Probably go on after dinner. We shall have all the obstructionists wasting time as hard as they can. But luckily that's the worst they can do."

You would never have guessed from the tone of Studdock's reply what intense pleasure he derived from Curry's use of the pronoun "we." So very recently he had been an outsider, watching the proceedings of what he then called "Curry and his gang" with awe and with little understanding, and making at College meetings short, nervous speeches which never influenced the course of events. Now he was inside, and "Curry and his gang" had become "we" or "the progressive element in College." It had all happened quite suddenly and was still sweet in the mouth.

"You think it'll go through, then?" said Studdock.

"Sure to," said Curry. "We've got the Warden, and the Bursar, and all the chemical and bio-chemical people for a start. I've tackled Pelham and Ted and they're sound. I've made Sancho believe that he sees the point and that he's in favour of it. Bill the Blizzard will probably do something pretty devastating, but he's bound to side with us if it comes to a vote. Besides: I haven't yet told you. Dick's going to be there. He came up in time for dinner last night and got busy at once."

Studdock's mind darted hither and thither in search of some safe way to conceal the fact that he did not know who Dick was. In the nick of time he remembered a very obscure colleague whose Christian name was Richard.

"Telford?" said Studdock in a puzzled voice. He knew very well that Telford could not be the Dick that Curry meant, and therefore threw a slightly whimsical and ironical tone into his question.

"Good Lord! Telford!" said Curry with a laugh. "No. I mean Lord Feverstone — Dick Devine as he used to be."

“I *was* a little baffled by the idea of Telford,” said Studdock, joining in the laugh. “I’m glad Feverstone is coming. I’ve never met him you know.”

“Oh, but you must,” said Curry. “Look here, come and dine in my rooms to-night. I’ve asked him.”

“I should like to very much,” said Studdock quite truly. And then, after a pause, “By the way, I suppose Feverstone’s own position is quite secure?”

“How do you mean?” asked Curry.

“Well, there was some talk, if you remember, as to whether someone who was away quite so much could go on holding a fellowship.”

“Oh, you mean Glossop and all that ramp. Nothing will come of that. Didn’t you think it absolute blah?”

“As between ourselves, yes. But I confess if I were put up to explain *in public* exactly why a man who is nearly always in London should go on being a Fellow of Bracton, I shouldn’t find it altogether easy. The real reasons are the sort that Watson would call imponderables.”

“I don’t agree. I shouldn’t have the least objection to explaining the real reasons in public. Isn’t it important for a college like this to have influential connections with the outer world? It’s not in the least impossible that Dick will be in the next Cabinet. Even already Dick in London has been a damn sight more use to the College than Glossop and half a dozen others of that sort have been by sitting here all their lives.”

“Yes. Of course that’s the real point. It would be a little difficult to put in that form at a College meeting, though!”

“There’s one thing,” said Curry in a slightly less intimate tone, “that perhaps you ought to know about Dick.”

“What’s that?”

“He got you your Fellowship.”

Mark was silent. He did not like things which reminded him that he had once been not only outside the progressive element but even outside the College. He did not always like Curry either. His pleasure in being with him was not that sort of pleasure.

“Yes,” said Curry. “Denniston was your chief rival. Between ourselves, a good many people liked his papers better than yours. It was Dick who insisted all through that you were the sort of man we really wanted. He went round to Duke’s and ferreted out all about you. He took the line that the one thing to consider is the type of man we need, and be damned to paper qualifications. And I must say he turned out to be right.”

“Very kind of you,” said Studdock with a little mock bow. He was surprised at the turn the conversation had taken. It was an old rule at Bracton, as presumably in most colleges, that one never mentioned in the presence of a man the circumstances of his own election, and Studdock had not realised till now that this also was one of the traditions the Progressive Element was prepared to scrap. It had also never occurred to him that his own election had depended on anything but the excellence of his work in the fellowship examination: still less that it had been so narrow a thing. He was so accustomed to his position by now that this thought gave him the same curious sensation which a man has when he discovers that his father once very nearly married a different woman.

“Yes,” continued Curry, pursuing another train of thought. “One sees now that Denniston would never have done. Most emphatically not. A brilliant man at that time, of course, but he seems to have gone quite off the rails since then with all his Distributivism and what not. They tell me he’s likely to end up in a monastery.”

“He’s no fool, all the same,” said Studdock.

“I’m glad you’re going to meet Dick,” said Curry. “We haven’t time now, but there’s one thing about him I wanted to discuss with you.”

Studdock looked enquiringly at him.

“James and I and one or two others,” said Curry in a somewhat lower voice, “have been thinking he ought to be the new warden. But here we are.”

“It’s not yet twelve,” said Studdock. “What about popping into the Bristol for a drink?”

Into the Bristol they accordingly went. It would not have been easy to preserve the atmosphere in which the Progressive Element operated without a good many of these little courtesies. This weighed harder on Studdock than on Curry who was unmarried and had a sub-warden’s stipend. But the Bristol was a very pleasant place. Studdock bought a double whisky for his companion and half a pint of beer for himself.

III

The only time I was a guest at Bracton I persuaded my host to let me into the Wood and leave me there alone for an hour. He apologised for locking me in.

Very few people were allowed into Bragdon Wood. The gate was by Inigo Jones and was the only entry: a high wall enclosed the Wood, which was perhaps a quarter of a mile broad and a mile from east to west. If you came in from the street and went through the College to reach it, the sense of gradual penetration into a holy of holies was very strong. First you went through the Newton quadrangle which is dry and gravelly; florid, but beautiful, Georgian buildings look down upon it. Next you must enter a cool tunnel-like passage, nearly dark at midday unless either the door into Hall should be open on your right or the buttery hatch on your left, giving you a glimpse of indoor daylight falling on panels, and a whiff of the smell of fresh bread. When you emerged from this tunnel you would find yourself in the medieval college: in the cloister of the much smaller quadrangle called Republic. The grass here looks very green after the aridity of Newton and the very stone of the buttresses that rise from it gives the impression of being soft and alive. Chapel is not far off: the hoarse, heavy noise of the works of a great and old clock comes to you from somewhere overhead. You went along this cloister, past slabs and urns and busts that commemorate dead Bractonians, and then down shallow steps into the full daylight of the quadrangle called Lady Alice. The buildings to your left and right were seventeenth-century work: humble, almost domestic in character, with dormer windows, mossy and grey-tiled. You were in a sweet, Protestant world. You found yourself, perhaps, thinking of Bunyan or of Walton's *Lives*. There were no buildings straight ahead on the fourth side of Lady Alice: only a row of elms and a wall; and here first one became aware of the sound of running water and the cooing of wood pigeons. The street was so far off by now that there were no other noises. In the wall there was a door. It led you into a covered gallery pierced with narrow windows on either side. Looking out through these you discovered that you were crossing a bridge and the dark brown dimpled Wynd was flowing under you. Now you were very near your goal. A wicket at the far end of the bridge brought you out on the Fellows' bowling-green, and across that you saw the high wall of the Wood and through the Inigo Jones gate you caught a glimpse of sunlit green and deep shadows.

I suppose the mere fact of being walled in gave the Wood part of its peculiar quality, for when a thing is enclosed the mind does not willingly regard it as common. As I went forward over the quiet turf I had the sense of being received. The trees were just so wide apart that one saw

uninterrupted foliage in the distance, but the place where one stood seemed always to be a clearing: surrounded by a world of shadows, one walked in mild sunshine. Except for the sheep whose nibbling kept the grass so short and who sometimes raised their long, foolish faces to stare at me, I was quite alone; and it felt more like the loneliness of a very large room in a deserted house than like any ordinary solitude out of doors. I remember thinking, “This is the sort of place which, as a child, one would have been rather afraid of or else would have liked very much indeed.” A moment later I thought, “But when alone — really alone — everyone is a child: or no one?” Youth and age touch only the surface of our lives.

Half a mile is a short walk. Yet it seemed a long time before I came to the centre of the Wood. I knew it was the centre, for there was the thing I had chiefly come to see. It was a well: a well with steps going down to it and the remains of an ancient pavement about it. It was very imperfect now. I did not step on it, but I lay down in the grass and touched it with my fingers. For this was the heart of Bracton or Bragdon Wood: out of this all the legends had come and on this, I suspected, the very existence of the College had originally depended. The archaeologists were agreed that the masonry was very late British-Roman work, done on the very eve of the Anglo-Saxon invasion. How Bragdon the wood was connected with Bracton the lawyer was a mystery, but I fancy myself that the Bracton family had availed themselves of an accidental similarity in the names to believe, or make believe, that they had something to do with it. Certainly, if all that was told were true, or even half of it, the Wood was older than the Bractons. I suppose no one now would attach much importance to Strabo’s *Balachthon*, though it had led a sixteenth-century warden of the College to say that “we know not by ancientest report of any Britain without Bragdon.” But the medieval song takes us back to the fourteenth century,

In Bragdon bricht this ende dai
Herde ich Merlin ther he lai
Singende woo and welawai.

It is good enough evidence that the well with the British-Roman pavement was already “Merlin’s Well,” though the name is not found till Queen Elizabeth’s reign, when good Warden Shovel surrounded the Wood with a wall “for the taking away of all profane and heathenish superstitions

and the deterring of the vulgar sort from all wakes, May games, dancings, mummings, and baking of Morgan's bread, heretofore used about the fountain called in vanity Merlin's Well, and utterly to be renounced and abominated as a gallimaufrey of papistry, gentilism, lewdness and dunsicall folly." Not that the College had by this action renounced its own interest in the place. Old Dr. Shovel, who lived to be nearly a hundred, can scarcely have been cold in his grave when one of Cromwell's major-generals, conceiving it his business to destroy "the groves and the high places," sent a few troopers with power to impress the country people for this pious work. The scheme came to nothing in the end: but there had been a bicker between the College and the troopers in the heart of Bragdon, and the fabulously learned and saintly Richard Crowe had been killed by a musket ball on the very steps of the Well. He would be a brave man who would accuse Crowe either of popery or "gentilism": yet the story is that his last words had been "Marry, sirs, if Merlin who was the Devil's son was a true King's man as ever ate bread, is it not a shame that you, being but the sons of bitches, must be rebels and regicides?" And always, through all changes, every warden of Bracton, on the day of his election, had drunk a ceremonial draught of water from Merlin's Well in the great cup which both for its antiquity and for its beauty, was the greatest of the Bracton treasures.

All this I thought of, lying beside Merlin's Well, beside the Well which must certainly date from Merlin's time if there had ever been a real Merlin: lying where Sir Kenelm Digby had lain all one summer night and seen a certain strange appearance: where Collins the poet had lain, and where George the Third had cried: where the brilliant and much-loved Nathaniel Fox had composed the famous poem three weeks before he was killed in France. The air was so still and the billows of foliage so heavy above me, that I fell asleep. I was wakened by my friend hallowing to me from a long way off.

IV

The most controversial business before the College meeting was the question of selling Bragdon Wood. The purchaser was the N.I.C.E., the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments. They wanted a site for the building which would worthily house this remarkable organisation. The N.I.C.E. was the first-fruit of that constructive fusion between the state and

the laboratory on which so many thoughtful people base their hopes of a better world. It was to be free from almost all the tiresome restraints— "red tape" was the word its supporters used — which have hitherto hampered research in this country. It was also largely free from the restraints of economy, for, as it was argued, a nation which can spend so many millions a day on a war can surely afford a few millions a month on productive research in peace-time. The building proposed for it was one which would make a quite noticeable addition to the skyline of New York, the staff was to be enormous, and their salaries princely. Persistent pressure and endless diplomacy on the part of the Senate of Edgestow had lured the new Institute away from Oxford, from Cambridge, from London. It had thought of all these in turn as possible scenes for its labours. At times the Progressive Element in Edgestow had almost despaired. But success was now practically certain. If the N.I.C.E. could get the necessary land, it would come to Edgestow. And once it came, then, as everyone felt, things would at last begin to move. Curry had even expressed a doubt whether, eventually, Oxford and Cambridge could survive as major universities at all.

Three years ago, if Mark Studdock had come to a College meeting at which such a question was to be decided, he would have expected to hear the claims of sentiment against progress and beauty against utility openly debated. To-day, as he took his seat in the Soler, the long upper room on the south of Lady Alice, he expected no such matter. He knew now that that was not the way things are done.

The Progressive Element managed its business really very well. Most of the Fellows did not know when they came into the Soler that there was any question of selling the Wood. They saw, of course, from their agenda paper that Item 15 was "Sale of College land," but as that appeared at almost every College meeting, they were not very interested. On the other hand they did see that Item 1 was "Questions about Bragdon Wood." These were not concerned with the proposed sale. Curry, who rose as sub-warden to introduce them, had a few letters to read to the College. The first was from a society concerned for the preservation of ancient monuments. I think myself that this society had been ill-advised to make two complaints in one letter. It would have been wiser if they had confined themselves to drawing the College's attention to the disrepair of the wall round the Wood. When they went on to urge the desirability of building some protection over the Well itself and even to point out that they had urged this before, the College

began to be restive. And when, as a kind of afterthought, they expressed a wish that the College could be a little more accommodating to serious antiquaries who wanted to examine the Well, the College became definitely ill-tempered. I would not like to accuse a man in Curry's position of misreading a letter: but his reading of this letter was certainly not such as to gloss over any defects in the tone of the original composition. Before he sat down, nearly everyone in the room desired strongly to make the outer world understand that Bragdon Wood was the private property of Bracton College and that the outer world had better mind its own business. Then he rose again to read another letter. This was from a society of Spiritualists who wanted leave to investigate the "reported phenomena" in the Wood — a letter "connected" as Curry said, "with the next which, with the Warden's permission, I will now read to you." This was from a firm who had heard of the Spiritualists' proposal and wanted permission to make a film, not exactly of the phenomena, but of the Spiritualists looking for the phenomena. Curry was directed to write short refusals to all three letters.

Then came a new voice from quite a different part of the Soler. Lord Feverstone had risen. He fully agreed with the action which the College had taken about these impertinent letters from various busybodies outside. But was it not, after all, a fact, that the wall of the Wood *was* in a very unsatisfactory condition? A good many Fellows — Studdock was not one of them — imagined they were watching a revolt on Feverstone's part against "Curry and his gang" and became intensely interested. Almost at once the Bursar, James Busby, was on his feet. He welcomed Lord Feverstone's question. In his Bursarial capacity he had recently taken expert advice about the wall of the Wood. "Unsatisfactory" was, he feared, much too mild a word to describe its condition. Nothing but a complete new wall would really meet the situation. With great difficulty the probable cost of this was elicited from him: and when the College heard the figure it gasped. Lord Feverstone enquired icily whether the Bursar was seriously proposing that the College should undertake such an expense. Busby (a very large ex-clergyman with a bushy black beard) replied with some temper that he had proposed nothing: if he *were* to make a suggestion it would be that the question could not be treated in isolation from some important financial considerations which it would become his duty to lay before them later in the day. There was a pause at this ominous statement, until gradually, one by one, the "outsiders" and "obstructionists," the men not included in the

Progressive Element, began coming into the debate. Most of these found it hard to believe that nothing short of a complete new wall would be any use. The Progressive Element let them talk for nearly ten minutes. Then it looked once again as if Lord Feverstone were actually leading the outsiders. He wanted to know whether it was possible that the Bursar and the Preservation Committee could really find no alternative between building a new wall and allowing Bragdon Wood to degenerate into a common. He pressed for an answer. Some of the outsiders even began to feel that he was being too rude to the Bursar. At last the Bursar answered in a low voice that he *had* in a purely theoretical way got some facts about possible alternatives. A barbed wire fence — but the rest was drowned in a roar of disapproval, during which old Canon Jewel was heard to say that he would sooner have every tree in the Wood felled to the ground than see it caged in barbed wire. Finally the matter was postponed for consideration at the next meeting.

The next item was one of those which the majority of the Fellows could not understand. It involved the recapitulation (by Curry) of a long correspondence between the College and the Senate of the University about the proposed incorporation of the N.I.C.E. in the University of Edgestow. The words “committed to” kept recurring in the debate that followed. “We appear,” said Watson, “to have pledged ourselves as a college to the fullest possible support of the new Institute.” “We appear,” said Feverstone, “to have tied ourselves up hand and foot and given the University *carte blanche*.” What all this actually amounted to never became clear to any of the outsiders. They remembered fighting hard at a previous meeting against the N.I.C.E. and all its works, and being defeated: but every effort to find out what their defeat had meant, though answered with great lucidity by Curry, served only to entangle them further in the impenetrable mazes of the university constitution and the still darker mystery of the relations between university and college. The result of the discussion was to leave them under the impression that the honour of the College was now involved in the establishment of the N.I.C.E. at Edgestow.

During this item the thoughts of more than one Fellow had turned to lunch and attention had wandered. But when Curry rose at five minutes to one to introduce Item 3, there was a sharp revival of interest. It was called “Rectification of an Anomaly of the Stipends in Junior Fellows.” I would not like to say what the most junior Fellows of Bracton were getting at this

time, but I believe it hardly covered the expenses of their residence in college, which was compulsory. Studdock who had only recently emerged from this class felt great sympathy with them. He understood the look in their faces. The Rectification, if it went through, would mean to them clothes and holidays and meat for lunch and a chance to buy a half, instead of a fifth, of the books they needed. All their eyes were fixed on the Bursar when he rose to reply to Curry's proposal. He hoped that no one would imagine he approved the anomaly which had, in 1910, excluded the lowest class of the Fellows from the new clauses in the eighteenth paragraph of Statute 17. He felt sure that everyone present would *wish* it to be rectified: but it was his duty, as Bursar, to point out that this was the second proposal involving very heavy expenditure which had come before them that morning. He could only say of this, as he had said of the previous proposal, that it could not be isolated from the whole problem of the present financial position of the College which he hoped to lay before them during the course of the afternoon. A great deal more was said, but the Bursar remained unanswered, the matter was postponed, and when, at quarter to two, the Fellows came surging out of the Soler for lunch, hungry and headachy and ravenous for tobacco, every junior had it fixed in his mind that a new wall for the Wood and a rise in his own stipend were strictly exclusive alternatives. "That darn Wood has been in our way all morning," said one. "We're not out of it yet," answered another.

In this frame of mind the College returned to the Soler after lunch to consider its finances. Busby, the Bursar, was naturally the principal speaker. It is very hot in the Soler on a sunny afternoon; and the smooth flow of the Bursar's exposition, and even the flashing of his level, white teeth above his beard (he had remarkably fine teeth) had a sort of hypnotic power. Fellows of colleges do not always find money matters easy to understand: if they did they would probably not have been the sort of men who become Fellows of colleges. They gathered that the situation was bad; very bad indeed. Some of the youngest and most inexperienced members ceased to wonder whether they would get a new wall or a rise of stipend and began to wonder instead whether the College could continue to function at all. The times, as the Bursar so truly said, were extraordinarily difficult. Older members had heard of such times very often before from dozens of previous Bursars and were less disturbed. I am not suggesting for a moment that the Bursar of Bracton was in any way misrepresenting the position. It is very seldom that

the affairs of a large corporation, indefinitely committed to the advancement of learning, can be described as being, in a quite unambiguous sense, satisfactory. His delivery was excellent. Each sentence was a model of lucidity: and if his hearers found the gist of his whole statement less clear than the parts, that may have been their own fault. Some minor retrenchments and re-investments which he suggested were unanimously approved and the College adjourned for tea in a chastened mood. Studdock rang up Jane and told her he would not be home for dinner.

It was not till six o'clock that all the converging lines of thought and feeling aroused by the earlier business came together upon the question of selling Bragdon Wood. It was not called "the sale of Bragdon Wood." The Bursar called it the "sale of the area coloured pink on the plan which, with the Warden's permission, I will now pass round the table." He pointed out quite frankly that this involved the loss of *part* of the Wood. In fact, the proposed N.I.C.E. site still left to the College a strip about sixteen feet broad along the far half of the south side, but there was no deception for the Fellows had the plan to look at with their own eyes. It was a small-scale plan and not perhaps perfectly accurate — only meant to give one a general idea. In answer to questions he admitted that unfortunately — or perhaps fortunately — the Well itself was in the area which the N.I.C.E. wanted. The rights of the College to access would, of course, be guaranteed: and the Well and its pavement would be preserved by the Institute in a manner to satisfy all the archaeologists in the world. He refrained from offering any advice and merely mentioned the quite astonishing figure which the N.I.C.E. was offering. After that, the meeting became lively. The advantages of the sale discovered themselves one by one like ripe fruit dropping into the hand. It solved the problem of the wall: it solved the problem of protecting ancient monuments: it solved the financial problem: it looked like solving the problem of the junior Fellows' stipends. It appeared further that the N.I.C.E. regarded this as the only possible site in Edgestow: if by any chance Bracton would not sell, the whole scheme miscarried and the Institute would undoubtedly go to Cambridge. It was even drawn out of the Bursar by much questioning that he knew of a Cambridge college very anxious to sell.

The few real "Die-hards" present, to whom Bragdon Wood was almost a basic assumption of life, could hardly bring themselves to realise what was happening. When they found their voices, they struck a discordant note

amid the general buzz of cheerful comment. They were manoeuvred into the position of appearing as the party who passionately desired to see Bragdon surrounded with barbed wire. When at last old Jewel, blind and shaky and almost weeping, rose to his feet, his voice was hardly audible. Men turned round to gaze at, and some to admire, the clear-cut, half-childish face and the white hair which had become more conspicuous as the long room grew darker. But only those close to him could hear what he said. At this moment Lord Feverstone sprang to his feet, folded his arms, and looking straight at the old man said in a very loud, clear voice:

"If Canon Jewel wishes us *not* to hear his views, I suggest that his end could be better attained by silence."

Jewel had been already an old man in the days before the first war when old men were treated with kindness, and he had never succeeded in getting used to the modern world. He stared with puzzled eyes in the direction of Feverstone. For a moment as he stood with his head thrust forward, people thought he was going to reply. Then quite suddenly he spread out his hands with a gesture of helplessness, shrunk back, and began laboriously to resume his chair.

The motion was carried.

V

After leaving the flat that morning Jane also had gone down to Edgestow and bought a hat. She had before now expressed some contempt for the kind of woman who buys hats, as a man buys drinks, for a stimulant and a consolation. It did not occur to her that she was doing so herself on this occasion. She liked her clothes to be rather severe and in colours that were really good on serious aesthetic grounds — clothes which would make it plain to everyone that she was an intelligent adult and not a woman of the chocolate-box variety — and because of this preference she did not know that she was interested in clothes at all. She was therefore a little annoyed when Mrs. Dimble met her coming out of Sparrow's and said: "Hullo, dear! Been buying a hat? Come home to lunch and let's see it. Cecil has the car just round the corner."

Cecil Dimble, a Fellow of Northumberland, had been Jane's tutor for her last years as a student, and Mrs. Dimble (one tended to call her "Mother Dimble") had been a kind of universal aunt to all the girls of her year. A

liking for the female pupils of one's husband is not, perhaps, so common as might be wished among dons' wives: but Mrs. Dimble appeared to like all Dr. Dimble's pupils of both sexes and the Dimble's house, away on the far side of the river, was a kind of noisy *salon* all the term. She had been particularly fond of Jane with that kind of affection which a humorous, easy natured and childless woman sometimes feels for a girl whom she thinks pretty and slightly absurd. For the last year or so Jane had been somewhat losing sight of the Dimbles and felt rather guilty about it. She accepted the invitation to lunch.

They drove over the bridge to the north of Bracton and then south along the bank of the Wynd, past the cottages, then left and eastward at the Norman church and down the straight road with the poplars on one side and the wall of Bragdon Wood on the other, and so finally to the Dimbles' front door.

"How lovely it's looking!" said Jane quite sincerely as she got out of the car. The Dimbles' garden was famous.

"You'd better take a good look at it then," said Dr. Dimble.

"What do you mean?" asked Jane.

"Haven't you told her?" said Dr. Dimble to his wife.

"I haven't screwed myself up to it yet," said Mrs. Dimble. "Besides, poor dear, her husband is one of the villains of the piece. Anyway, I expect she knows."

"I've no idea what you're talking about," said Jane.

"Your own college is being so tiresome, dear. They're turning us out. They won't renew the lease."

"Oh, Mrs. Dimble!" exclaimed Jane. "And I didn't even know this was Bracton property."

"There you are!" said Mrs. Dimble. "One half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives. Here have I been imagining that you were using all your influence with Mr. Studdock to try to save us, whereas in reality ——"

"Mark never talks to me about College business."

"Good husbands never do," said Dr. Dimble. "At least only about the business of other people's colleges. That's why Margaret knows all about Bracton and nothing about Northumberland. Is no one coming in to have lunch?"

Dimble guessed that Bracton was going to sell the Wood and everything else it owned on that side of the river. The whole region seemed to him now even more of a paradise than when he first came to live there twenty-five years ago, and he felt much too strongly on the subject to wish to talk about it before the wife of one of the Bracton men.

"You'll have to wait for your lunch till I've seen Jane's new hat," said Mother Dimble, and forthwith hurried Jane upstairs. Then followed some minutes of conversation which was strictly feminine in the old-fashioned sense. Jane, while preserving a certain sense of superiority, found it indefinably comforting: and though Mrs. Dimble had really the wrong point of view about such things, there was no denying that the one small alteration which she suggested did go to the root of the matter. When the hat was being put away again Mrs. Dimble suddenly said:

"There's nothing wrong, is there?"

"Wrong," said Jane. "Why? What should there be?"

"You're not looking yourself."

"Oh, I'm all right," said Jane, aloud. Mentally she added: "She's dying to know whether I'm going to have a baby. That sort of woman always is."

"Do you hate being kissed?" said Mrs. Dimble unexpectedly.

"Do I hate being kissed?" thought Jane to herself. "That indeed is the question. Do I hate being kissed? Hope not for mind in women — —" She had intended to reply "Of course not," but inexplicably, and to her great annoyance, found herself crying instead. And then, for a moment, Mrs. Dimble became simply a grown-up as grown-ups had been when one was a very small child: large, warm, soft objects to whom one ran with bruised knees or broken toys. When she thought of her childhood Jane usually remembered those occasions on which the voluminous embrace of nurse or mother had been unwelcome and resisted as an insult to one's maturity: now, for the moment, she was back in those forgotten, yet not infrequent, times when fear or misery induced a willing surrender and surrender brought comfort. Not to detest being petted and pawed was contrary to her whole theory of life: yet before they went downstairs she had told Mrs. Dimble that she was not going to have a baby but was a bit depressed from being very much alone and from a nightmare.

During lunch Dr. Dimble talked about the Arthurian legend. "It's really wonderful," he said, "how the whole thing hangs together, even in a late version like Malory's. You've noticed how there are two sets of characters?

There's Guinevere and Launcelot and all those people in the centre: all very courtly and nothing particularly British about them. But then in the background — on the other side of Arthur, so to speak — there are all those *dark* people like Morgan and Morgawse, who are very British indeed and usually more or less hostile though they are his own relatives. Mixed up with magic. You remember that wonderful phrase, how Queen Morgan 'set all the country in fire with ladies that were enchantresses.' Merlin too, of course, is British, though not hostile. Doesn't it look very like a picture of Britain as it must have been on the eve of the invasion?"

"How do you mean, Dr. Dimble?" said Jane.

"Well, wouldn't there have been one section of society that was almost purely Roman? People wearing togas and talking a Celticised Latin — something that would sound to us rather like Spanish: and fully Christian. But farther up country, in the out-of-the-way places, cut off by the forests, there would have been little courts ruled by real old British under-kings, talking something like Welsh, and practising a certain amount of the Druidical religion."

"And which would Arthur himself have been?" said Jane. It was silly that her heart should have missed a beat at the words "rather like Spanish."

"That's just the point," said Dr. Dimble. "One can imagine a man of the old British line, but also a Christian and a fully-trained general with Roman technique, trying to pull this whole society together and almost succeeding. There'd be jealousy from his own British family, and the Romanised section — the Lancelots and Lionels — would look down on the Britons. That'd be why Kay is always represented as a boor: he is part of the native strain. And always that under-tow, that tug back to Druidism."

"And where would Merlin be?"

"Yes. . . . He's the really interesting figure. Did the whole thing fail because he died so soon? Has it ever struck you what an odd creation Merlin is? He's not evil: yet he's a magician. He is obviously a druid: yet he knows all about the Grail. He's 'the devil's son': but then Layamon goes out of his way to tell you that the kind of being who fathered Merlin needn't have been bad after all. You remember: 'There dwell in the sky many kinds of wights. Some of them are good, and some work evil.'"

"It *is* rather puzzling. I hadn't thought of it before."

"I often wonder," said Dr. Dimble, "whether Merlin doesn't represent the last trace of something the later tradition has quite forgotten about —

something that became impossible when the only people in touch with the supernatural were either white or black, either priests or sorcerers."

"What a horrid idea," said Mrs. Dimble, who had noticed that Jane seemed to be preoccupied. "Anyway, Merlin happened a long time ago if he happened at all, and he's safely dead and buried under Bragdon Wood as we all know."

"Buried but *not* dead, according to the story," corrected Dr. Dimble.

"Ugh!" said Jane involuntarily, but Dr. Dimble was musing aloud.

"I wonder what they *will* find if they start digging up that place for the foundations of their N.I.C.E.," he said.

"First mud and then water," said Mrs. Dimble. "That's why they can't really build it there."

"So you'd think," said her husband. "And if so, why should they want to come here at all? A little cockney like Jules is not likely to be influenced by any poetic fancy about Merlin's mantle having fallen on him!"

"Merlin's mantle indeed!" said Mrs. Dimble.

"Yes," said the Doctor. "It's a rum idea. I dare say some of his set would like to recover the mantle well enough. Whether they'll be big enough to fill it is another matter! I don't think they'd like it if the old man himself came back to life along with it."

"That child's going to faint," said Mrs. Dimble suddenly jumping up.

"Hullo! What's the matter?" said Dr. Dimble, looking with amazement at Jane's face. "Is the room too hot for you?"

"Oh, it's too ridiculous," said Jane.

"Let's come into the drawing-room," said Dr. Dimble. "Here. Lean on my arm."

A little later, in the drawing-room, seated beside a window that opened onto the lawn, now strewn with bright yellow leaves, Jane attempted to excuse her absurd behaviour by telling the story of her dream. "I suppose I've given myself away dreadfully," she said. "You can both start psycho-analysing me now."

From Dr. Dimble's face Jane might have indeed conjectured that her dream had shocked him exceedingly. "Extraordinary thing . . . most extraordinary," he kept muttering. "*Two* heads. And one of them Alcasan's. Now is that a false scent?"

"Don't, Cecil," said Mrs. Dimble.

"Do you think I ought to be analysed?" said Jane.

“Analysed?” said Dr. Dimble, glancing at her as if he had not quite understood. “Oh, I see. You mean going to Brizeacre or someone of that sort?” Jane realised that her question had recalled him from some quite different train of thought and even — disconcertingly — that the problem of her own health had been shouldered aside. The telling of her dream had raised some other problem, though what this was she could not even imagine.

Dr. Dimble looked out of the window. “There is my dullest pupil just ringing the bell,” he said. “I must go to the study and listen to an essay on Swift beginning ‘Swift was born.’ Must try to keep my mind on it, too, which won’t be easy.” He rose and stood for a moment with his hand on Jane’s shoulder. “Look here,” he said, “I’m not going to give any advice. But if you do decide to go to anyone about that dream, I wish you would *first* consider going to someone whose address Margery or I will give you.”

“You don’t believe in Mr. Brizeacre?” said Jane.

“I can’t explain,” said Dr. Dimble. “Not now. It’s all so complicated. Try not to bother about it. But if you *do*, just let us know first. Good-bye.”

Almost immediately after his departure some other visitors arrived, so that there was no opportunity of further private conversation between Jane and her hostess. She left the Dimbles about half an hour later and walked home, not along the road with the poplars but by the footpath across the common, past the donkeys and the geese, with the towers and spires of Edgestow to her left and the old windmill on the horizon to her right.

TWO

Dinner with the Sub-Warden

I

"This is a blow!" said Curry, standing in front of the fireplace in his magnificent rooms which overlooked Newton. They were the best set in College.

"Something from N.O.?" said James Busby. He and Lord Feverstone and Mark were all drinking sherry before dining with Curry. N.O., which stood for *Non Olet*, was the nickname of Charles Place, the Warden of Bracton. His election to this post, some fifteen years before, had been one of the earliest triumphs of the Progressive Element. By dint of saying that the College needed "new blood" and must be shaken out of its "academic grooves" they had succeeded in bringing in an elderly civil servant who had certainly never been contaminated by academic weaknesses since he left his rather obscure Cambridge college in the previous century, but who had written a monumental report on National Sanitation. The subject had, if anything, rather recommended him to the Progressive Element. They regarded it as a slap in the face for the *dilettanti* and Die-hards, who replied by christening their new warden *Non Olet*. But gradually even Place's supporters had adopted the name. For Place had not answered their expectations, having turned out to be a dyspeptic with a taste for philately, whose voice was so seldom heard that some of the junior Fellows did not know what it sounded like.

"Yes, blast him," said Curry. "Wishes to see me on a most important matter as soon as I can conveniently call on him after dinner."

"That means," said the Bursar, "that Jewel and Co. have been getting at him and want to find some way of going back on the whole business."

"I don't give a damn for that," said Curry. "How can you go back on a resolution? It isn't that. But it's enough to muck up the whole evening."

"Only your evening," said Feverstone. "Don't forget to leave out that very special brandy of yours before you go."

"Jewel! Good God!" said Busby, burying his left hand in his beard.

“I was rather sorry for old Jewel,” said Mark. His motives for saying this were very mixed. To do him justice, it must be said that the quite unexpected and apparently unnecessary brutality of Feverstone’s behaviour to the old man had disgusted him. And then, too, the whole idea of his debt to Feverstone in the matter of his own Fellowship had been rankling all day. Who was this man Feverstone? But paradoxically, even while he felt that the time had come for asserting his own independence and showing that his agreement with all the methods of the Progressive Element must not be taken for granted, he also felt that a little independence would raise him to a higher position within that Element itself. If the idea “Feverstone will think all the more of you for showing your teeth” had occurred to him in so many words, he would have probably have rejected it as servile; but it didn’t.

“Sorry for Jewel?” said Curry, wheeling round. “You wouldn’t say that if you knew what he was like in his prime.”

“I agree with you,” said Feverstone to Mark, “but then I take the Clausewitz view. Total war is the most humane in the long run. I shut him up instantaneously. Now that he’s got over the shock he’s quite enjoying himself, because I’ve fully confirmed everything he’s been saying about the younger generation for the last forty years. What was the alternative? To let him drivel on until he’d worked himself into a coughing fit or a heart attack, and give him in addition the disappointment of finding that he was treated civilly.”

“That’s a point of view, certainly,” said Mark.

“Damn it all,” continued Feverstone, “no man likes to have his stock-in-trade taken away. What would poor Curry, here, do if the Die-hards one day all refused to do any die-harding? Othello’s occupation would be gone.”

“Dinner is served, sir,” said Curry’s “Shooter” — for that is what they call a college servant at Bracton.

“That’s all rot, Dick,” said Curry as they sat down. “There’s nothing I should like better than to see the end of all these Die-hards and obstructionists and be able to get on with the job. You don’t suppose I *like* having to spend all my time merely getting the road clear?” Mark noticed that his host was a little nettled at Lord Feverstone’s banter. The latter had an extremely virile and infectious laugh. Mark felt he was beginning to like him.

“The job being . . . ?” said Feverstone, not exactly glancing, much less winking, at Mark, but making him feel that he was somehow being included

in the fun.

“Well, some of us have got work of our own to do,” replied Curry, dropping his voice to give it a more serious tone, almost as some people drop their voices to speak of medical or religious matters.

“I never knew you were *that* sort of person,” said Feverstone.

“That’s the worst of the whole system,” said Curry. “In a place like this you’ve either got to be content to see everything go to pieces — I mean, become stagnant — or else to sacrifice your own career as a scholar to all these infernal college politics. One of these days I *shall* chuck that side of it and get down to my book. The stuff’s all there, you know, Feverstone. One long vacation clear and I really believe I could put it into shape.”

Mark, who had never seen Curry baited before, was beginning to enjoy himself.

“I see,” said Feverstone. “In order to keep the place going as a learned society, all the best brains in it have to give up doing anything about learning.”

“Exactly!” said Curry. “That’s just—” and then stopped, uncertain whether he was being taken quite seriously. Feverstone burst into laughter. The Bursar, who had up till now been busily engaged in eating, wiped his beard carefully and spoke.

“All that’s very well in theory,” he said, “but I think Curry’s quite right. Supposing he resigned his office as sub-warden and retired into his cave. He might give us a thundering good book on economics — —”

“Economics?” said Feverstone, lifting his eyebrows.

“I happen to be a military historian, James,” said Curry. He was often somewhat annoyed at the difficulty which his colleagues seemed to find in remembering what particular branch of learning he had been elected to pursue.

“I mean military history, of course,” said Busby. “As I say, he might give us a thundering good book on military history. But it would be superseded in twenty years. Whereas the work he is actually doing for the College will benefit it for centuries. This whole business, now, of bringing the N.I.C.E. to Edgestow. What about a thing like that, Feverstone? I’m not speaking merely of the financial side of it, though as Bursar I naturally rate that pretty high. But think of the new life, the awakening of new vision, the stirring of dormant impulses. What would any book on economics — —”

“Military history,” said Feverstone gently, but this time Busby did not hear him.

“What would any book on economics be, compared with a thing like that?” he continued. “I look upon it as the greatest triumph of practical idealism that this century has yet seen.”

The good wine was beginning to do its good office. We have all known the kind of clergyman who tends to forget his clerical collar after the third glass: but Busby’s habit was the reverse. It was after the third glass that he began to remember his collar. As wine and candlelight loosened his tongue, the parson still latent within him after thirty years’ apostasy began to wake into a strange galvanic life.

“As you chaps know,” he said, “I make no claim to orthodoxy. But if religion is understood in the deepest sense, I have no hesitation in saying that Curry, by bringing the N.I.C.E. to Edgestow, has done more for it in one year than Jewel has done in his whole life.”

“Well,” said Curry modestly, “that’s rather the sort of thing one had hoped. I mightn’t put it exactly as you do, James — —”

“No, no,” said the Bursar. “Of course not. We all have our different languages; but we all really mean the same thing.”

“Has anyone discovered,” asked Feverstone, “what, precisely, the N.I.C.E. is, or what it intends to do?”

Curry looked at him with a slightly startled expression. “That comes oddly from you, Dick,” he said. “I thought you were in on it yourself.”

“Isn’t it a little naïve,” said Feverstone, “to suppose that being in on a thing involves any distinct knowledge of its official programme?”

“Oh well, if you mean *details*,” said Curry, and then stopped.

“Surely, Feverstone,” said Busby, “you’re making a great mystery about nothing. I should have thought the objects of the N.I.C.E. were pretty clear. It’s the first attempt to take applied science seriously from the national point of view. The difference in scale between it and anything we’ve had before amounts to a difference in kind. The buildings alone, the apparatus alone! — think what it has done already for industry. Think how it is going to mobilise all the talent of the country: and not only scientific talent in the narrower sense. Fifteen departmental directors at fifteen thousand a year each! Its own legal staff! Its own police, I’m told! Its own permanent staff of architects, surveyors, engineers! The thing’s stupendous!”

“Careers for our sons,” said Feverstone. “I see.”

“What do you mean by that, Lord Feverstone?” said Busby, putting down his glass.

“God!” said Feverstone, his eyes laughing. “What a brick to drop. I’d quite forgotten you had a family, James.”

“I agree with James,” said Curry, who had been waiting somewhat impatiently to speak. “The N.I.C.E. marks the beginning of a new era — the *really* scientific era. Up to now everything has been haphazard. This is going to put science itself on a scientific basis. There are to be forty interlocking committees sitting every day and they’ve got a wonderful gadget — I was shown the model last time I was in town — by which the findings of each committee print themselves off in their own little compartment on the Analytical Notice-Board every half-hour. Then that report slides itself into the right position where it’s connected up by little arrows with all the relevant parts of the other reports. A glance at the board shows you the policy of the whole Institute actually taking shape under your own eyes. There’ll be a staff of at least twenty experts at the top of the building working this notice-board in a room rather like the Tube control rooms. It’s a marvellous gadget. The different kinds of business all come out in the board in different coloured lights. It must have cost half a million. They call it a Pragmatometer.”

“And there,” said Busby, “you see again what the Institute is already doing for the country. Pragmatometry is going to be a big thing. Hundreds of people are going in for it. Why, this Analytical Notice-Board will probably be out of date before the building is finished!”

“Yes, by Jove,” said Feverstone, “and N.O. himself told me this morning that the sanitation of the Institute was going to be something quite out of the ordinary.”

“So it is,” said Busby sturdily. “I don’t see why one should think that unimportant.”

“And what do you think about it, Studdock?” said Feverstone.

“I think,” said Mark, “that James touched on the most important point when he said that it would have its own legal staff and its own police. I don’t give a fig for Pragmatometers and sanitation *de luxe*. The real thing is that this time we’re going to get science applied to social problems and backed by the whole force of the state, just as war has been backed by the whole force of the state in the past. One hopes, of course, that it’ll find out

more than the old free-lance science did: but what's certain is that it can *do* more."

"Damn," said Curry, looking at his watch. "I'll have to go and talk to N.O. now. If you people would like any brandy when you've finished your wine, it's in that cupboard. You'll find balloon glasses on the shelf above. I'll be back as soon as I can. You're not going, James, are you?"

"Yes," said the Bursar. "I'm going to bed early. Don't let me break up the party for you two. I've been on my legs nearly all day, you know. A man's a fool to hold any office in this College. Continual anxiety. Crushing responsibility. And then you get people suggesting that all the little research-beetles who never poke their noses outside their libraries and laboratories are the real workers! I'd like to see Glossop or any of that lot face the sort of day's work I've had to-day. Curry, my lad, you'd have had an easier life if you'd stuck to economics."

"I've told you before—" began Curry, but the Bursar, now risen, was bending over Lord Feverstone and telling him a funny story.

As soon as the two men had got out of the room Lord Feverstone looked steadily at Mark for some seconds with an enigmatic expression. Then he chuckled. Then the chuckle developed into a laugh. He threw his lean, muscular body well back into his chair and laughed louder and louder. He was very infectious in his laughter and Mark found himself laughing too — quite sincerely and even helplessly, like a child. "Pragmatometers — palatial lavatories — practical idealism," gasped Feverstone. It was a moment of extraordinary liberation for Mark. All sorts of things about Curry and Busby which he had not previously noticed, or else, noticing, had slurred over in his reverence for the Progressive Element, came back to his mind. He wondered how he could have been so blind to the funny side of them.

"It really is rather devastating," said Feverstone when he had partially recovered, "that the people one has to use for getting things done should talk such drivel the moment you ask them about the things themselves."

"And yet they *are*, in a sense, the brains of Bracton," said Mark.

"Good Lord, no! Glossop and Bill the Blizzard and even old Jewel have ten times their intelligence."

"I didn't know you took that view."

"I think Glossop etc. are quite mistaken. I think their idea of culture and knowledge and what not is unrealistic. I don't think it fits the world we're

living in. It's a mere fantasy. But it is quite a clear idea and they follow it out consistently. They know what they want. But our two poor friends, though they can be persuaded to take the right train, or even to drive it, haven't a ghost of a notion where it's going to, or why. They'll sweat blood to bring the N.I.C.E. to Edgestow: that's why they're indispensable. But what the point of the N.I.C.E. is, what the point of anything is — ask them another. Pragmatometry! Fifteen sub-directors!"

"Well, perhaps I'm in the same boat myself."

"Not at all. You saw the point at once. I knew you would. I've read everything you've written since you were in for your Fellowship. That's what I wanted to talk to you about."

Mark was silent. The giddy sensation of being suddenly whirled up from one plane of secrecy to another, coupled with the growing effect of Curry's excellent port, prevented him from speaking.

"I want you to come into the Institute," said Feverstone.

"You mean — to leave Bracton?"

"That makes no odds. Anyway, I don't suppose there's anything you want here. We'd make Curry warden when N.O. retires and — —"

"They were talking of making you warden."

"God!" said Feverstone, and stared. Mark realised that from Feverstone's point of view this was like the suggestion that he should become Headmaster of a small idiots' school, and thanked his stars that his own remark had not been uttered in a tone that made it obviously serious. Then they both laughed again.

"You," said Feverstone, "would be absolutely wasted as warden. That's the job for Curry. He'll do it very well. You want a man who loves business and wire-pulling for their own sake and doesn't really ask what it's all about. If he did, he'd start bringing in his own — well, I suppose he'd call them 'ideas.' As it is, we've only got to tell him that he thinks so-and-so is a man the College wants, and he *will* think it. And then he'll never rest till so-and-so gets a fellowship. That's what we want the College for: a drag net, a recruiting office."

"A recruiting office for the N.I.C.E., you mean?"

"Yes, in the first instance. But it's only one part of the general show."

"I'm not sure that I know what you mean."

"You soon will. The home side, and all that, you know! It sounds rather in Busby's style to say that humanity is at the cross-roads. But it is the main

question at the moment: which side one's on — obscurantism or order. It does really look as if we now had the power to dig ourselves in as a species for a pretty staggering period; to take control of our own destiny. If Science is really given a free hand it can now take over the human race and recondition it; make man a really efficient animal. If it doesn't — well, we're done."

"Go on."

"There are three main problems. First, the interplanetary problem."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, that doesn't really matter. We can't do anything about that at present. The only man who could help was Weston."

"He was killed in a blitz, wasn't he?"

"He was murdered."

"Murdered?"

"I'm pretty sure of it, and I've a shrewd idea who the murderer was."

"Good God! Can nothing be done?"

"There's no evidence. The murderer is a respectable Cambridge don with weak eyes, a game leg, and a fair beard. He's dined in this College."

"What was Weston murdered for?"

"For being on our side. The murderer is one of the enemy."

"You don't mean to say he murdered him for that?"

"Yes," said Feverstone, bringing his hand down smartly on the table. "That's just the point. You'll hear people like Curry or James burbling away about the 'war' against reaction. It never enters their heads that it might be a real war with real casualties. They think the violent resistance of the other side ended with the persecution of Galileo and all that. But don't believe it. It is just seriously beginning. They know now that we have at last got *real* powers: that the question of what humanity is to be is going to be decided in the next sixty years. They're going to fight every inch. They'll stop at nothing."

"They can't win," said Mark.

"We'll hope not," said Lord Feverstone. "I think they can't. That is why it is of such immense importance to each of us to choose the right side. If you try to be neutral you become simply a pawn."

"Oh, I haven't any doubt which is *my* side," said Mark. "Hang it all — the preservation of the human race — it's a pretty rock-bottom obligation."

“Well, personally,” said Feverstone, “I’m not indulging in any Busbyisms about that. It’s a little fantastic to base one’s actions on a supposed concern for what’s going to happen millions of years hence; and you must remember that the other side would claim to be preserving humanity too. Both can be explained psycho-analytically if they take that line. The practical point is that you and I don’t like being pawns, and we do rather like fighting — specially on the winning side.”

“And what is the first practical step?”

“Yes, that’s the real question. As I said, the interplanetary problem must be left on one side for the moment. The second problem is our rivals on this planet. I don’t mean only insects and bacteria. There’s far too much life of every kind about, animal and vegetable. We haven’t really cleared the place yet. First we couldn’t; and then we had aesthetic and humanitarian scruples: and we still haven’t short-circuited the question of the balance of Nature. All that is to be gone into. The third problem is man himself.”

“Go on. This interests me very much.”

“Man has got to take charge of man. That means, remember, that some men have got to take charge of the rest — which is another reason for cashing in on it as soon as one can. You and I want to be the people who do the taking charge, not the ones who are taken charge of. Quite.”

“What sort of thing have you in mind?”

“Quite simple and obvious things, at first — sterilisation of the unfit, liquidation of backward races (we don’t want any dead weights), selective breeding. Then real education, including pre-natal education. By real education I mean one that has no ‘take-it-or-leave-it’ nonsense. A real education makes the patient what it wants infallibly: whatever he or his parents try to do about it. Of course, it’ll have to be mainly psychological at first. But we’ll get on to biochemical conditioning in the end and direct manipulation of the brain.”

“But this is stupendous, Feverstone.”

“It’s the real thing at last. A new type of man: and it’s people like you who’ve got to begin to make him.”

“That’s my trouble. Don’t think it’s false modesty: but I haven’t yet seen how I can contribute.”

“No, but *we* have. You are what we need; a trained sociologist with a radically realistic outlook, not afraid of responsibility. Also, a sociologist who can write.”

“You don’t mean you want me to write up all this?”

“No. We want you to write it *down* — to camouflage it. Only for the present, of course. Once the thing gets going we shan’t have to bother about the great heart of the British public. We’ll make the great heart what we want it to be. But in the meantime it *does* make a difference how things are put. For instance, if it were even whispered that the N.I.C.E. wanted powers to experiment on criminals, you’d have all the old women of both sexes up in arms and yapping about humanity: call it re-education of the mal-adjusted and you have them all slobbering with delight that the brutal era of retributive punishment has at last come to an end. Odd thing it is — the word ‘experiment’ is unpopular, but not the word ‘experimental.’ You mustn’t experiment on children: but offer the dear little kiddies free education in an experimental school attached to the N.I.C.E. and it’s all correct!”

“You don’t mean that this — er — journalistic side would be my main job?”

“It’s nothing to do with journalism. Your readers in the first instance would be committees of the House of Commons, not the public. But that would only be a side line. As for the job itself — why, it’s impossible to say how it might develop. Talking to a man like you, I don’t stress the financial side. You’d start at something quite modest: say about fifteen hundred a year.”

“I wasn’t thinking about that,” said Mark, flushing with pure excitement.

“Of course,” said Feverstone, “I ought to warn you, there is the danger. Not yet, perhaps. But when things really begin to hum it’s quite on the cards they may try to bump you off, like poor old Weston.”

“I don’t think I was thinking about that either,” said Mark.

“Look here,” said Feverstone. “Let me run you across to-morrow to see John Wither. He told me to bring you for the week-end if you were interested. You’ll meet all the important people there, and it’ll give you a chance to make up your mind.”

“How does Wither come into it? I thought Jules was the head of the N.I.C.E.” Jules was a distinguished novelist and scientific populariser whose name always appeared before the public in connection with the new Institute.

“Jules! Hell’s bells!” said Feverstone. “You don’t imagine that little mascot has anything to say to what really goes on? He’s all right for selling

the Institute to the great British public in the Sunday papers and he draws a whacking salary. He's no use for work. There's nothing inside his head except some nineteenth-century socialist stuff, and blah about the rights of man. He's just about got as far as Darwin!"

"Oh quite," said Mark. "I was always rather puzzled at his being in the show at all. Do you know, since you're so kind, I think I'd better accept your offer and go over to Withers for the week-end. What time would you be starting?"

"About quarter to eleven. They tell me you live out Sandown way. I could call and pick you up."

"Thanks very much. Now tell me about Wither."

"John Wither," began Feverstone, but suddenly broke off. "Damn!" he said. "Here comes Curry. Now we shall have to hear everything N.O. said and how wonderfully the arch-politician has managed him. Don't run away. I shall need your moral support."

II

The last bus had gone long before Mark left College, and he walked home up the hill in brilliant moonlight. Something happened to him the moment he had let himself into the flat which was very unusual. He found himself, on the door-mat, embracing a frightened, half-sobbing Jane — even a humble Jane, who was saying, "Oh, Mark, I've been so frightened."

There was a quality in the very muscles of his wife's body which took him by surprise. A certain indefinable defensiveness had momentarily deserted her. He had known such occasions before, but they were rare. They were already becoming rarer. And they tended, in his experience, to be followed next day by inexplicable quarrels. This puzzled him greatly, but he had never put his bewilderment into words.

It is doubtful whether he could have understood her feelings even if they had been explained to him; and Jane, in any case, could not have explained them. She was in extreme confusion. But the reasons for her unusual behaviour on this particular evening were simple enough. She had got back from the Dimbles at about half-past four, feeling much exhilarated by her walk and hungry, and quite sure that her experiences on the previous night and at lunch were over and done with. She had had to light up and draw the curtains before she had finished tea, for the days were getting short. While

doing so the thought had come into her mind that her fright at the dream and at the mere mention of a mantle, an old man, an old man buried but not dead, and a language like Spanish, had really been as irrational as a child's fear of the dark. This had led her to remember moments when she had feared the dark as a child. Perhaps she allowed herself to remember them too long. At any rate, when she sat down to drink her last cup of tea, the evening had somehow deteriorated. It never recovered. First she found it rather difficult to keep her mind on her book. Then, when she had acknowledged this difficulty, she found it difficult to fix on any book. Then she realised that she was restless. From being restless she became nervous. Then followed a long time when she was not frightened, but knew that she would be very frightened indeed if she did not keep herself in hand. Then came a curious reluctance to go into the kitchen to get herself some supper, and a difficulty — indeed an impossibility — of eating anything when she had got it. And now there was no disguising the fact that she was frightened. In desperation she rang up the Dimbles. "I think I might go and see the person you suggested, after all," she said. Mrs. Dimble's voice came back, after a curious little pause, giving her the address. Ironwood was the name, Miss Ironwood, apparently. Jane had assumed it would be a man and was rather repelled. Miss Ironwood lived out at St. Anne's on the Hill. Jane asked if she should make an appointment. "No," said Mrs. Dimble, "they'll be — you needn't make an appointment." Jane kept the conversation going as long as she could. She had rung up not chiefly to get the address but to hear Mother Dimble's voice. Secretly she had had a wild hope that Mother Dimble would recognise her distress and say at once, "I'll come straight up to you by car." Instead, she got the mere information and a hurried "Good night." It seemed to Jane that there was something queer about Mrs. Dimble's voice. She felt that by ringing up she had interrupted a conversation about herself: or no — not about herself but about something else more important, with which she was somehow connected. And what had Mrs. Dimble meant by "They'll be." "They'll be expecting you?" Horrible, childish night-nursery visions of *They* "expecting her" passed before her mind. She saw Miss Ironwood, dressed all in black, sitting with her hands folded on her knees and then someone leading her into Miss Ironwood's presence and saying "She's come" and leaving her there.

"Damn the Dimbles!" said Jane to herself, and then unsaid it, more in fear than in remorse. And now that the life-line had been used and brought

no comfort, the terror, as if insulted by her futile attempt to escape it, rushed back on her with no possibility of disguise, and she could never afterwards remember whether the horrible old man and the mantle had actually appeared to her in a dream or whether she had merely sat there, huddled and wild-eyed, hoping, hoping, hoping (even praying, though she believed in no one to pray to) that they would not.

And that is why Mark found such an unexpected Jane on the door-mat. It was a pity, he thought, that this should have happened on a night when he was so late and so tired and, to tell the truth, not perfectly sober.

III

"Do you feel quite all right this morning?" said Mark.

"Yes, thank you," said Jane shortly.

Mark was lying in bed and drinking a cup of tea. Jane was seated at the dressing-table, partially dressed, and doing her hair. Mark's eyes rested on her with indolent, early morning pleasure. If he guessed very little of the maladjustment between them this was partly due to our race's incurable habit of "projection." We think the lamb gentle because its wool is soft to our hands: men call a woman voluptuous when she arouses voluptuous feelings in them. Jane's body, soft though firm and slim though rounded, was so exactly to Mark's mind that it was all but impossible for him not to attribute to her the same sensations which she excited in him.

"You're quite sure you're all right?" he asked again.

"Quite," said Jane, more shortly still.

Jane thought she was annoyed because her hair was not going up to her liking and because Mark was fussing. She also knew, of course, that she was deeply angry with herself for the collapse which had betrayed her last night, into being what she most detested — the fluttering, tearful "little woman" of sentimental fiction running for comfort to male arms. But she thought this anger was only in the back of her mind, and had no suspicion that it was pulsing through every vein and producing at that very moment the clumsiness in her fingers which made her hair seem intractable.

"Because," continued Mark, "if you felt the least bit uncomfortable, I *could* put off going to see this man Wither."

Jane said nothing.

“If I did go,” said Mark, “I’d certainly have to be away for the night; perhaps two.”

Jane closed her lips a little more firmly and still said nothing.

“Supposing I did,” said Mark, “you wouldn’t think of asking Myrtle over to stay?”

“No thank you,” said Jane emphatically; and then, “I’m quite accustomed to being alone.”

“I know,” said Mark in a rather defensive voice. “That’s the devil of the way things are in College at present. That’s one of the chief reasons I’m thinking of another job.”

Jane was still silent.

“Look here, old thing,” said Mark, suddenly sitting up and throwing his legs out of bed. “There’s no good beating about the bush. I don’t feel comfortable about going away while you’re in your present state — —”

“What state?” said Jane, turning round and facing him for the first time.

“Well — I mean — just a bit nervy — as anyone may be temporarily.”

“Because I happened to be having a nightmare when you came home last night — or rather this morning — there’s no need to talk as if I was a neurasthenic.” This was not in the least what Jane had intended or expected to say.

“Now there’s no good going on like that . . .” began Mark.

“Like what?” said Jane loudly, and then, before he had time to reply, “If you’ve decided that I’m going mad you’d better get Brizeacre to come down and certify me. It would be convenient to do it while you’re away. They could get me packed off while you are at Mr. Wither’s without any fuss. I’m going to see about the breakfast now. If you don’t shave and dress pretty quickly, you’ll not be ready when Lord Feverstone calls.”

The upshot of it was that Mark gave himself a very bad cut while shaving (and saw, at once, a picture of himself talking to the all-important Wither with a great blob of cotton wool on his upper lip), while Jane decided, from a mixture of motives, to cook Mark an unusually elaborate breakfast — of which she would rather die than eat any herself — and did so with the swift efficiency of an angry woman, only to upset it all over the new stove at the last moment. They were still at the table and both pretending to read newspapers when Lord Feverstone arrived. Most unfortunately Mrs. Maggs arrived at the same moment. Mrs. Maggs was that element in Jane’s economy represented by the phrase “I have a woman

who comes in twice a week." Twenty years earlier Jane's mother would have addressed such a functionary as "Maggs" and been addressed by her as "Mum." But Jane and her "woman who came in" called one another Mrs. Maggs and Mrs. Studdock. They were about the same age and to a bachelor's eye there was no very noticeable difference in the clothes they wore. It was therefore perhaps not inexcusable that when Mark attempted to introduce Feverstone to his wife Feverstone should have shaken Mrs. Maggs by the hand: but it did not sweeten the last few minutes before the two men departed.

Jane left the flat under pretence of shopping almost at once. "I really couldn't stand Mrs. Maggs to-day," she said to herself. "She's a terrible talker." So that was Lord Feverstone — that man with the loud, unnatural laugh and the mouth like a shark, and no manners. Apparently a perfect fool, too! What good could it do Mark to go about with a man like that? Jane had distrusted his face. She could always tell — there was something shifty about him. Probably he was making a fool of Mark. Mark was so easily taken in. If only he wasn't at Bracton! It was a horrible college. What did Mark see in people like Mr. Curry and the odious old clergyman with the beard? And meanwhile, what of the day that awaited her, and the night, and the next night, and beyond that — for when men say they may be away for two nights it means that two nights is the minimum and they hope to be away for a week. A telegram (never a trunk call) puts it all right as far as they are concerned.

She must do something. She even thought of following Mark's advice and getting Myrtle to come and stay. But Myrtle was her sister-in-law, Mark's twin sister, with much too much of the adoring sister's attitude to the brilliant brother. She would talk about Mark's health and his shirts and socks with a continual undercurrent of unexpressed yet unmistakable astonishment at Jane's good luck in marrying him. No, certainly not Myrtle. Then she thought of going to see Dr. Brizeacre as a patient. He was a Bracton man and would therefore probably charge her nothing. But when she came to think of answering, to Brizeacre of all people, the sort of questions which Brizeacre would certainly ask, this turned out to be impossible. She must do something. In the end, somewhat to her own surprise, she found that she had decided to go out to St. Anne's and see Miss Ironwood. She thought herself a fool for doing so.

IV

An observer placed at the right altitude above Edgestow that day might have seen far to the south a moving spot on a main road, and later, to the east, much nearer the silver thread of the Wynd, and much more slowly moving, the smoke of a train.

The spot would have been the car which was carrying Mark Studdock towards the Blood Transfusion Office at Belbury, where the nucleus of the N.I.C.E. had taken up its temporary abode. The very size and style of the car had made a favourable impression on him the moment he saw it. The upholstery was of such quality that one felt it ought to be good to eat. And what fine, male energy (Mark felt sick of women at the moment) revealed itself in the very gestures with which Feverstone settled himself at the wheel and put his elbow on the horn, and clasped his pipe firmly between his teeth! The speed of the car, even in the narrow streets of Edgestow, was impressive, and so were the laconic criticisms of Feverstone on other drivers and pedestrians. Once over the level crossing and beyond Jane's old college (St. Elizabeth's) he began to show what his car could do. Their speed became so great that even on a rather empty road the inexcusably bad drivers, the manifestly half-witted pedestrians and men with horses, the hen that they actually ran over and the dogs and hens that Feverstone pronounced "damned lucky," seemed to follow one another almost without intermission. Telegraph posts raced by, bridges rushed overhead with a roar, villages streamed backward to join the country already devoured, and Mark, drunk with air and at once fascinated and repelled by the insolence of Feverstone's driving, sat saying "Yes" and "Quite" and "It was *their* fault," and stealing sidelong glances at his companion. Certainly, he was a change from the fussy importance of Curry and the Bursar! The long, straight nose and the clenched teeth, the hard bony outlines beneath the face, the very way he wore his clothes, all spoke of a big man driving a big car to somewhere where they would find big stuff going on. And he, Mark, was to be in it all. At one or two moments when his heart came into his mouth he wondered whether the quality of Lord Feverstone's driving quite justified its speed.

"You need never take a cross-road like that seriously," yelled Feverstone, as they plunged on after the narrowest of these escapes.

"Quite," bawled Mark. "No good making a fetish of them!"

“Drive much yourself?” said Feverstone.

“Used to a good deal,” said Mark.

The smoke which our imaginary observer might have seen to the east of Edgestow would have indicated the train in which Jane Studdock was progressing slowly towards the village of St. Anne’s. Edgestow itself, for those who had reached it from London, had all the appearances of a terminus: but if you looked about you, you might see presently, in a bay, a little train of two or three coaches and a tank engine — a train that sizzled and exuded steam from beneath the footboards and in which most of the passengers seemed to know one another. On some days, instead of the third coach, there might be a horse-box, and on the platform there would be hampers containing dead rabbits or live poultry, and men in brown bowler hats and gaiters, and perhaps a terrier or a sheep-dog that seemed to be used to travelling. In this train, which started at half-past one, Jane jerked and rattled along an embankment whence she looked down through some bare branches and some branches freckled with red and yellow leaves into Bragdon Wood itself and thence through the cutting and over the level-crossing at Bragdon Camp and along the edge of Brawl Park (the great house was just visible at one point) and so to the first stop at Duke’s Eaton. Here, as at Woolham and Cure Hardy and Fourstones, the train settled back, when it stopped, with a little jerk and something like a sigh. And then there would be a noise of milk cans rolling and coarse boots treading on the platform and after that a pause which seemed to last long, during which the autumn sunlight grew warm on the window-pane and smells of wood and field from beyond the tiny station floated in and seemed to claim the railway as part of the land. Passengers got in and out of her carriage at every stop; apple-faced men, and women with elastic-side boots and imitation fruit on their hats, and schoolboys. Jane hardly noticed them; for though she was theoretically an extreme democrat, no social class save her own had yet become a reality to her in any place except the printed page. And in between the stations things flitted past, so isolated from their context that each seemed to promise some unearthly happiness if one could but have descended from the train at that very moment to seize it: a house backed with a group of haystacks and wide brown fields about it, two aged horses standing head to tail, a little orchard with washing hanging on a line, and a rabbit staring at the train, whose two eyes looked like the dots, and his ears like the uprights, of a double exclamation mark. At quarter-past two

she came to St. Anne's, which was the real terminus of the branch, and the end of everything. The air struck her as cold and tonic when she left the station.

Although the train had been chugging and wheezing up-hill for the latter half of her journey there was still a climb to be done on foot, for St. Anne's is one of those villages perched on a hilltop which are commoner in Ireland than in England, and the station is some way from the village. A winding road between high banks led her up to it. As soon as she had passed the church she turned left, as she had been instructed, at the Saxon Cross. There were no houses on her left — only a row of beech trees and unfenced ploughland falling steeply away, and beyond that the timbered midland plain spreading as far as she could see and blue in the distance. She was on the highest ground in all that region. Presently she came to a high wall on her right that seemed to run on for a great way. There was a door in it and beside the door an old iron bell-pull. A kind of flatness of spirit was on her. She felt sure she had come on a fool's errand: nevertheless she rang. When the jangling noise had ceased there followed a silence so long, and in that upland place so chilly, that Jane began to wonder whether the house were inhabited. Then, just as she was debating whether to ring again or to turn away, she heard the noise of someone's feet approaching briskly on the inside of the wall.

Meanwhile Lord Feverstone's car had long since arrived at Belbury — a florid Edwardian mansion which had been built for a millionaire who admired Versailles. At the sides it seemed to have sprouted into a widespread outgrowth of newer and lower buildings in cement, which housed the Blood Transfusion Office.

THREE

Belbury and St. Anne's-on-the-Hill

I

On his way up the wide staircase Mark caught sight of himself and his companion in a mirror. Feverstone looked, as always, master of his clothes, his face, and of the whole situation. The blob of cotton wool on Mark's upper lip had been blown awry during the journey, so that it looked like one half of a fiercely upturned false moustache and revealed a patch of blackened blood beneath it. A moment later he found himself in a big-windowed room with a blazing fire, being introduced to Mr. John Wither, Deputy Director of the N.I.C.E.

Wither was a white-haired old man with a courtly manner. His face was clean shaven and very large indeed, with watery blue eyes and something rather vague and chaotic about it. He did not appear to be giving them his whole attention, and this impression must, I think, have been due to the eyes, for his actual words and gestures were polite to the point of effusiveness. He said it was a great, a very great pleasure, to welcome Mr. Studdock among them. It added to the deep obligations under which Lord Feverstone had already laid him. He hoped they had had an agreeable journey. Mr. Wither appeared to be under the impression that they had come by air and, when this was corrected, that they had come from London by train. Then he began enquiring whether Mr. Studdock found his quarters perfectly comfortable and had to be reminded that they had only that moment arrived. "I suppose," thought Mark, "the old chap is trying to put me at my ease." In fact, Mr. Wither's conversation was having precisely the opposite effect. Mark wished he would offer him a cigarette. His growing conviction that this man really knew nothing about him, and even that all the well-knit schemes and promises of Feverstone were at this moment dissolving into some sort of mist, was extremely uncomfortable. At last he took his courage in both hands and endeavoured to bring Mr. Wither to the point by saying that he was still not quite clear in what capacity he would be able to assist the Institute.

“I assure you, Mr. Studdock,” said the Deputy Director with an unusually far-away look in his eye, “that you needn’t anticipate the slightest . . . er . . . the slightest difficulty on that point. There was never any idea of circumscribing your activities and your general influence on policy, much less your relations with your colleagues and what I might call in general the terms of reference under which you would be collaborating with us, without the fullest possible consideration of your own views and, indeed, your own advice. You will find us, Mr. Studdock, if I might express myself in that way, a very happy family.”

“Oh, don’t misunderstand me, sir,” said Mark. “I didn’t mean that at all. I only meant that I felt I should like some sort of idea of what exactly I should be doing if I came to you.”

“Well now, when you speak of coming to us,” said the Deputy Director, “that raises a point on which I hope there is no misunderstanding. I think we all agreed that no question of residence need be raised — I mean, at this stage. We thought, we all thought, that you should be left entirely free to carry on your work wherever you pleased. If you cared to live in London or Cambridge — —”

“Edgestow,” prompted Lord Feverstone.

“Ah yes, Edgestow,” here the Deputy Director turned round and addressed Feverstone. “I was just explaining to Mr. . . . er . . . Studdock, and I feel sure you will fully agree with me, that nothing was further from the mind of the committee than to dictate in any way, or even to advise, where Mr. —— where your friend should live. Of course, wherever he lives we should naturally place air transport and road transport at his disposal. I dare say, Lord Feverstone, you have already explained to him that he will find that all questions of that sort will adjust themselves without the smallest difficulty.”

“Really, Sir,” said Mark, “I wasn’t thinking about that at all. I haven’t — I mean I shouldn’t have the smallest objection to living anywhere; I only — —”

The Deputy Director interrupted him, if anything so gentle as Wither’s voice can be called an interruption. “But I assure you, Mr. . . . er . . . I assure you, Sir, that there is not the smallest objection to your residing wherever you may find convenient. There was never, at any stage, the slightest suggestion — —” but here Mark, almost in desperation, ventured to interrupt himself.

“It is the exact nature of the work,” he said, “and of my qualifications for it that I wanted to get clear.”

“My dear friend,” said the Deputy Director, “you need not have the slightest uneasiness in that direction. As I said before, you will find us a very happy family, and may feel perfectly satisfied that no questions as to your entire suitability have been agitating anyone’s mind in the least. I should not be offering you a position among us if there were the slightest danger of your not being completely welcome to all, or the least suspicion that your very valuable qualities were not fully appreciated. You are — you are among *friends* here, Mr. Studdock. I should be the last person to advise you to connect yourself with any organisation where you ran the risk of being exposed . . . er . . . to disagreeable personal contacts.”

Mark did not ask again in so many words what the N.I.C.E. wanted him to do; partly because he began to be afraid that he was supposed to know this already, and partly because a perfectly direct question would have sounded a crudity in that room — a crudity which might suddenly exclude him from the warm and almost drugged atmosphere of vague, yet heavily important, confidence in which he was gradually being enfolded.

“You are very kind,” he said. “The only thing I should like to get just a little clearer is the exact — well, the exact scope of the appointment.”

“Well,” said Mr. Wither in a voice so low and rich that it was almost a sigh. “I am very glad you have raised that issue now in a quite informal way. Obviously neither you nor I would wish to commit ourselves, in this room, in any sense which was at all injurious to the powers of the committee. I quite understand your motives and . . . er . . . respect them. We are not, of course, speaking of an appointment in the quasi-technical sense of the term; it would be improper for both of us (though, you may well remind me, in different ways) to do so — or at least it might lead to certain inconveniences. But I think I can most definitely assure you that nobody wants to force you into any kind of strait-waistcoat or bed of Procrustes. We do not really think, among ourselves, in terms of strictly demarcated functions, of course. I take it that men like you and me are — well, to put it frankly, hardly in the habit of using concepts of that type. Everyone in the Institute feels that his own work is not so much a departmental contribution to an end already defined as a moment or grade in the progressive self-definition of an organic whole.”

And Mark said — God forgive him, for he was young and shy and vain and timid all in one— “I do think that is so important. The elasticity of your organisation is one of the things that attracts me.” After that, he had no further chance of bringing the Director to the point, and whenever the slow, gentle voice ceased he found himself answering it in its own style, and apparently helpless to do otherwise despite the torturing recurrence of the question, “What are we both talking *about*?” At the very end of the interview there came one moment of clarity. Mr. Wither supposed that he, Mark, would find it convenient to join the N.I.C.E. club: even for the next few days he would be freer as a member than as someone’s guest. Mark agreed and then flushed crimson like a small boy on learning that the easiest course was to become a life member at the cost of £200. He had not that amount in the bank. Of course, if he had got the new job with its fifteen hundred a year, all would be well. But had he got it? Was there a job at all?

“How silly,” he said aloud, “I haven’t got my cheque-book with me.”

A moment later he found himself on the stairs with Feverstone.

“Well?” asked Mark eagerly. Feverstone did not seem to hear him.

“Well?” repeated Mark. “When shall I know my fate? I mean, have I got the job?”

“Hullo, Guy!” bawled Feverstone suddenly to a man in the hall beneath. Next moment he had trotted down to the foot of the stairs, grasped his friend warmly by the hand, and disappeared. Mark, following him more slowly, found himself in the hall, silent, alone, and self-conscious, among the groups and pairs of chattering men, who were all crossing it towards the big folding doors on his left.

II

It seemed to last long, this standing, this wondering what to do, this effort to look natural and not to catch the eyes of strangers. The noise and the agreeable smells which came from the folding doors made it obvious that people were going to lunch. Mark hesitated, uncertain of his own status. In the end he decided that he couldn’t stand there looking like a fool any longer, and went in.

He had hoped that there would be several small tables at one of which he could have sat alone. But there was only a single long table, already so nearly filled that, after looking in vain for Feverstone, he had to sit down

beside a stranger. “I suppose one sits where one likes?” he murmured as he did so; but the stranger apparently did not hear. He was a bustling sort of man who was eating very quickly and talking at the same time to his neighbour on the other side.

“That’s just it,” he was saying. “As I told him, it makes no difference to me which way they settle it. I’ve no objection to the I.J.P. people taking over the whole thing if that’s what the D.D. wants, but what I dislike is one man being responsible for it when half the work is being done by someone else. As I said to him, you’ve now got three H.D.s all tumbling over one another about some job that could really be done by a clerk. It’s becoming ridiculous. Look at what happened this morning.” Conversation on these lines continued throughout the meal.

Although the food and the drinks were excellent, it was a relief to Mark when people began getting up from table. Following the general movement, he recrossed the hall and came into a large room furnished as a lounge where coffee was being served. Here at last he saw Feverstone. Indeed it would have been difficult not to notice him, for he was the centre of a group and laughing prodigiously. Mark wished to approach him, if only to find out whether he were expected to stay the night and, if so, whether a room had been assigned to him. But the knot of men round Feverstone was of that confidential kind which it is difficult to join. He moved towards one of the many tables and began turning over the glossy pages of an illustrated weekly. Every few seconds he looked up to see if there were any chance of getting a word with Feverstone alone. The fifth time he did so, he found himself looking into the face of one of his own colleagues, a Fellow of Bracton, called William Hingest. The Progressive Element called him, though not to his face, Bill the Blizzard.

Hingest had not, as Curry anticipated, been present at the College meeting, and was hardly on speaking terms with Lord Feverstone. Mark realised with a certain awe that here was a man *directly* in touch with the N.I.C.E. — one who started, so to speak, at a point beyond Feverstone. Hingest, who was a physical chemist, was one of the two scientists at Bracton who had a reputation outside England. I hope the reader has not been misled into supposing that the Fellows of Bracton were a specially distinguished body. It was certainly not the intention of the Progressive Element to elect mediocrities to fellowships, but their determination to elect “sound men” cruelly limited their field of choice and, as Busby had once

said, “You can’t have everything.” Bill the Blizzard had an old-fashioned curly moustache in which white had almost, but not completely, triumphed over yellow, a large beak-like nose, and a bald head.

“This is an unexpected pleasure,” said Mark with a hint of formality. He was always a little afraid of Hingest.

“Huh?” grunted Bill. “Eh? Oh, it’s you, Studdock? Didn’t know they’d secured your services here.”

“I was sorry not to see you at the College meeting yesterday,” said Mark.

This was a lie. The Progressive Element always found Hingest’s presence an embarrassment. As a scientist — and the only really eminent scientist they had — he was their rightful property; but he was that hateful anomaly, the wrong sort of scientist. Glossop, who was a classic, was his chief friend in College. He had the air (the “affectation” Curry called it) of not attaching much importance to his own revolutionary discoveries in chemistry and of valuing himself much more on being a Hingest: the family was of almost mythical antiquity, “never contaminated” as its nineteenth century historian had said, “by traitor, placeman, or baronetcy.” He had given particular offence on the occasion of de Broglie’s visit to Edgestow. The Frenchman had spent his spare time exclusively in Bill the Blizzard’s society, but when an enthusiastic junior Fellow had thrown out a feeler about the rich feast of science which the two *savants* must have shared, Bill the Blizzard had appeared to search his memory for a moment and then replied that he didn’t think they had got on to that subject. “Gassing Almanac de Gotha nonsense, I suppose,” was Curry’s comment, though not in Hingest’s presence.

“Eh? What’s that? College meeting?” said the Blizzard. “What were they talking about?”

“About the sale of Bragdon Wood.”

“All nonsense,” muttered the Blizzard.

“I hope you would have agreed with the decision we came to.”

“It made no difference what decision they came to.”

“Oh!” said Mark with some surprise.

“It was all nonsense. The N.I.C.E. would have had the Wood in any case. They had powers to compel a sale.”

“What an extraordinary thing! I was given to understand they were going to Cambridge if we didn’t sell.”

“Not a word of truth in it. As to its being an extraordinary thing, that depends on what you mean. There’s nothing extraordinary in the Fellows of Bracton talking all afternoon about an unreal issue. And there’s nothing extraordinary in the fact that the N.I.C.E. should wish, if possible, to hand over to Bracton the odium of turning the heart of England into a cross between an abortive American hotel and a glorified gas-works. The only real puzzle is why the N.I.C.E. should want that bit of land.”

“I suppose we shall find out as things go on.”

“You may. I shan’t.”

“Oh?” said Mark interrogatively.

“I’ve had enough of it,” said Hingest, lowering his voice, “I’m leaving to-night. I don’t know what you were doing at Bracton, but if it was any good I’d advise you to go back and stick to it.”

“Really!” said Mark. “Why do you say that?”

“Doesn’t matter for an old fellow like me,” said Hingest, “but they could play the devil with *you*. Of course it all depends on what a man likes.”

“As a matter of fact,” said Mark, “I haven’t fully made up my mind.” He had been taught to regard Hingest as a warped reactionary. “I don’t even know yet what my job would be if I stayed.”

“What’s your subject?”

“Sociology.”

“Huh!” said Hingest. “In that case I can soon point you out the man you’d be under. A fellow called Steele. Over there by the window, do you see?”

“Perhaps you could introduce me.”

“You’re determined to stay then?”

“Well, I suppose I ought at least to see him.”

“All right,” said Hingest. “No business of mine.” Then he added in a louder voice, “Steele!”

Steele turned round. He was a tall, unsmiling man with that kind of face which, though long and horse-like, has nevertheless rather thick and pouting lips.

“This is Studdock,” said Hingest. “The new man for your department.” Then he turned away.

“Oh,” said Steele. Then after a pause, “Did he say *my* department?”

“That’s what he *said*,” replied Mark with an attempt at a smile. “But perhaps he’s got it wrong. I’m supposed to be a sociologist — if that throws

any light on it."

"I'm H.D. for sociology all right," said Steele. "But this is the first I've heard about you. Who told you you were to be there?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," said Mark, "the whole thing is rather vague. I've just had a talk with the Deputy Director but we didn't actually go into any details."

"How did you manage to see *him*?"

"Lord Feverstone introduced me."

Steele whistled. "I say, Cosser," he called out to a freckle-faced man who was passing by, "listen to this. Feverstone has just unloaded this chap on our department. Taken him straight to the D.D. without saying a word to me about it. What do you think of that?"

"Well I'm damned!" said Cosser, hardly glancing at Mark but looking very hard at Steele.

"I'm sorry," said Mark, a little more loudly and a little more stiffly than he had yet spoken. "Don't be alarmed. I seem to have been put in rather a false position. There must have been some misunderstanding. As a matter of fact I am, at the moment, merely having a look round. I'm not at all certain that I intend to stay in any case."

Neither of the other two took any notice of this last suggestion.

"That's Feverstone all over," said Cosser to Steele.

Steele turned to Mark. "I shouldn't advise you to take much notice of what Lord Feverstone says here," he remarked. "This isn't his business at all."

"All I object to," said Mark, wishing that he could prevent his face from turning so red, "is being put in a false position. I only came over as an experiment. It is a matter of indifference to me whether I take a job in the N.I.C.E. or not."

"You see," said Steele to Cosser, "there isn't really any room for a man in our show — specially for someone who doesn't know the work. Unless they put him on the U.L."

"That's right," said Cosser.

"Mr. Studdock, I think," said a new voice at Mark's elbow, a treble voice which seemed disproportionate to the huge hill of a man whom he saw when he turned his head. He recognised the speaker at once. His dark, smooth face and black hair were unmistakable, and so was the foreign accent. This was Professor Filostrato, the great physiologist, whom Mark

had sat next to at a dinner about two years before. He was fat to that degree which is comic on the stage, but the effect was not funny in real life. Mark was charmed that such a man should have remembered him.

"I am very glad you have come to join us," said Filostrato, taking hold of Mark's arm and gently piloting him away from Steele and Cosser.

"To tell you the truth," said Mark, "I'm not sure that I have. I was brought over by Feverstone but he has disappeared, and Steele — I'd have been in his department I suppose — doesn't seem to know anything about me."

"Bah! Steele!" said the Professor. "That is all a bagatelle. He get too big for his boots. He will be put in his place one of these days. It may be you who will put him. I have read all your work, *si si*. Do not consider him."

"I have a strong objection to being put in a false position — —" began Mark.

"Listen, my friend," interrupted Filostrato. "You must put all such ideas out of your head. The first thing to realise is that the N.I.C.E. is serious. It is nothing less than the existence of the human race that depends on our work: our *real* work, you comprehend? You will find frictions and impertinences among this *canaglia*, this rabble. They are no more to be regarded than your dislike of a brother officer when the battle is at his crisis."

"As long as I'm given something to do that is worth doing," said Mark, "I shouldn't allow anything of that sort to interfere with it."

"Yes, yes, that is right. The work is more important than you can yet understand. You will see. These Steeles and Feverstones — they are of no consequence. As long as you have the good will of the Deputy Director you snap your fingers at them. You need listen to no one but him, you comprehend? Ah — and there is one other. Do not have the Fairy for your enemy. For the rest — you laugh at them."

"The Fairy?"

"Yes. Her they call the Fairy. Oh, my God, a terrible *Inglesaccia*! She is the head of our police, the Institutional Police. *Ecco*, she come. I will present you. Miss Hardcastle, permit that I present to you Mr. Studdock."

Mark found himself writhing from the stoker's or carter's hand-grip of a big woman in a black, short-skirted uniform. Despite a bust that would have done credit to a Victorian barmaid, she was rather thickly built than fat and her iron-grey hair was cropped short. Her face was square, stern, and pale, and her voice deep. A smudge of lip-stick laid on with violent inattention to

the real shape of her mouth was her only concession to fashion, and she rolled or chewed a long black cheroot, unlit, between her teeth. As she talked she had a habit of removing this, staring intently at the mixture of lip-stick and saliva on its mangled end, and then replacing it more firmly than before. She sat down immediately in a chair close to where Mark was standing, flung her right leg over one of the arms, and fixed him with a gaze of cold intimacy.

III

Click — clack, distinct in the silence, where Jane stood waiting, came the tread of the person on the other side of the wall. Then the door opened and Jane found herself facing a tall woman of about her own age. This person looked at her with keen, non-committal eyes.

"Does a Miss Ironwood live here?" said Jane.

"Yes," said the other girl, neither opening the door any further nor standing aside.

"I want to see her, please," said Jane.

"Have you an appointment?" said the tall woman.

"Well, not exactly," said Jane. "I was directed here by Dr. Dimble who knows Miss Ironwood. He said I shouldn't need an appointment."

"Oh, if you're from Dr. Dimble that is another matter," said the woman. "Come in. Now wait a moment while I attend to this lock. That's better. Now we're all right. There's not room for two on this path so you must excuse me if I go first."

The woman led her along a brick path beside a wall on which fruit trees were growing, and then to the left along a mossy path with gooseberry bushes on each side. Then came a little lawn with a see-saw in the middle of it, and beyond that a greenhouse. Here they found themselves in the sort of hamlet that sometimes occurs in the purlieus of a large garden — walking in fact down a little street which had a barn and a stable on one side and, on the other, a second greenhouse, and a potting shed and a pigstye — inhabited, as the grunts and the not wholly disagreeable smell informed her. After that were narrow paths across a vegetable garden that seemed to be on a fairly steep hillside and then rose bushes, all stiff and prickly in their winter garb. At one place they were going along a path made of single planks. This reminded Jane of something. It was a very large garden. It was

like . . . like . . . yes, now she had it: it was like the garden in *Peter Rabbit*. Or was it like the garden in the *Romance of the Rose*? No, not in the least like really. Or like Klingsor's garden? Or the garden in *Alice*? Or like the garden on the top of some Mesopotamian ziggurat which had probably given rise to the whole legend of Paradise? Or simply like all walled gardens? Freud said we liked gardens because they were symbols of the female body. But that must be a man's point of view. Presumably gardens meant something different in women's dreams. Or did they? Did men and women both feel interested in the female body and even, though it sounded ridiculous, in almost the same way. A sentence rose to her memory. "The beauty of the female is the root of joy to the female as well as to the male, and it is no accident that the goddess of Love is older and stronger than the god." Where on earth had she read that? And, incidentally, what frightful nonsense she had been thinking for the last minute or so! She shook off all these ideas about gardens and determined to pull herself together. A curious feeling that she was now on hostile, or at least alien, ground warned her to keep all her wits about her. At that moment they suddenly emerged from between plantations of rhododendron and laurel and found themselves at a small side door, flanked by a water butt, in the long wall of a large house. Just as they did so a window clapped shut upstairs.

A minute or two later Jane was sitting waiting in a large sparely furnished room with a shut stove to warm it. Most of the floor was bare, and the walls, above the waist-high wainscotting, were of greyish-white plaster, so that the whole effect was faintly austere and conventual. The tall woman's tread died away in the passages and the room became very quiet when it had done so. Occasionally the cawing of rooks could be heard. "I've let myself in for it now," thought Jane, "I shall have to tell this woman that dream and she'll ask all sorts of questions." She considered herself, in general, a modern person who could talk without embarrassment of anything: but it began to look quite different as she sat in that room. All sorts of secret reservations in her programme of frankness — things which, she now realised, she had set apart as never to be told — came creeping back into consciousness. It was surprising that very few of them were connected with sex. "In dentists," said Jane, "they at least leave illustrated papers in the waiting-room." She got up and opened the one book that lay on the table in the middle of the room. Instantly her eyes lit on the following words: "The beauty of the female is the root of joy to the female

as well as to the male, and it is no accident that the goddess of Love is older and stronger than the god. To desire the desiring of her own beauty is the vanity of Lilith, but to desire the enjoying of her own beauty the obedience of Eve, and to both it is in the lover that the beloved tastes her own delightfulness. As obedience is the stairway of pleasure, so humility is the . . .”

At that moment the door was suddenly opened. Jane turned crimson as she shut the book and looked up. The same girl who had first let her in had apparently just opened the door and was still standing in the doorway. Jane now conceived for her that almost passionate admiration which women, more often than is supposed, feel for other women whose beauty is not of their own type. It would be nice, Jane thought, to be like that — so straight, so forthright, so valiant, so fit to be mounted on a horse, and so divinely tall.

“Is . . . is Miss Ironwood in?” said Jane.

“Are you Mrs. Studdock?” said the girl.

“Yes,” said Jane.

“I will bring you to her at once,” said the other. “We have been expecting you. My name is Camilla — Camilla Denniston.”

Jane followed her. From the narrowness and plainness of the passages Jane judged that they were still in the back parts of the house, and that, if so, it must be a very large house indeed. They went a long way before Camilla knocked at a door and stood aside for Jane to enter, after saying in a low, clear voice (“like a servant,” Jane thought), “She has come.” And Jane went in; and there was Miss Ironwood dressed all in black and sitting with her hands folded on her knees, just as Jane had seen her when dreaming — if she were dreaming — last night in the flat.

“Sit down, young lady,” said Miss Ironwood.

The hands which were folded on her knees were very big and boney though they did not suggest coarseness, and even when seated Miss Ironwood was extremely tall. Everything about her was big — the nose, the unsmiling lips, and the grey eyes. She was perhaps nearer sixty than fifty. There was an atmosphere in the room which Jane found uncongenial.

“What is your name, young lady?” said Miss Ironwood, taking up a pencil and a note-book.

“Jane Studdock.”

“Are you married?”

“Yes.”

“Does your husband know you have come to us?”

“No.”

“And your age, if you please?”

“Twenty-three.”

“And now,” said Miss Ironwood, “what have you to tell me?”

Jane took a deep breath. “I’ve been having bad dreams and — and feeling depressed lately,” she said.

“What were the dreams?” asked Miss Ironwood.

Jane’s narrative — she did not do it very well — took some time. While she was speaking she kept her eyes fixed on Miss Ironwood’s large hands and her black skirt and the pencil and the note-book. And that was why she suddenly stopped. For as she proceeded she saw Miss Ironwood’s hand cease to write and the fingers wrap themselves round the pencil: immensely strong fingers they seemed. And every moment they tightened, till the knuckles grew white and the veins stood out on the backs of the hands, and at last, as if under the influence of some stifled emotion, they broke the pencil in two. It was then that Jane stopped in astonishment and looked up at Miss Ironwood’s face. The wide grey eyes were still looking at her with no change of expression.

“Pray continue, young lady,” said Miss Ironwood.

Jane resumed her story. When she had finished, Miss Ironwood put a number of questions. After that she became silent for so long that Jane said:

“Is there, do you think, anything very serious wrong with me?”

“There is nothing wrong with you,” said Miss Ironwood.

“You mean it will go away?”

“I have no means of telling. I should say probably not.”

“Then — can’t anything be done about it? They were horrible dreams — horribly vivid, not like dreams at all.”

“I can quite understand that.”

“Is it something that can’t be cured?”

“The reason you cannot be cured is that you are not ill.”

“But there must be something wrong. It’s surely not natural to have dreams like that.”

There was a pause. “I think,” said Miss Ironwood, “I had better tell you the whole truth.”

“Yes, do,” said Jane in a strained voice. The other’s words had frightened her.

“And I will begin by saying this,” continued Miss Ironwood. “You are a more important person than you imagine.”

Jane said nothing, but thought inwardly, “She is humouring me. She thinks I am mad.”

“What was your maiden name?” asked Miss Ironwood.

“Tudor,” said Jane. At any other moment she would have said it rather self-consciously, for she was very anxious not to be supposed vain of her ancient ancestry.

“The Warwickshire branch of the family?”

“Yes.”

“Did you ever read a little book — it is only forty pages long — written by an ancestor of yours about the battle of Worcester?”

“No. Father had a copy — the only copy, I think he said. But I never read it. It was lost when the house was broken up after his death.”

“Your father was mistaken in thinking it the only copy. There are at least two others: one is in America, and the other is in this house.”

“Well?”

“Your ancestor gave a full and, on the whole, correct account of the battle, which he says he completed on the same day on which it was fought. But he was not at it. He was in York at the time.”

Jane, who had not really been following this, looked at Miss Ironwood.

“If he was speaking the truth,” said Miss Ironwood, “and we believe that he was, he dreamed it. Do you understand?”

“Dreamed about the battle?”

“Yes. But dreamed it right. He saw the real battle in his dream.”

“I don’t see the connection.”

“Vision — the power of dreaming realities — is sometimes hereditary,” said Miss Ironwood.

Something seemed to be interfering with Jane’s breathing. She felt a sense of injury — this was just the sort of thing she hated: something out of the past, something irrational and utterly uncalled for, coming up from its den and interfering with her.

“Can it be proved?” she asked. “I mean; we have only his word for it.”

“We have your dreams,” said Miss Ironwood. Her voice, always grave, had become stern. A fantastic thought crossed Jane’s mind. Could this old

woman have some idea that one ought not to call even one's remote ancestors liars?

"My dreams?" she said a little sharply.

"Yes," said Miss Ironwood.

"What do you mean?"

"My opinion is that you have seen real things in your dreams. You have seen Alcasan as he really sat in the condemned cell: and you have seen a visitor whom he really had."

"But — but — oh, this is ridiculous," said Jane. "*That* part was a mere coincidence. The rest was just nightmare. It was all impossible. He screwed off his head, I tell you. And they . . . dug up the horrible old man. They made him come to life."

"There are some confusions there, no doubt. But in my opinion there are realities behind even those episodes."

"I am afraid I don't believe in that sort of thing," said Jane coldly.

"Your upbringing makes it natural that you should not," replied Miss Ironwood. "Unless, of course, you have discovered for yourself that you have a tendency to dream real things."

Jane thought of the book on the table which she had apparently remembered before she saw it: and then there was Miss Ironwood's own appearance — that, too, she had seen before she saw it. But it must be nonsense.

"Can you, then, do nothing for me?"

"I can tell you the truth," said Miss Ironwood. "I have tried to do so."

"I mean, can you not stop it — cure it?"

"Vision is not a disease."

"But I don't *want* it," said Jane passionately. "I must stop it. I hate this sort of thing." Miss Ironwood said nothing.

"Don't you even know of anyone who could stop it?" said Jane. "Can't you recommend anyone?"

"If you go to an ordinary psychotherapist," said Miss Ironwood, "he will proceed on the assumption that the dreams merely reflect your own subconscious. He would try to treat you. I do not know what would be the results of treatment based on that assumption. I am afraid they might be very serious. And — it would certainly not remove the dreams."

"But what is this all about?" said Jane. "I want to lead an ordinary life. I want to do my own work. It's unbearable! Why should I be selected for this

horrible thing?”

“The answer to that is known only to authorities much higher than myself.”

There was a short silence. Jane made a vague movement and said, rather sulkily, “Well, if you can do nothing for me, perhaps I’d better be going . . .” Then suddenly she added, “But how can you *know* all this? I mean . . . what realities are you talking about?”

“I think,” said Miss Ironwood, “that you yourself have probably more reason to suspect the truth of your dreams than you have yet told me. If not, you soon will have. In the meantime I will answer your question. We know your dreams to be partly true because they fit in with information we already possess. It was because he saw their importance that Dr. Dimble sent you to us.”

“Do you mean he sent me here not to be cured but to give information?” said Jane. The idea fitted in with things she had observed in his manner when she first told him.

“Exactly.”

“I wish I had known that a little earlier,” said Jane coldly, and now definitely getting up to go. “I’m afraid it has been a misunderstanding. I had imagined Dr. Dimble was trying to help me.”

“He was. But he was also trying to do something more important at the same time.”

“I suppose I should be grateful for being considered at all,” said Jane dryly. “And how, exactly, was I to be helped by — by all this sort of thing?” The attempt at icy irony collapsed as she said these last words and red, undisguised anger rushed back into her face. In some ways she was very young.

“Young lady,” said Miss Ironwood. “You do not at all realise the seriousness of this matter. The things you have seen concern something compared with which the happiness, or even the life, of you and me *is* of no importance. I must beg you to face the situation. You cannot get rid of your gift. You can try to suppress it, but you will fail, and you will be very badly frightened. On the other hand, you can put it at our disposal. If you do so, you will be much less frightened in the long run and you will be helping to save the human race from a very great disaster. Or thirdly, you may tell someone else about it. If you do that, I warn you that you will almost certainly fall into the hands of other people who are at least as anxious as

we to make use of your faculty and who will care no more about your life and happiness than about those of a fly. The people you have seen in your dreams are real people. It is not at all unlikely that they know you have, involuntarily, been spying on them. And, if so, they will not rest till they have got hold of you. I would advise you, even for your own sake, to join our side."

"You keep on talking of *we* and *us*. Are you some kind of company?"

"Yes. You may call it a company."

Jane had been standing for the last few minutes: and she had almost been believing what she heard. Then suddenly all her repugnance came over her again — all her wounded vanity, her resentment of the meaningless complication in which she seemed to be caught, and her general dislike of the mysterious and the unfamiliar. At that moment nothing seemed to matter but to get out of that room and away from the grave, patient voice of Miss Ironwood. "She's made me worse already," thought Jane, still regarding herself as a patient. Aloud, she said:

"I must go home now. I don't know what you are talking about. I don't want to have anything to do with it."

IV

Mark discovered in the end that he was expected to stay, at least for the night, and when he went up to dress for dinner he was feeling more cheerful. This was partly due to a whisky and soda taken with "Fairy" Hardcastle immediately before, and partly to the fact that by a glance at the mirror he saw that he could now remove the objectionable piece of cotton wool from his lip. The bedroom with its bright fire and its private bathroom attached had also something to do with it. Thank goodness he had allowed Jane to talk him into buying that new dress-suit! It looked very well, laid out on the bed; and he saw now that the old one really would not have done. But what had reassured him most of all was his conversation with the Fairy.

It would be misleading to say that he liked her. She had indeed excited in him all the distaste which a young man feels at the proximity of something rankly, even insolently, sexed and at the same time wholly unattractive. And something in her cold eye had told him that she was well aware of this reaction and found it amusing. She had told him a good many smoking-room stories. Often before now Mark had shuddered at the clumsy efforts of

the emancipated female to indulge in this kind of humour, but his shudders had always been consoled by a sense of superiority. This time he had the feeling that he was the butt; this woman was exasperating male prudery for her diversion. Later on she drifted into police reminiscences. In spite of some initial scepticism, Mark was gradually horrified by her assumption that about thirty per cent of our murder trials ended by the hanging of an innocent man. There were details, too, about the execution shed which had not occurred to him before.

All this was disagreeable. But it was made up for by the deliciously esoteric character of the conversation. Several times that day he had been made to feel himself an outsider: that feeling completely disappeared while Miss Hardcastle was talking to him. He had the sense of getting *in*. Miss Hardcastle had apparently lived an exciting life. She had been, at different times, a suffragette, a pacifist, and a British Fascist. She had been manhandled by the police and imprisoned. On the other hand, she had met Prime Ministers, Dictators, and famous film stars; all her history was secret history. She knew from both ends what a police force could do and what it could not, and there were in her opinion very few things it could not do. “Specially now,” she said. “Here in the Institute, we’re backing the crusade against Red Tape.”

Mark gathered that, for the Fairy, the police side of the Institute was the really important side. It existed to relieve the ordinary executive of what might be called all sanitary cases — a category which ranged from vaccination to charges of unnatural vice — from which, as she pointed out, it was only a step to bringing in all cases of blackmail. As regards crime in general, they had already popularised in the press the idea that the Institute should be allowed to experiment pretty largely in the hope of discovering how far humane, remedial treatment could be substituted for the old notion of “retributive” or “vindictive” punishment. That was where a lot of legal Red Tape stood in their way. “But there are only two papers we don’t control,” said the Fairy. “And we’ll smash them. You’ve got to get the ordinary man into the state in which he says ‘Sadism’ automatically when he hears the word Punishment.” And then one would have *carte blanche*. Mark did not immediately follow this. But the Fairy pointed out that what had hampered every English police force up to date was precisely the idea of deserved punishment. For desert was always finite: you could do so much to the criminal and no more. Remedial treatment, on the other hand,

need have no fixed limit; it could go on till it had effected a cure, and those who were carrying it out would decide when *that* was. And if cure were humane and desirable, how much more prevention? Soon anyone who had ever been in the hands of the police at all would come under the control of the N.I.C.E.; in the end, every citizen. “And that’s where you and I come in, Sonny,” added the Fairy, tapping Mark’s chest with her forefinger. “There’s no distinction in the long run between police work and sociology. You and I’ve got to work hand in hand.”

This had brought Mark back to his doubts as to whether he were really being given a job and, if so, what it was. The Fairy had warned him that Steele was a dangerous man. “There are two people you want to be very cautious about,” she said. “One is Frost and the other is old Wither.” But she had laughed at his fears in general. “You’re in all right, Sonny,” she said. “Only don’t be too particular about what exactly you’ve got to do. You’ll find out as it comes along. Wither doesn’t like people who try to pin him down. There’s no good saying you’ve come here to do *this* and you won’t do *that*. The game’s too fast just at present for that sort of thing. You’ve got to make yourself useful. And don’t believe everything you’re told.”

At dinner Mark found himself seated next to Hingest.

“Well,” said Hingest, “have they finally roped you into it, eh?”

“I rather believe they have,” said Mark.

“Because,” said Hingest, “if you thought the better of it I’m motoring back to-night and I could give you a lift.”

“You haven’t yet told me why you are leaving us yourself,” said Mark.

“Oh, well, it all depends what a man likes. If you enjoy the society of that Italian eunuch and the mad parson and that Hardcastle girl — her grandmother would have boxed her ears if she were alive — of course there’s nothing more to be said.”

“I suppose it’s hardly to be judged on purely social grounds — I mean, it’s something more than a club.”

“Eh? Judged? Never judged anything in my life, to the best of my knowledge, except at a flower show. It’s all a question of taste. I came here because I thought it had something to do with science. Now that I find it’s something more like a political conspiracy, I shall go home. I’m too old for that kind of thing, and if I wanted to join a conspiracy, this one wouldn’t be my choice.”

“You mean, I suppose, that the element of social planning doesn’t appeal to you? I can quite understand that it doesn’t fit in with your work as it does with sciences like sociology, but — —”

“There *are* no sciences like sociology. And if I found chemistry beginning to fit in with a secret police run by a middle-aged virago who doesn’t wear corsets and a scheme for taking away his farm and his shop and his children from every Englishman, I’d let chemistry go to the devil and take up gardening again.”

“I think I *do* understand that sentiment that still attaches to the small man, but when you come to study the reality as I have had to do — —”

“I should want to pull it to bits and put something else in its place. Of course. That’s what happens when you study men: you find mare’s nests. I happen to believe that you can’t study men, you can only get to know them, which is quite a different thing. Because you study them, you want to make the lower orders govern the country and listen to classical music, which is balderdash. You also want to take away from them everything which makes life worth living, and not only from them but from everyone except a parcel of prigs and professors.”

“Bill!” said Fairy Hardcastle suddenly, from the far side of the table, in a voice so loud that even he could not ignore it. Hingest fixed his eyes upon her and his face grew a dark red.

“Is it true,” bawled the Fairy, “that you’re going off by car immediately after dinner?”

“Yes, Miss Hardcastle, it is.”

“I was wondering if you could give me a lift.”

“I should be happy to do so,” said Hingest in a voice not intended to deceive, “if we are going in the same direction.”

“Where are you going?”

“I am going to Edgestow.”

“Will you be passing Brenstock?”

“No, I leave the by-pass at the cross-roads just beyond Lord Holywood’s front gate and go down what they used to call Potter’s Lane.”

“Oh, damn! No good to me. I may as well wait till the morning.”

After this Mark found himself engaged by his left-hand neighbour and did not see Bill the Blizzard again until he met him in the hall after dinner. He was in his overcoat and just ready to step into his car.

He began talking as he opened the door and thus Mark was drawn into accompanying him across the gravel sweep to where his car was parked.

"Take my advice, Studdock," he said, "or at least think it over. I don't believe in sociology myself, but you've got quite a decent career before you if you stay at Bracton. You'll do yourself no good by getting mixed up with the N.I.C.E. — and, by God, you'll do nobody else any good either."

"I suppose there are two views about everything," said Mark.

"Eh? Two views? There are a dozen views about everything until you know the answer. Then there's never more than one. But it's no affair of mine. Good night."

"Good night, Hingest," said Mark. The other started up the car and drove off.

There was a touch of frost in the air. The shoulder of Orion, though Mark did not know even that earnest constellation, flamed at him above the treetops. He felt a hesitation about going back into the house. It might mean further talk with interesting and influential people: but it might also mean feeling once more an outsider, hanging about and watching conversations which he could not join. Anyway, he was tired. Strolling along the front of the house he came presently to another and smaller door by which, he judged, one could enter without passing through the hall or the public rooms. He did so, and went upstairs for the night immediately.

V

Camilla Denniston showed Jane out — not by the little door in the wall at which she had come in, but by the main gate which opened on the same road about a hundred yards farther on. Yellow light from a westward gap in the grey sky was pouring a short-lived and chilly brightness over the whole landscape. Jane had been ashamed to show either temper or anxiety before Camilla: as a result both had in reality been diminished when she said good-bye. But a settled distaste for what she called "all this nonsense" remained. She was not indeed sure that it was nonsense: but she had already resolved to treat it as if it were. She would not get "mixed up in it," would not be drawn in. One had to live one's own life. To avoid entanglements and interferences had long been one of her first principles. Even when she had discovered that she was going to marry Mark if he asked her, the thought "But I must still keep up my own life" had arisen at once and had never for

more than a few minutes at a stretch been absent from her mind. Some resentment against love itself, and therefore against Mark, for thus invading her life, remained. She was at least very vividly aware how much a woman gives up in getting married. Mark seemed to her insufficiently aware of this. Though she did not formulate it, this fear of being invaded and entangled was the deepest ground of her determination not to have a child — or not for a long time yet. One had one's own life to live.

Almost as soon as she got back to the flat the telephone went. "Is that you, Jane?" came a voice. "It's me, Margaret Dimble. Such a dreadful thing's happened. I'll tell you when I come. I'm too angry to speak at the moment. Have you a spare bed by any chance? What? Mr. Studdock's away? Not a bit, if *you* don't mind. I've sent Cecil to sleep in College. You're sure it won't be a nuisance? Thanks most awfully. I'll be round in half an hour."

FOUR

The Liquidation of Anachronisms

I

Almost before Jane had finished putting clean sheets on Mark's bed, Mrs. Dimble, with a great many parcels, arrived. "You're an angel to have me for the night," she said. "We'd tried every hotel in Edgestow I believe. This place is going to become unendurable. The same answer everywhere! All full up with the hangers-on and camp followers of this detestable N.I.C.E. Secretaries here — typists there — commissioners of works — the thing's outrageous. If Cecil hadn't had a room in College I really believe he'd have had to sleep in the waiting-room at the station. I only hope that man in College has aired the bed."

"But what on earth's happened?" asked Jane.

"Turned out, my dear!"

"But it isn't possible, Mrs. Dimble. I mean, it can't be legal."

"That's what Cecil said. . . . Just think of it, Jane. The first thing we saw when we poked our heads out of the window this morning was a lorry on the drive with its back wheels in the middle of the rose bed, unloading a small army of what looked like criminals with picks and spades. Right in our own garden! There was an odious little man in a peaked cap who talked to Cecil with a cigarette in his mouth, at least it wasn't in his mouth but seccotined onto his upper lip — you know — and guess what he said? He said they'd have no objection to our remaining in possession (of the *house*, mind you, not the garden) till eight o'clock to-morrow morning. No objection!"

"But surely — surely — it must be some mistake."

"Of course Cecil rang up your Bursar. And of course your Bursar was out. That took nearly all morning, ringing up again and again, and by that time the big beech that you used to be so fond of had been cut down, and all the plum trees. If I hadn't been so angry I'd have sat down and cried my eyes out. That's what I felt like. At last Cecil did get on to your Mr. Busby, who was perfectly useless. Said there must be some misunderstanding, but it was out of his hands now and we'd better get on to the N.I.C.E. at

Belbury. Of course it turned out to be quite impossible to get *them*. But by lunch-time we saw that one simply *couldn't* stay there for the night, whatever happened."

"Why not?"

"My dear, you've no conception what it was like. Great lorries and traction engines roaring past all the time, and a crane on a thing like a railway truck. Why, our own tradesmen couldn't get through it. The milk didn't arrive till eleven o'clock. The meat never arrived at all; they rang up in the afternoon to say their people hadn't been able to reach us by either road. We'd the greatest difficulty in getting into town ourselves. It took us half an hour from our house to the bridge. It was like a nightmare. Flares and noise everywhere and the road practically ruined and a sort of great tin camp already going up on the Common. And the people! Such horrid men. I didn't know we *had* workpeople like that in England. Oh, horrible, horrible!" Mrs. Dimble fanned herself with the hat she had just taken off.

"And what are you going to do?" asked Jane.

"Heaven knows!" said Mrs. Dimble. "For the moment we have shut up the house and Cecil has been at Rumbold the solicitors, to see if we can at least have it sealed and left alone until we've got our things out of it. Rumbold doesn't seem to know where he is. He keeps on saying the N.I.C.E. are in a very peculiar position legally. After that, I'm sure I don't know. As far as I can see there won't *be* any houses in Edgestow. There's no question of trying to live on the far side of the river any longer, even if they'd let us. What did you say? Oh, indescribable. All the poplars are going down. All those nice little cottages by the church are going down. I found poor Ivy — that's your Mrs. Maggs, you know — in tears. Poor things! They do look dreadful when they cry on top of powder. She's being turned out too. Poor little woman; she's had enough troubles in her life without this. I was glad to get away. The men were so horrible. Three big brutes came to the back door asking for hot water and went on so that they frightened Martha out of her wits and Cecil had to go and speak to them. I thought they were going to strike Cecil, really I did. It was most horribly unpleasant. But a sort of special constable sent them away. What? Oh yes, there are dozens of what look like policemen all over the place, and I didn't like the look of *them* either. Swinging some kind of truncheon things, like what you'd see in an American film. Do you know, Jane, Cecil and I both

thought the same thing: we thought, it's almost as if we'd lost the war. Oh, good girl, tea! That's just what I wanted."

"You must stay here as long as you like, Mrs. Dimble," said Jane. "Mark'll just have to sleep in College."

"Well, really," said Mother Dimble, "I feel at the moment that no Fellow of Bracton ought to be allowed to sleep anywhere! But I'd make an exception in favour of Mr. Studdock. As a matter of fact, I shan't have to behave like the sword of Siegfried — and, incidentally, a nasty fat stodgy sword I should be! But that side of it is all fixed up. Cecil and I are to go out to the Manor at St. Anne's. We have to be there so much at present, you see."

"Oh," said Jane, involuntarily prolonging the exclamation as the whole of her own story flowed back on her mind.

"Why, what a selfish pig I've been," said Mother Dimble. "Here have I been chattering away about my own troubles and quite forgetting that you've been out there and are full of things to tell me. Did you see Grace? And did you like her?"

"Is 'Grace' Miss Ironwood?" asked Jane.

"Yes."

"I saw her. I don't know if I liked her or not. But I don't want to talk about all that. I can't think about anything except this outrageous business of yours. It's you who are the real martyr, not me."

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Dimble, "I'm not a martyr. I'm only an angry old woman with sore feet and a splitting head (but that's beginning to be better) who's trying to talk herself into a good temper. After all, Cecil and I haven't lost our livelihood as poor Ivy Maggs has. It doesn't *really* matter leaving the old house. Do you know, the pleasure of living there was in a way a melancholy pleasure. (I wonder, by the bye, do human beings really *like* being happy?) A little melancholy, yes. All those big upper rooms which we thought we should want because we thought we were going to have lots of children, and then we never had. Perhaps I was getting too fond of mooning about them on long afternoons when Cecil was away. Pitying oneself. I shall be better away from it, I dare say. I might have got like that frightful woman in Ibsen who was always maundering about dolls. It's really worse for Cecil. He did so love having all his pupils about the place. Jane, that's the third time you've yawned. You're dropping asleep and I've talked your head off. It comes of being married for thirty years. Husbands

were made to be talked to. It helps them to concentrate their minds on what they're reading — like the sound of a weir. There! — you're yawning again."

Jane found Mother Dimble an embarrassing person to share a room with because she said prayers. It was quite extraordinary, Jane thought, how this put one out. One didn't know where to look, and it was so difficult to talk naturally again for several minutes after Mrs. Dimble had risen from her knees.

II

"Are you awake now?" said Mrs. Dimble's voice, quietly, in the middle of the night.

"Yes," said Jane. "I'm so sorry. Did I wake you up? Was I shouting?"

"Yes. You were shouting out about someone being hit on the head."

"I saw them killing a man . . . a man in a big car driving along a country road. Then he came to a cross-roads and turned off to the right past some trees, and there was someone standing in the middle of the road waving a light to stop him. I couldn't hear what they said; I was too far away. They must have persuaded him to get out of the car somehow, and there he was talking to one of them. The light fell full on his face. He wasn't the same old man I saw in my other dream. He hadn't a beard, only a moustache. And he had a very quick, kind of proud, way. He didn't like what the man said to him and presently he put up his fists and knocked him down. Another man behind him tried to hit him on the head with something, but the old man was too quick and turned round in time. Then it was rather horrible, but rather fine. There were three of them at him and he was fighting them all. I've read about that kind of thing in books, but I never realised how one would feel about it. Of course they got him in the end. They beat his head about terribly with the things in their hands. They were quite cool about it and stooped down to examine him and make sure he was really dead. The light from the lantern seemed all funny. It looked as if it made long uprights of light — sort of rods — all round the place. But perhaps I was waking up by then. No thanks, I'm all right. It was horrid, of course, but I'm not really frightened . . . not the way I would have been before. I'm more sorry for the old man."

"You feel you can go to sleep again?"

“Oh rather! Is your headache better, Mrs. Dimble?”

“Quite gone, thank you. Good night.”

III

“Without a doubt,” thought Mark, “this must be the Mad Parson that Bill the Blizzard was talking of.” The committee at Belbury did not meet till 10.30, and ever since breakfast he had been walking with the Reverend Straik in the garden, despite the raw and misty weather of the morning. At the very moment when the man had first buttonholed him, the threadbare clothes and clumsy boots, the frayed clerical collar, the dark, lean, tragic face, gashed and ill-shaved and seamed, and the bitter sincerity of his manner, had struck a discordant note. It was not a type Mark had expected to meet in the N.I.C.E.

“Do not imagine,” said Mr. Straik, “that I indulge in any dreams of carrying out our programme without violence. There will be resistance. They will gnaw their tongues and not repent. We are not to be deterred. We face these disorders with a firmness which will lead traducers to say that we have desired them. Let them say so. In a sense we have. It is no part of our witness to preserve that organisation of ordered sin which is called Society. To that organisation the message which we have to deliver is a message of absolute despair.”

“Now that is what I meant,” said Mark, “when I said that your point of view and mine must, in the long run, be incompatible. The preservation, which involves the thorough planning, of society is just precisely the end I have in view. I do not think there is or can be any other end. The problem is quite different for you because you look forward to something else, something better than human society, in some other world.”

“With every thought and vibration of my heart, with every drop of my blood,” said Mr. Straik, “I repudiate that damnable doctrine. That is precisely the subterfuge by which the World, the organisation and body of Death, has sidetracked and emasculated the teaching of Jesus, and turned into priestcraft and mysticism the plain demand of the Lord for righteousness and judgement here and now. The Kingdom of God is to be realised here — in this world. And it will be. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. In that name I dissociate myself completely from all the organised religion that has yet been seen in the world.”

And at the name of Jesus, Mark, who would have lectured on abortion or perversion to an audience of young women without a qualm, felt himself so embarrassed that he knew his cheeks were slightly reddening; and he became so angry with himself and Mr. Straik at this discovery that they then proceeded to redden very much indeed. This was exactly the kind of conversation he could not endure; and never since the well-remembered misery of scripture lessons at school had he felt so uncomfortable. He muttered something about his ignorance of theology.

"Theology!" said Mr. Straik with profound contempt. "It's not theology I'm talking about, young man, but the Lord Jesus. Theology is talk — eyewash — a smoke screen — a game for rich men. It wasn't in lecture rooms I found the Lord Jesus. It was in the coal pits, and beside the coffin of my daughter. If they think that theology is a sort of cotton wool which will keep them safe in the great and terrible day, they'll find their mistake. For, mark my words, this thing is going to happen. The Kingdom is going to arrive: in this world; in this country. The powers of science are an instrument. An irresistible instrument, as all of us in the N.I.C.E. know. And why are they an irresistible instrument?"

"Because science is based on observation," suggested Mark.

"They are an irresistible instrument," shouted Straik, "because they are an instrument in His hand. An instrument of judgement as well as of healing. That is what I couldn't get any of the churches to see. They are blinded. Blinded by their filthy rags of humanism, their culture and humanitarianism and liberalism, as well as by their sins, or what they think their sins, though they are really the least sinful thing about them. That is why I have come to stand alone; a poor, weak, unworthy old man, but the only prophet left. I knew that He was coming in power. And therefore, where we see power, we see the sign of His coming. And that is why I find myself joining with profligates and materialists and anyone else who is really ready to expedite the coming. The feeblest of these people here has the tragic sense of life, the ruthlessness, the total commitment, the readiness to sacrifice all merely human values, which I could not find amid all the nauseating cant of the organised religions."

"You mean, do you," said Mark, "that as far as immediate practice is concerned, there are no limits to your co-operation with the programme?"

"Sweep away all idea of co-operation!" said the other. "Does clay *co-operate* with the potter? Did Cyrus *co-operate* with the Lord? These people

will be used. I shall be used too. Instruments. Vehicles. But here comes the point that concerns you, young man. You have no choice whether you will be used or not. There is no turning back once you have set your hand to the plough. No one goes *out* of the N.I.C.E. Those who try to turn back will perish in the wilderness. But the question is whether you are content to be one of the instruments which is thrown aside when it has served His turn — one which, having executed judgement on others, is reserved for judgement itself — or will you be among those who enter on the inheritance? For it's all true, you know. It is the saints who are going to inherit the earth — here in England, perhaps within the next twelve months — the saints and no one else. Know you not that we shall judge angels?" Then, suddenly lowering his voice, Straik added, "The *real* resurrection is even now taking place. The real life everlasting. Here in this world. You will see it."

"I say," said Mark, "it's nearly twenty past. Oughtn't we to be going to the committee?"

Straik turned with him in silence. Partly to avoid further conversation along the same lines, and partly because he really wanted to know the answer, Mark said presently, "A rather annoying thing has happened. I've lost my wallet. There wasn't much money in it: only about three pounds. But there were letters and things, and it's a nuisance. Ought I to tell someone about it?"

"You could tell the steward," said Straik.

IV

The committee sat for about two hours and the Deputy Director was in the chair. His method of conducting business was slow and involved, and to Mark, with his Bracton experience to guide him, it soon became obvious that the real work of the N.I.C.E. must go on somewhere else. This, indeed, was what he had expected, and he was too reasonable to suppose that he should find himself, at this early stage, in the Inner Ring or whatever at Belbury corresponded to the Progressive Element at Bracton. But he hoped he would not be kept marking time on phantom committees for too long. This morning the business mainly concerned the details of the work which had already been begun at Edgestow. The N.I.C.E. had apparently won some sort of victory which gave it the right to pull down the little Norman Church at the corner. "The usual objections were, of course, tabled," said

Wither. Mark who was not interested in architecture and who did not know the other side of the Wynd nearly so well as his wife, allowed his attention to wander. It was only at the end of the meeting that Wither opened a much more sensational subject. He believed that most of those present had already heard ("Why do chairmen always begin that way?" thought Mark) the very distressing piece of news which it was, nevertheless, his duty now to communicate to them in a semi-official manner. He was referring, of course, to the murder of Mr. William Hingest. As far as Mark could discover from the chairman's tortuous and allusive narrative, Bill the Blizzard had been discovered with his head beaten in by some blunt instrument, lying near his car in Potter's Lane at about four o'clock that morning. He had been dead for several hours. Mr. Wither ventured to suppose that it would be a melancholy pleasure to the committee to know that N.I.C.E. police had been on the scene of the crime before five, and that neither the local authorities nor Scotland Yard were making any objections to the fullest collaboration. He felt that if the occasion were more appropriate he would have welcomed a motion for some expression of the gratitude they must all feel to Miss Hardcastle and possibly of congratulations to her on the smooth interaction between her own forces and those of the state. This was a most gratifying feature in the sad story and, he suggested, a good omen for the future. Some decently subdued applause went round the table at this. Mr. Wither then proceeded to speak at some length about the dead man. They had all much regretted Mr. Hingest's resolution to withdraw from the N.I.C.E., while fully appreciating his motives; they had all felt that this official severance would not in the least alter the cordial relations which existed between the deceased and almost all — he thought he could even say all without exception — of his former colleagues in the Institute. The obituary (in Raleigh's fine phrase) was an instrument which the Deputy Director's talents well fitted him to play, and he spoke at great length. He concluded by suggesting that they should all stand in silence for one minute as a token of respect for the memory of William Hingest.

And they did — a world-without-end minute in which odd creakings and breathings became audible, and behind the mask of each glazed and tight-lipped face, shy, irrelevant thoughts of this and that came creeping out as birds and mice creep out again in the clearing of a wood when the

picnickers have gone, and everyone silently assured himself that he, at least, was not being morbid and not thinking about death.

Then there was a stir and a bustle and the committee broke up.

V

The whole process of getting up and doing the “morning jobs” was more cheerful, Jane found, because she had Mrs. Dimble with her. Mark often helped: but as he always took the view — and Jane could feel it even if he did not express it in words — that “anything would do” and that Jane made a lot of unnecessary work and that men could keep house with a tithe of the fuss and trouble which women made about it, Mark’s help was one of the commonest causes of quarrels between them. Mrs. Dimble, on the other hand, fell in with her ways. It was a bright sunny morning, and as they sat down to breakfast in the kitchen Jane was feeling bright herself. During the night her mind had evolved a comfortable theory that the mere fact of having seen Miss Ironwood and “had it all out” would probably stop the dreams altogether. The episode would be closed. And now — there was all the exciting possibility of Mark’s new job to look forward to. She began to see pictures in her mind.

Mrs. Dimble was anxious to know what had happened to Jane at St. Anne’s and when she was going there again. Jane answered evasively on the first question and Mrs. Dimble was too polite to press it. As to the second, Jane thought she wouldn’t “bother” Miss Ironwood again, or wouldn’t “bother” any further about the dreams. She said she had been “silly” but felt sure she’d be all right now. And she glanced at the clock and wondered why Mrs. Maggs hadn’t yet turned up.

“My dear, I’m afraid you’ve lost Ivy Maggs,” said Mrs. Dimble. “Didn’t I tell you they’d taken her house too? I thought you’d understand she wouldn’t be coming to you in future. You see there’s nowhere for her to live in Edgestow.”

“Bother!” said Jane: and added, without much interest in the reply, “What is she doing, do you know?”

“She’s gone out to St. Anne’s.”

“Has she got friends there?”

“She’s gone to the Manor, along with Cecil and me.”

“Do you mean she’s got a job there?”

“Well, yes. I suppose it is a job.”

Mrs. Dimble left at about eleven. She also, it appeared, was going to St. Anne’s, but was first to meet her husband and lunch with him at Northumberland. Jane walked down to the town with her to do a little shopping and they parted at the bottom of Market Street. It was just after this that Jane met Mr. Curry.

“Have you heard the news, Mrs. Studdock?” said Curry. His manner was always important and his tone always vaguely confidential, but this morning they seemed more so than usual.

“No. What’s wrong?” said Jane. She thought Mr. Curry a pompous fool and Mark a fool for being impressed by him. But as soon as Curry began speaking her face showed all the wonder and consternation he could have wished. Nor were they, this time, feigned. He told her that Mr. Hingest had been murdered, some time during the night or in the small hours of that morning. The body had been found lying beside his car, in Potter’s Lane, badly beaten about the head. He had been driving from Belbury to Edgestow. Curry was at the moment hastening back to College to talk to the warden about it: he had just been at the police station. One saw that the murder had already become Curry’s property. The “matter” was, in some indefinable sense, “in his hands,” and he was heavy with responsibility. At another time Jane would have found this amusing. She escaped from him as soon as possible and went into Blackie’s for a cup of coffee. She felt she must sit down.

The death of Hingest in itself meant nothing to her. She had met him only once and she had accepted from Mark the view that he was a disagreeable old man and rather a snob. But the certainty that she herself in her dream had witnessed a real murder shattered at one blow all the consoling pretences with which she had begun the morning. It came over her with sickening clarity that the affair of her dreams, far from being ended, was only beginning. The bright, narrow little life which she had proposed to live was being irremediably broken into. Windows into huge, dark landscapes were opening on every side and she was powerless to shut them. It would drive her mad, she thought, to face it alone. The other alternative was to go back to Miss Ironwood. But that seemed to be only a way of going deeper into all this darkness. This Manor at St. Anne’s — this “kind of company” — was “mixed up in it.” She didn’t want to get drawn in. It was unfair. It wasn’t as if she had asked much of life. All she wanted

was to be left alone. And the thing was so preposterous! The sort of thing which, according to all the authorities she had hitherto accepted, could not really happen.

VI

Cosser — the freckle-faced man with the little wisp of black moustache — approached Mark as he was coming away from the committee.

"You and I have a job to do," he said. "Got to get out a report about Cure Hardy."

Mark was very relieved to hear of a job. But he was a little on his dignity, not having liked Cosser much when he had met him yesterday, and he answered:

"Does that mean I *am* to be in Steele's department after all?"

"That's right," said Cosser.

"The reason I ask," said Mark, "is that neither he nor you seemed particularly keen on having me. I don't want to push myself in, you know. I don't need to stay at the N.I.C.E. at all if it comes to that."

"Well, don't start talking about it here," said Cosser. "Come upstairs."

They were talking in the hall and Mark noticed Wither pacing thoughtfully towards them. "Wouldn't it be as well to speak to *him* and get the whole thing thrashed out?" he suggested. But the Deputy Director, after coming within ten feet of them, had turned in another direction. He was humming to himself under his breath and seemed so deep in thought that Mark felt the moment unsuitable for an interview. Cosser, though he said nothing, apparently thought the same, and so Mark followed him up to an office on the third floor.

"It's about the village of Cure Hardy," said Cosser, when they were seated. "You see, all that land at Bragdon Wood is going to be little better than a swamp once they get to work. Why the hell we wanted to go there I don't know. Anyway, the latest plan is to divert the Wynd: block up the old channel through Edgestow altogether. Look. Here's Shillingbridge, ten miles north of the town. It's to be diverted there and brought down an artificial channel — here, to the east, where the blue line is — and rejoin the old bed down here."

"The university will hardly agree to that," said Mark. "What would Edgestow be without the river?"

“We’ve got the university by the short hairs,” said Cosser. “You needn’t worry about that. Anyway it’s not our job. The point is that the new Wynd must come right through Cure Hardy. Now look at your contours. Cure Hardy is in this narrow little valley. Eh? Oh, you’ve been there, have you? That makes it all the easier. I don’t know these parts myself. Well, the idea is to dam the valley at the southern end and make a big reservoir. You’ll need a new water supply for Edgestow now that it’s to be the second city in the country.”

“But what happens to Cure Hardy?”

“That’s another advantage. We build a new model village (it’s to be called Jules Hardy or Wither Hardy) four miles away. Over here, on the railway.”

“I say, you know, there’ll be the devil of a stink about this. Cure Hardy is famous. It’s a beauty spot. There are the sixteenth-century almshouses, and a Norman church, and all that.”

“Exactly. That’s where you and I come in. We’ve got to make a report on Cure Hardy. We’ll run out and have a look round to-morrow, but we can write most of the report to-day. It ought to be pretty easy. If it’s a beauty spot, you can bet it’s insanitary. That’s the first point to stress. Then we’ve got to get out some facts about the population. I think you’ll find it consists almost entirely of the two most undesirable elements — small *rentiers* and agricultural labourers.”

“The small *rentier* is a bad element, I agree,” said Mark. “I suppose the agricultural labourer is more controversial.”

“The Institute doesn’t approve of him. He’s a very recalcitrant element in a planned community, and he’s always backward. We’re not going in for English agriculture. So, you see, all we have to do is to verify a few facts. Otherwise the report writes itself.”

Mark was silent for a moment or two.

“That’s easy enough,” he said. “But before I get down to it I’d just like to be a bit clearer about my own position. Oughtn’t I to go and see Steele? I don’t fancy settling down to work in this department if he doesn’t want to have me.”

“I wouldn’t do that,” said Cosser.

“Why not?”

“Well, for one thing, Steele can’t prevent you if the D.D. backs you up, as he seems to be doing for the moment. For another, Steele is rather a

dangerous man. If you just go quietly on with the job, he may get used to you in the end: but if you go and see him it might lead to a bust up. There's another thing, too." Cosser paused, picked his nose thoughtfully, and proceeded. "Between ourselves, I don't think things can go on indefinitely in this department in the way they are at present."

The excellent training which Mark had had at Bracton enabled him to understand this. Cosser was hoping to get Steele out of the department altogether. He thought he saw the whole situation. Steele was dangerous while he lasted, but he might not last.

"I got the impression yesterday," said Mark, "that you and Steele hit it off together rather well."

"The great thing here," said Cosser, "is never to quarrel with anyone. I hate quarrels myself. I can get on with anybody — as long as the work gets done."

"Of course," said Mark. "By the way, if we go to Cure Hardy to-morrow I might as well run in to Edgestow and spend the night at home."

For Mark a good deal hung on the answer to this. He might find out whether he were actually under orders from Cosser. If Cosser said "you can't do that" he would at least know where he stood. If Cosser said that Mark couldn't be spared, that would be better still. Or Cosser might reply that he'd better consult the D.D. That also would have made Mark feel surer of his position. But Cosser merely said "Oh," leaving Mark in doubt whether no one needed leave of absence or whether Mark was not sufficiently established as a member of the Institute for his absence to be of any consequence. Then they went to work on their report.

It took them the rest of the day, so that Cosser and he came in to dinner late and without dressing. This gave Mark a most agreeable sensation. And he enjoyed the meal, too. Although he was among men he had not met before, he seemed to know everyone within the first five minutes and to be joining naturally in the conversation. He was learning how to talk their shop.

"How lovely it is!" said Mark to himself next morning as the car left the main road at Duke's Eaton and began descending the bumpy little lane into the long valley where Cure Hardy lay. Mark was not as a rule very sensitive to beauty: but Jane, and his love for Jane, had already awakened him a little in this respect. Perhaps the winter morning sunlight affected him all the more because he had never been taught to regard it as specially beautiful

and it therefore worked on his senses without interference. The earth and sky had the look of things recently washed. The brown fields looked as if they would be good to eat, and those in grass set off the curves of the little hills as close-clipped hair sets off the body of a horse. The sky looked farther away than usual, but also clearer, so that the long, slender streaks of cloud (dark slate colour against the pale blue) had edges as clear as if they were cut out of cardboard. Every little copse was black and bristling as a hairbrush, and when the car stopped in Cure Hardy itself the silence that followed the turning-off of the engine was filled with the noise of rooks that seemed to be calling “Wake! Wake!”

“Bloody awful noise those birds make,” said Cosser. “Got your map? Now . . .” He plunged at once into business.

They walked about that village for two hours and saw with their own eyes all the abuses and anachronisms they came to destroy. They saw the recalcitrant and backward labourer and heard his views on the weather. They met the wastefully supported pauper in the person of an old man shuffling across the courtyard of the alms-houses to fill a kettle, and the elderly *rentier* (to make matters worse she had a fat old dog with her) in earnest conversation with the postman. It made Mark feel as if he were on a holiday, for it was only on holidays that he had ever wandered about an English village. For that reason he felt pleasure in it. It did not quite escape him that the face of the backward labourer was rather more interesting than Cosser’s and his voice a great deal more pleasing to the ear. The resemblance between the elderly *rentier* and Aunt Gilly (when had he last thought of *her*? Good Lord, that took one back . . .) did make him understand how it was possible to like that kind of person. All this did not in the least influence his sociological convictions. Even if he had been free from Belbury and wholly unambitious, it could not have done so, for his education had had the curious effect of making things that he read and wrote more real to him than things he saw. Statistics about agricultural labourers were the substance: any real ditcher, ploughman, or farmer’s boy, was the shadow. Though he had never noticed it himself, he had a great reluctance, in his work, ever to use such words as “man” or “woman.” He preferred to write about “vocational group,” “elements,” “classes,” and “populations”: for, in his own way, he believed as firmly as any mystic in the superior reality of the things that are not seen.

And yet he could not help rather liking this village. When, at one o’clock, he persuaded Cosser to turn into the Two Bells, he even said so. They had both brought sandwiches with them, but Mark felt he would like a pint of beer. In the Two Bells it was very warm and dark, for the window was small. Two labourers (no doubt recalcitrant and backward) were sitting with earthenware mugs at their elbows, munching very thick sandwiches, and a third was standing up at the counter conducting a conversation with the landlord.

“No beer for me, thanks,” said Cosser, “and we don’t want to muck about here too long. What were you saying?”

“I was saying that on a fine morning there is something rather attractive about a place like this, in spite of all its obvious absurdities.”

“Yes, it *is* a fine morning. Makes a real difference to one’s health, a bit of sunlight.”

“I was thinking of the place.”

“You mean *this*?” said Cosser, glancing round the room. “I should have thought it was just the sort of thing we wanted to get rid of. No sunlight, no ventilation. Haven’t much use for alcohol myself (read the Miller Report), but if people have got to have their stimulants, I’d like to see them administered in a more hygienic way.”

“I don’t know that the stimulant is quite the whole point,” said Mark, looking at his beer. The whole scene was reminding him of drinks and talks long ago — of laughter and arguments in undergraduate days. Somehow one had made friends more easily then. He wondered what had become of all that set — of Carey and Wadsden and Denniston, who had so nearly got his own Fellowship.

“Don’t know, I’m sure,” said Cosser, in answer to his last remark. “Nutrition isn’t my subject. You’d want to ask Stock about that.”

“What I’m really thinking about,” said Mark, “is not this pub, but the whole village. Of course you’re quite right: that sort of thing has got to go. But it had its pleasant side. We’ll have to be careful that whatever we’re building up in its place will really be able to beat it on all levels — not merely in efficiency.”

“Oh, architecture and all that,” said Cosser. “Well, that’s hardly my line, you know. That’s more for someone like Wither. Have you nearly finished?”

All at once it came over Mark what a terrible bore this little man was, and in the same moment he felt utterly sick of the N.I.C.E. But he reminded himself that one could not expect to be in the interesting set at once; there would be better things later on. Anyway, he had not burnt his boats. Perhaps he would chuck up the whole thing and go back to Bracton in a day or two. But not at once. It would be only sensible to hang on for a bit and see how things shaped.

On their way back Cosser dropped him near Edgestow station, and as he walked home Mark began to think of what he would say to Jane about Belbury. You will quite misunderstand him if you think he was consciously inventing a lie. Almost involuntarily, as the picture of himself entering the flat, and of Jane's questioning face, arose in his mind, there arose also the imagination of his own voice answering her, hitting off the salient features of Belbury in amusing, confident phrases. This imaginary speech of his own gradually drove out of his mind the real experiences he had undergone. Those real experiences of misgiving and of uneasiness, indeed, quickened his desire to cut a good figure in the eyes of his wife. Almost without noticing it, he had decided not to mention the affair of Cure Hardy; Jane cared for old buildings and all that sort of thing. As a result, when Jane, who was at that moment drawing the curtains, heard the door opening and looked round and saw Mark, she saw a rather breezy and buoyant Mark. Yes, he was almost sure he'd got the job. The salary wasn't absolutely fixed, but he'd be going into that to-morrow. It was a very funny place: he'd explain all that later. But he had already got on to the real people there. Wither and Miss Hardcastle were the ones that mattered. "I *must* tell you about the Hardcastle woman," he said, "she's quite incredible."

Jane had to decide what she would say to Mark much more quickly than he had decided what he would say to her. And she decided to tell him nothing about the dreams or St. Anne's. Men hated women who had things wrong with them, specially queer, unusual things. Her resolution was easily kept, for Mark, full of his own story, asked her no questions. She was not, perhaps, entirely convinced by what he said. There was a vagueness about all the details. Very early in the conversation she said in a sharp, frightened voice (she had no idea how he disliked that voice), "Mark, you haven't given up your Fellowship at Bracton?" He said No, of course not, and went on. She listened only with half her mind. She knew he often had rather grandiose ideas, and from something in his face she divined that during his

absence he had been drinking much more than he usually did. And so, all evening, the male bird displayed his plumage and the female played her part and asked questions and laughed and feigned more interest than she felt. Both were young, and if neither loved very much each was still anxious to be admired.

VII

That evening the Fellows of Bracton sat in Common Room over their wine and dessert. They had given up dressing for dinner, as an economy during the war and not yet resumed the practice, so that their sports coats and cardigans struck a somewhat discordant note against the dark Jacobean panels, the candle-light, and the silver of many different periods. Feverstone and Curry were sitting together. Until that night for about three hundred years this Common Room had been one of the pleasant quiet places of England. It was in Lady Alice, on the ground floor beneath the soler, and the windows at its eastern end looked out on the river and on Bragdon Wood, across a little terrace where the Fellows were in the habit of taking their dessert on summer evenings. At this hour and season these windows were of course shut and curtained. And from beyond them came such noises as had never been heard in that room before — shouts and curses and the sound of lorries heavily drumming past or harshly changing gear, rattling of chains, drumming of mechanical drills, clanging of iron, whistles, thuddings, and an all-pervasive vibration. *Saeva sonare verbera, tum stridor ferri tractaeque catenae,* as Glossop, sitting on the far side of the fire, had observed to Jewel. For beyond those windows, scarcely thirty yards away on the other side of the Wynd, the conversion of an ancient woodland into an inferno of mud and noise and steel and concrete was already going on apace. Several members even of the Progressive Element — those who had rooms on this side of College — had already been grumbling about it. Curry himself had been a little surprised by the form which his dream had taken now that it was a reality, but he was doing his best to brazen it out, and though his conversation with Feverstone had to be conducted at the top of their voices, he made no allusion to this inconvenience.

“It’s quite definite, then,” he bawled, “that young Studdock is not coming back?”

“Oh, quite,” shouted Feverstone. “He sent me a message through a high official to tell me to let the College know.”

“When will he send a formal resignation?”

“Haven’t an earthly! Like all these youngsters he’s very casual about these things. As a matter of fact, the longer he delays the better.”

“You mean it gives us a chance to look about us?”

“Quite. You see, nothing need come before the College till he writes. One wants to have the whole question of his successor taped *before* that.”

“Obviously. That is most important. Once you present an open question to all these people who don’t understand the field and don’t know their own minds you may get anything happening.”

“Exactly. That’s what we want to avoid. The only way to manage a place like this is to produce your candidate — bring the rabbit out of the hat — two minutes after you’ve announced the vacancy.”

“We must begin thinking about it at once.”

“Does his successor have to be a sociologist? I mean is the Fellowship tied to the subject?”

“Oh, not in the least. It’s one of those Paston Fellowships. Why? Had you any subject in mind?”

“It’s a long time since we had anyone in politics.”

“Um . . . yes. There’s still a considerable prejudice against politics as an academic subject. I say, Feverstone, oughtn’t we to give this new subject a leg up?”

“What new subject?”

“Pragmatometry.”

“Well, now, it’s funny you should say that, because the man I was beginning to think of is a politician who has also been going in a good deal for pragmatometry. One could call it a fellowship in social pragmatometry, or something like that.”

“Who is the man?”

“Laird — from Leicester, Cambridge.”

It was automatic for Curry to look very thoughtful, though he had never heard of Laird, and to say “Ah, Laird. Just remind me of the details of his academic career.”

“Well,” said Feverstone, “as you remember, he was in bad health at the time of his finals, and came rather a cropper. The Cambridge examining is so bad nowadays that one hardly counts that. Everyone knew he was one of

the most brilliant men of his year. He was president of the Sphinxes and used to edit *The Adult*. David Laird, you know."

"Yes, to be sure. David Laird. But I say, Dick . . ."

"Yes?"

"I'm not quite happy about his bad degree. Of course I don't attach a superstitious value to examination results any more than you do. Still . . . we have made one or two unfortunate elections lately." Almost involuntarily as he said this, Curry glanced across the room to where Pelham sat — Pelham with his little button-like mouth and his pudding face. Pelham was a sound man: but even Curry found it difficult to remember anything that Pelham had ever done or said.

"Yes, I know," said Feverstone, "but even our worst elections aren't quite so dim as those the College makes when we leave it to itself."

Perhaps because the intolerable noise had frayed his nerves, Curry felt a momentary doubt about the "dimness" of these outsiders. He had dined recently at Northumberland and found Telford dining there the same night. The contrast between the alert and witty Telford whom everyone at Northumberland seemed to know, whom everyone listened to, and the "dim" Telford in Bracton Common Room had perplexed him. Could it be that the silences of all these "outsiders" in his own college, their monosyllabic replies when he condescended and their blank faces when he assumed his confidential manner, had an explanation which had never occurred to him? The fantastic suggestion that he, Curry, might be a bore, passed through his mind so swiftly that a second later he had forgotten it forever. The much less painful suggestion that these traditionalists and research beetles affected to look down on him was retained. But Feverstone was shouting at him again.

"I'm going to be at Cambridge next week," he said, "in fact I'm giving a dinner. I'd as soon it wasn't mentioned here, because, as a matter of fact, the P.M. may be coming, and one or two big newspaper people and Tony Dew. What? Oh, of course you know Tony. That little dark man from the Bank. Laird is going to be there. He's some kind of cousin of the P.M.'s. I was wondering if you could join us. I know David's very anxious to meet you. He's heard a lot about you from some chap who used to go to your lectures. I can't remember the name."

"Well, it would be very difficult. It rather depends on when old Bill's funeral is to be. I should have to be here for that of course. Was there

anything about the inquest on the six o'clock news?"

"I didn't hear. But, of course, that raises a second question. Now that the Blizzard has gone to blow in a better world, we have *two* vacancies."

"I can't hear," yelled Curry. "Is this noise getting worse? Or am I getting deaf?"

"I say, Sub-Warden," shouted Ted Raynor from beyond Feverstone, "what the devil are your friends outside doing?"

"Can't they work without shouting?" asked someone else.

"It doesn't sound like work at all to me," said a third.

"Listen!" said Glossop suddenly, "that's not work. Listen to the feet. It's more like a game of rugger."

"It's getting worse every minute," said Raynor.

Next moment nearly everyone in the room was on his feet. "What was that?" shouted one. "They're murdering someone," said Glossop. "There's only one way of getting a noise like that out of a man's throat." "Where are you going?" asked Curry. "I'm going to see what's happening," said Glossop. "Curry, go and collect all the shooters in College. Someone ring up the police." "I shouldn't go out if I were you," said Feverstone, who had remained seated and was pouring himself out another glass of wine, "it sounds as if the police, or something, was there already."

"What do you mean?"

"Listen. There!"

"I thought that was their infernal drill."

"Listen!"

"My God . . . you really think it's a machine-gun?"

"Look out! Look out!" said a dozen voices at once as a splintering of glass became audible and a shower of stones fell onto the Common Room floor. A moment later several of the Fellows had made a rush for the windows and put up the shutters: and then they were all standing staring at one another, and silent but for the noise of their heavy breathing. Glossop had a cut on the forehead, and on the floor lay the fragments of that famous east window on which Henrietta Maria had once cut her name with a diamond.

FIVE

Elasticity

I

Next morning Mark went back to Belbury by train. He had promised his wife to clear up a number of points about his salary and place of residence, and the memory of all these promises made a little cloud of uneasiness in his mind, but on the whole he was in good spirits. This return to Belbury — just sauntering in and hanging up his hat and ordering a drink — was a pleasant contrast to his first arrival. The servant who brought the drink knew him. Filostrato nodded to him. Women *would* fuss, but this was clearly the real world. After the drink he strolled upstairs to Cosser's office. He was there for only five minutes, and when he came out his state of mind had been completely altered.

Steele and Cosser were both there and both looked up with the air of men who have been interrupted by a total stranger. Neither spoke.

"Ah — good morning," said Mark awkwardly.

Steele finished making a pencil note on some large document which was spread out before him.

"What is it, Mr. Studdock?" he said without looking up.

"I came to see Cosser," said Mark, and then, addressing Cosser, "I've just been thinking over the last section but one in that report — —"

"What report's this?" said Steele to Cosser.

"Oh, I thought," replied Cosser, with a little twisty smile at one corner of his mouth, "that it would be a good thing to put together a report on Cure Hardy in my spare time, and as there was nothing particular to do yesterday I drew it up. Mr. Studdock helped me."

"Well, never mind about that now," said Steele. "You can talk to Mr. Cosser about it some other time, Mr. Studdock. I'm afraid he's busy at present."

"Look here," said Mark, "I think we'd better understand one another. Am I to take it that this report was simply a private hobby of Cosser's? And if so, I should like to have known that before I spent eight hours' work on it. And whose orders am I under?"

Steele, playing with his pencil, looked at Cosser.

“I asked you a question about my position, Mr. Steele,” said Mark.

“I haven’t time for this sort of thing,” said Steele. “If you haven’t any work to do, I have. I know nothing about your position.”

Mark thought, for a moment, of turning to Cosser; but Cosser’s smooth, freckled face and non-committal eyes suddenly filled him with such contempt that he turned on his heel and left the room, slamming the door behind him. He was going to see the Deputy Director.

At the door of Wither’s room he hesitated for a moment because he heard voices from within. But he was too angry to wait. He knocked and entered without noticing whether the knock had been answered.

“My dear boy,” said the Deputy Director, looking up but not quite fixing his eyes on Mark’s face, “I am delighted to see you.” As he heard these words Mark noticed that there was a third person in the room. It was a man called Stone whom he had met at dinner the day before yesterday. Stone was standing in front of Wither’s table rolling and unrolling a piece of blotting-paper with his fingers. His mouth was open, his eyes fixed on the Deputy Director.

“Delighted to see you,” repeated Wither. “All the more so because you — er — interrupted me in what I am afraid I must call a rather painful interview. As I was just saying to poor Mr. Stone when you came in, nothing is nearer to my heart than the wish that this great Institute should all work together like one family . . . the greatest unity of will and purpose, Mr. Stone, the freest mutual confidence . . . that is what I expect of my colleagues. But then as you may remind me, Mr. — ah — Studdock, even in family life there are occasionally strains and frictions and misunderstandings. And that is why, my dear boy, I am not at the moment quite at leisure — don’t go, Mr. Stone. I have a great deal more to say to you.”

“Perhaps I’d better come back later?” said Mark.

“Well, perhaps in all the circumstances . . . it is *your* feelings that I am considering, Mr. Stone . . . perhaps . . . the usual method of seeing me, Mr. Studdock, is to apply to my secretary and make an appointment. Not, you will understand, that I have the least wish to insist on any formalities or would be other than pleased to see you whenever you looked in. It is the waste of *your* time that I am anxious to avoid.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Mark. “I’ll go and see your secretary.”

The secretary's office was next door. When one went in one found not the secretary himself but a number of subordinates who were cut off from their visitors behind a sort of counter. Mark made an appointment for ten o'clock to-morrow which was the earliest hour they could offer him. As he came out he ran into Fairy Hardcastle.

"Hullo, Studdock," said the Fairy. "Hanging round the D.D.'s office? That won't do, you know."

"I have decided," said Mark, "that I must either get my position definitely fixed once and for all or else leave the Institute."

She looked at him with an ambiguous expression in which amusement seemed to predominate. Then she suddenly slipped her arm through his.

"Look, sonny," she said, "you drop all that, see? It isn't going to do you any good. You come along and have a talk with me."

"There's really nothing to talk about, Miss Hardcastle," said Mark. "I'm quite clear in my mind. Either I get a real job here, or I go back to Bracton. That's simple enough: I don't even particularly mind which, so long as I know."

To this the Fairy made no answer, and the steady pressure of her arm compelled Mark, unless he was prepared to struggle, to go with her along the passage. The intimacy and authority of her grip was ludicrously ambiguous, and would have fitted almost equally well the relations of policeman and prisoner, mistress and lover, nurse and child. Mark felt that he would look a fool if they met anyone.

She brought him to her own offices which were on the second floor. The outer office was full of what he had already learned to call Waips, the girls of the Women's Auxiliary Institutional Police. The men of the force, though very much more numerous, were not so often met with indoors, but Waips were constantly seen flitting to and fro wherever Miss Hardcastle appeared. Far from sharing the masculine characteristics of their chief they were (as Feverstone once said) "feminine to the point of imbecility" — small and slight and fluffy and full of giggles. Miss Hardcastle behaved to them as if she were a man, and addressed them in tones of half breezy, half ferocious gallantry. "Cocktails, Dolly," she bawled as they entered the outer office. When they reached the inner office she made Mark sit down but remained standing herself with her back to the fire and her legs wide apart. The drinks were brought and Dolly retired, closing the door behind her. Mark had grumblingly told his grievance on the way.

“Cut it all out, Studdock,” said Miss Hardcastle. “And whatever you do, don’t go bothering the D.D. I told you before that you needn’t worry about all those little third-floor people provided you’ve got him on your side. Which you have at present. But you won’t have if you keep on going to him with complaints.”

“That might be very good advice, Miss Hardcastle,” said Mark, “if I were committed to staying here at all. But I’m not. And from what I’ve seen I don’t like the place. I’ve very nearly made up my mind to go home. Only I thought I’d just have a talk with him first, to make everything clear.”

“Making things clear is the one thing the D.D. can’t stand,” replied Miss Hardcastle. “That’s not how he runs the place. And mind you, he knows what he’s about. It works, sonny. You’ve no idea yet how well it works. As for leaving . . . you’re not superstitious, are you? I am. I don’t think it’s lucky to leave the N.I.C.E. You needn’t bother your head about all the Steeles and Cossers. That’s part of your apprenticeship. You’re being put through it at the moment, but if you hold on you’ll come out above them. All you’ve got to do is to sit tight. Not one of them is going to be left when we get going.”

“That’s just the sort of line Cosser took about Steele,” said Mark, “and it didn’t seem to do me much good when it came to the point.”

“Do you know, Studdock,” said Miss Hardcastle, “I’ve taken a fancy to you. And it’s just as well I have. Because if I hadn’t, I’d be disposed to resent that last remark.”

“I don’t mean to be offensive,” said Mark. “But — damn it all — look at it from my point of view.”

“No good, sonny,” said Miss Hardcastle, shaking her head. “You don’t know enough facts yet for your point of view to be worth sixpence. You haven’t yet realised what you’re in on. You’re being offered a chance of something far bigger than a seat in the cabinet. And there are only two alternatives, you know. Either to be in the N.I.C.E. or to be out of it. And I know better than you which is going to be most fun.”

“I *do* understand that,” said Mark. “But anything is better than being nominally in and having nothing to do. Give me a real place in the Sociological Department and I’ll . . .”

“Rats! That whole Department is going to be scrapped. It had to be there at the beginning for propaganda purposes. But they’re all going to be weeded out.”

“But what assurance have I that I’m going to be one of their successors?”

“You aren’t. They’re not going to have any successors. The real work has nothing to do with all these departments. The kind of sociology we’re interested in will be done by my people — the police.”

“Then where do I come in?”

“If you’ll trust me,” said the Fairy, putting down her empty glass and producing a cheroot, “I can put you on to a bit of your real work — what you were really brought here to do — straight away.”

“What’s that?”

“Alcasan,” said Miss Hardcastle between her teeth. She had started one of her interminable dry smokes. Then, glancing at Mark with a hint of contempt, “You know who I’m talking about, don’t you?”

“You mean the radiologist — the man who was guillotined?” asked Mark, who was completely bewildered.

The Fairy nodded.

“He’s to be rehabilitated,” she said. “Gradually. I’ve got all the facts in the dossier. You begin with a quiet little article — not questioning his guilt, not at first, but just hinting that of course he *was* a member of their quisling government, and there was a prejudice against him. Say you don’t doubt the verdict was just, but it’s disquieting to realise that it would almost certainly have been the same even if he’d been innocent. Then you follow it up in a day or two with an article of quite a different kind. Popular account of the value of his work. You can mug up the facts — enough for *that* kind of article — in an afternoon. Then a letter, rather indignant, to the paper that printed the first article, and going much further. The execution *was* a miscarriage of justice. By that time — —”

“What on earth is the point of all this?”

“I’m telling you, Studdock. Alcasan is to be rehabilitated. Made into a martyr. An irreparable loss to the human race.”

“But what for?”

“There you go again! You grumble about being given nothing to do, and as soon as I suggest a bit of real work you expect to have the whole plan of campaign told you before you do it. It doesn’t make sense. That’s not the way to get on here. The great thing is to do what you’re told. If you turn out to be any good you’ll soon understand what’s going on. But you’ve got to begin by doing the work. You don’t seem to realise what we are. We’re an army.”

“Anyway,” said Mark, “I’m not a journalist. I didn’t come here to write newspaper articles. I tried to make that clear to Feverstone at the very beginning.”

“The sooner you drop all that talk about what you came here to do, the better you’ll get on. I’m speaking for your own good, Studdock. You *can* write. That’s one of the things you’re wanted for.”

“Then I’ve come here under a misunderstanding,” said Mark. The sop to his literary vanity, at that period of his career, by no means compensated for the implication that his sociology was of no importance. “I’ve no notion of spending my life writing newspaper articles,” he said. “And if I had, I’d want to know a good deal more about the politics of the N.I.C.E. before I went in for that sort of thing.”

“Haven’t you been told that it’s strictly non-political?”

“I’ve been told so many things that I don’t know whether I’m on my head or my heels,” said Mark. “But I don’t see how one’s going to start a newspaper stunt (which is about what this comes to) without being political. Is it Left or Right papers that are going to print all this rot about Alcasan?”

“Both, honey, both,” said Miss Hardcastle. “Don’t you understand *anything*? Isn’t it absolutely essential to keep a fierce Left and a fierce Right both on their toes and each terrified of the other? That’s how we get things done. Any opposition to the N.I.C.E. is represented as a Left racket in the Right papers and a Right racket in the Left papers. If it’s properly done you get each side out-bidding the other in support of us — to refute the enemy slanders. *Of course* we’re non-political. The real power always is.”

“I don’t believe you can do that,” said Mark. “Not with the papers that are read by educated people.”

“That shows you’re still in the nursery, lovey,” said Miss Hardcastle. “Haven’t you yet realised that it’s the other way round?”

“How do you mean?”

“Why, you fool, it’s the educated readers who *can* be gulled. All our difficulty comes with the others. When did you meet a workman who believes the papers? He takes it for granted that they’re all propaganda and skips the leading articles. He buys his paper for the football results and the little paragraphs about girls falling out of windows and corpses found in Mayfair flats. He is our problem: we have to recondition him. But the educated public, the people who read the highbrow weeklies, don’t need reconditioning. They’re all right already. They’ll believe anything.”

“As one of the class you mention,” said Mark with a smile, “I just don’t believe it.”

“Good Lord!” said the Fairy, “where are your eyes? Look at what the weeklies have got away with! Look at the *Weekly Question*. There’s a paper for you. When Basic English came in simply as the invention of a free-thinking Cambridge don, nothing was too good for it; as soon as it was taken up by a Tory Prime Minister it became a menace to the purity of our language. And wasn’t the Monarchy an expensive absurdity for ten years? And then, when the Duke of Windsor abdicated, didn’t the *Question* go all monarchist and legitimist for about a fortnight? Did they drop a single reader? Don’t you see that the educated reader *can’t* stop reading the highbrow weeklies whatever they do? He can’t. He’s been conditioned.”

“Well,” said Mark, “this is all very interesting, Miss Hardcastle, but it has nothing to do with me. In the first place, I don’t want to become a journalist at all: and if I did I should like to be an honest journalist.”

“Very well,” said Miss Hardcastle. “All you’ll do is to help to ruin this country, and perhaps the whole human race. Besides dishing your own career.”

The confidential tone in which she had been speaking up till now had disappeared and there was a threatening finality in her voice. The citizen and the honest man which had been awaked in Mark by the conversation, quailed a little: his other and far stronger self, the self that was anxious at all costs not to be placed among the outsiders, leaped up, fully alarmed.

“I don’t mean,” he said, “that I don’t see your point. I was only wondering . . .”

“It’s all one to me, Studdock,” said Miss Hardcastle, seating herself at last at her table. “If you don’t like the job, of course, that’s your affair. Go and settle it with the D.D. He doesn’t *like* people resigning, but, of course, you can. He’ll have something to say to Feverstone for bringing you here. We’d assumed you understood.”

The mention of Feverstone brought sharply before Mark as a reality the plan, which had up till now been slightly unreal, of going back to Edgestow and satisfying himself with the career of a Fellow of Bracton. On what terms would he go back? Would he still be a member of the inner circle even at Bracton? To find himself no longer in the confidence of the Progressive Element, to be thrust down among the Telfords and Jewels, seemed to him unendurable. And the salary of a mere don looked a poor

thing after the dreams he had been dreaming for the last few days. Married life was already turning out more expensive than he had reckoned. Then came a sharp doubt about that two hundred pounds for membership of the N.I.C.E. club. But no — that was absurd. They couldn't possibly dun him for that.

"Well, obviously," he said in a vague voice, "the first thing is to see the D.D."

"Now that you're leaving," said the Fairy, "there's one thing I've got to say. I've laid all the cards on the table. If it should ever enter your head that it would be fun to repeat any of this conversation in the outer world, take my advice and don't. It wouldn't be at all healthy for your future career."

"Oh, but of course," began Mark.

"You'd better run along now," said Miss Hardcastle. "Have a nice talk with the D.D. Be careful not to annoy the old man. He does so hate resignations."

Mark made an attempt to prolong the interview, but the Fairy did not permit this and in a few seconds he was outside the door.

The rest of that day he passed miserably enough, keeping out of people's way as much as possible lest his lack of occupation should be noticed. He went out before lunch for one of those short, unsatisfactory walks which a man takes in a strange neighbourhood when he has brought with him neither old clothes nor a walking-stick. After lunch he explored the grounds. But they were not the sort of grounds that anyone could walk in for pleasure. The Edwardian millionaire who had built Belbury had enclosed about twenty acres with a low brick wall surmounted by an iron railing, and laid it all out in what his contractor called Ornamental Pleasure Grounds. There were trees dotted about and winding paths covered so thickly with round white pebbles that you could hardly walk on them. There were immense flower-beds, some oblong, some lozenge-shaped, and some crescents. There were plantations — slabs would be almost a better word — of that kind of laurel which looks as if it were made of cleverly painted and varnished metal. Massive summer seats of bright green stood at regular intervals along the paths. The whole effect was like that of a municipal cemetery. Yet, unattractive as it was, he sought it again after tea, smoking incessantly, though the wind blew the lit part down the side of his cigarette, and his tongue was already burning. This time he wandered round to the back parts of the house where the newer and lower buildings joined it. Here

he was surprised by a stable-like smell and a medley of growls, grunts, and whimpers — all the signs, in fact, of a considerable zoo. At first he did not understand, but presently he remembered that an immense programme of vivisection, freed at last from Red Tape and from niggling economy, was one of the plans of the N.I.C.E. He had not been particularly interested and had thought vaguely of rats, rabbits, and an occasional dog. The confused noises from within suggested something very different. As he stood there one great yawn-like howl arose, and then, as if it had set the key, all manner of trumpetings, bayings, screams, laughter even, which shuddered and protested for a moment and then died away into mutterings and whines. Mark had no scruples about vivisection. What the noise meant to him was the greatness and grandiosity of this whole undertaking from which, apparently, he was likely to be excluded. There were all sorts of things in there: hundreds of pounds' worth of living animality, which the Institute could afford to cut up like paper on the mere off-chance of some interesting discovery. He *must* get the job: he must somehow solve the problem of Steele. But the noise was disagreeable and he moved away.

II

Mark woke next morning with the feeling that there would certainly be one fence and perhaps two fences for him to get over during the day. The first was his interview with the Deputy Director. Unless he could get a very definite assurance about a post and a salary, he would cut his connection with the Institute. And then, when he reached home, the second fence would be his explanation to Jane of how the whole dream had faded away.

The first real fog of the autumn had descended on Belbury that morning. Mark ate his breakfast by artificial light, and neither post nor newspaper had arrived. It was a Friday and a servant handed him his bill for the portion of a week which he had already spent in the Institute. He put it in his pocket after a hasty glance with a resolution that this, at any rate, should never be mentioned to Jane. Neither the total nor the items were of the sort that wives easily understand. He himself doubted whether there were not some mistake, but he was still at that age when a man would rather be fleeced to his last penny than dispute a bill. Then he finished his second cup of tea, felt for cigarettes, found none, and ordered a new packet.

The odd half-hour which he had to wait before keeping his appointment with the Deputy Director passed slowly. No one spoke to him. Everyone else seemed to be hasting away on some important and well-defined purpose. For part of the time he was alone in the lounge and felt that the servants looked at him as if he ought not to be there. He was glad when he was able to go upstairs and knock on Wither's door.

He was admitted at once, but the conversation was not easy to begin because Wither said nothing, and though he looked up as soon as Mark entered, with an expression of dreamy courtesy, he did not look exactly at Mark, nor did he ask him to sit down. The room, as usual, was extremely hot, and Mark, divided between his desire to make it clear that he had fully resolved to be left hanging about no longer and his equally keen desire not to lose the job if there were any real job going, did not perhaps speak very well. At all events the Deputy Director left him to run down — to pass into disjointed repetitions and thence into complete silence. That silence lasted for some time. Wither sat with his lips pouted and slightly open as though he were humming a tune.

"So I think, sir, I'd better go," said Mark at last, with vague reference to what he had been saying.

"You are Mr. Studdock I think?" said Wither tentatively after another prolonged silence.

"Yes," said Mark impatiently. "I called on you with Lord Feverstone a few days ago. You gave me to understand that you were offering me a position on the sociological side of the N.I.C.E. But as I was saying — —"

"One moment, Mr. Studdock," interrupted the Deputy Director. "It is so important to be perfectly clear what we are doing. You are no doubt aware that in certain senses of the words it would be most unfortunate to speak of my offering anyone a post in the Institute. You must not imagine for a moment that I hold any kind of autocratic position, nor, on the other hand, that the relation between my own sphere of influence and the powers — I am speaking of their temporary powers, you understand — of the permanent committee or those of the Director himself are defined by any hard and fast system of what — er — one might call a constitutional, or even a constitutive, character. For example — —"

"Then, sir, can you tell me whether anyone has offered me a post, and, if so, who?"

“Oh,” said Wither suddenly, changing both his position and his tone as if a new idea had struck him. “There has never been the least question of that sort. It was always understood that your co-operation with the Institute would be entirely acceptable — would be of the greatest value.”

“Well, can I — I mean, oughtn’t we to discuss the details? I mean the salary for example and — who should I be working under?”

“My dear friend,” said Wither with a smile, “I do not anticipate that there will be any difficulty about the — er — the financial side of the matter. As for — —”

“What would the salary be, sir?” said Mark.

“Well, there you touch on a point which it is hardly for me to decide. I believe that members in the position which we had envisaged you as occupying usually draw some sum like fifteen hundred a year, allowing for fluctuations calculated on a very liberal basis. You will find that all questions of that sort will adjust themselves with the greatest ease.”

“But when should I know, sir? Who ought I to go to about it?”

“You mustn’t suppose, Mr. Studdock, that when I mention fifteen hundred I am at all excluding the possibility of some higher figure. I don’t think any of us here would allow a disagreement on that point . . .”

“I should be perfectly satisfied with fifteen hundred,” said Mark. “I wasn’t thinking of that at all. But — but—” the Deputy Director’s expression became more and more courtly and confidential as Mark stammered, so that when he finally blurted out, “I suppose there’d be a contract or something of the kind,” he felt he had committed an unutterable vulgarity.

“Well,” said the Deputy Director, fixing his eyes on the ceiling and sinking his voice to a whisper as though he too were profoundly embarrassed, “that is not exactly the sort of procedure . . . it would, no doubt, be possible . . .”

“And that isn’t the main point, sir,” said Mark reddening. “There’s the question of my status. Am I to work under Mr. Steele?”

“I have here a form,” said Wither, opening a drawer, “which has not, I believe, been ever actually used but which was designed for such agreements. You might care to study it at your leisure and if you are satisfied we could sign it at any time.”

“But about Mr. Steele?”

At that moment a secretary entered and placed some letters on the Deputy Director's table.

"Ah! The post at last!" said Wither. "Perhaps, Mr. Studdock, er — you will have letters of your own to attend to. You are, I believe, married?" A smile of fatherly indulgence overspread his face as he said these words.

"I'm sorry to delay you, sir," said Mark, "but about Mr. Steele? There is no good my looking at the form of agreement until that question is settled. I should feel compelled to refuse any position which involved working under Mr. Steele."

"That opens up a very interesting question about which I should like to have a quite informal and confidential chat with you on some future occasion," said Wither. "For the moment, Mr. Studdock, I shall not regard anything you have said as final. If you care to call on me to-morrow . . ." He became absorbed in the letter he had opened, and Mark, feeling that he had achieved enough for one interview, left the room. Apparently they did really want him at the N.I.C.E. and were prepared to pay a high price for him. He would fight it out about Steele later; meanwhile he would study the form of agreement.

He came downstairs again and found the following letter waiting for him.

Bracton College,
Edgestow,
Oct. 20th, 19 — .

"MY DEAR MARK, — We were all sorry to hear from Dick that you are resigning your Fellowship, but feel quite certain you've made the right decision as far as your own career is concerned. Once the N.I.C.E. is settled in here I shall expect to see almost as much of you as before. If you have not yet sent a formal resignation to N.O., I shouldn't be in any hurry to do so. If you wrote early next term the vacancy would come up at the February meeting and we should have time to get ready a suitable candidate as your successor. Have you any ideas on the subject yourself? I was talking to James and Dick the other night about David Laird (James hadn't heard of him before). No doubt you know his work: could you let me have a line about it, and about his more general qualifications? I may see him next week when I'm running over to Cambridge to dine with the Prime Minister

and one or two others, and I think Dick might be induced to ask Laird as well. You'll have heard that we had rather a shindy here the other night. There was apparently some sort of *fracas* between the new workmen and the local inhabitants. The N.I.C.E. police, who seem to be a nervy lot, made the mistake of firing a few rounds over the head of the crowd. We had the Henrietta Maria window smashed and several stones came into Common Room. Glossop lost his head and wanted to go out and harangue the mob, but I managed to quiet him down. This is in strict confidence. There are lots of people ready to make capital out of it here and to get up a hue and cry against us for selling the Wood. In haste — I must run off and make arrangements about Hingest's funeral. — Yours, G. C. CURRY."

At the first words of this letter a stab of fear ran through Mark. He tried to reassure himself. An explanation of the misunderstanding — which he would write and post immediately — would be bound to put everything right. They couldn't shove a man out of his Fellowship simply on a chance word spoken by Lord Feverstone in Common Room. It came back to him with miserable insight that what he was now calling "a chance word" was exactly what he had learned, in the Progressive Element, to describe as "settling real business in private" or "cutting out the Red Tape," but he tried to thrust this out of his mind. It came back to him that poor Conington had actually lost his job in a way very similar to this, but he explained to himself that the circumstances had been quite different. Conington had been an outsider; he was inside, even more inside than Curry himself. But was he? If he were not "inside" at Belbury (and it began to look as if he were not) was he still in Feverstone's confidence? If he had to go back to Bracton would he find that he retained even his old status there? *Could* he go to Bracton? Yes, of course. He must write a letter at once explaining that he had not resigned, and would not resign, his Fellowship. He sat down at a table in the writing-room and took out his pen. Then another thought struck him. A letter to Curry, saying plainly that he meant to stay at Bracton, would be shown to Feverstone. Feverstone would tell Wither. Such a letter could be regarded as a refusal of any post at Belbury. Well — let it be! He would give up this short-lived dream and fall back on his Fellowship. But how if that were impossible? The whole thing might have been arranged simply to let him fall between the two stools — kicked out of Belbury because he was retaining the Bracton Fellowship and kicked out of Bracton

because he was supposed to be taking a job at Belbury . . . then he and Jane left to sink or swim with not a *sou* between them . . . perhaps with Feverstone's influence against him when he tried to get another job. And where *was* Feverstone?

Obviously, he must play his cards very carefully. He rang the bell and ordered a large whisky. At home he would not have drunk till twelve and even then would have drunk only beer. But now . . . and anyway, he felt curiously chilly. There was no point in catching a cold on top of all his other troubles.

He decided that he must write a very careful and rather elusive letter. His first draught was, he thought, not vague enough: it could be used as a proof that he had abandoned all idea of a job at Belbury. He must make it vaguer. But then, if it were too vague, it would do no good. Oh damn, damn, damn the whole thing. The two hundred pounds entrance fee, the bill for his first week, and snatches of imagined attempts to make Jane see the whole episode in the proper light, kept coming between him and his task. In the end, with the aid of the whisky and of a great many cigarettes, he produced the following letter:

"THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR CO-ORDINATED EXPERIMENTS,
BELBURY.

Oct. 21st, 19 — .

MY DEAR CURRY, — Feverstone must have got me wrong. I never made the slightest suggestion of resigning my Fellowship and don't in the least wish to do so. As a matter of fact, I have almost made up my mind not to take a full-time job with the N.I.C.E. and hope to be back in College in a day or two. For one thing, I am rather worried about my wife's health, and don't like to commit myself to being much away at present. In the second place, though everyone here has been extremely flattering and all press me to stay, the kind of job they want me for is more on the administrative and publicity side and less scientific than I had expected. So be sure and contradict it if you hear anyone saying I am thinking of leaving Edgestow. I hope you'll enjoy your jaunt to Cambridge: what circles you do move in! — Yours, MARK G. STUDDOCK.

P.S. — Laird wouldn't have done in any case. He got a third, and the only published work he's ventured on has been treated as a joke by serious reviewers. In particular, he has no *critical* faculty at all. You can always depend on him for admiring anything that is thoroughly bogus."

The relief of having finished the letter was only momentary, for almost as soon as he had sealed it the problem of how to pass the rest of this day returned to him. He decided to go and sit in his own room: but when he went up there he found the bed stripped and a vacuum cleaner in the middle of the floor. Apparently members were not expected to be in their bedrooms at this time of day. He came down and tried the lounge; the servants were tidying it. He looked into the library. It was empty but for two men who were talking with their heads close together. They stopped and looked up as soon as he entered, obviously waiting for him to go. He pretended that he had come to get a book and retired. In the hall he saw Steele himself standing by the notice-board and talking to a man with a pointed beard. Neither looked at Mark, but as he passed them they became silent. He dawdled across the hall and pretended to examine the barometer. Wherever he went he heard doors opening and shutting, the tread of rapid feet, occasional ringing of telephones; all the signs of a busy institution carrying on a vigorous life from which he was excluded. He opened the front door and looked out: the fog was thick, wet, and cold.

There is one sense in which every narrative is false; it dare not attempt, even if it could, to express the actual movement of time. This day was so long to Mark that a faithful account of it would be unreadable. Sometimes he sat upstairs — for at last they finished "doing" his bedroom — sometimes he went out into the fog, sometimes he hung about the public rooms. Every now and then these would be unaccountably filled up by crowds of talking people, and for a few minutes the strain of trying not to look unoccupied, not to seem miserable and embarrassed, would be imposed on him: then suddenly, as if summoned by their next engagement, all these people would hurry away.

Some time after lunch he met Stone in one of the passages. Mark had not thought of him since yesterday morning, but now, looking at the expression on his face and something furtive in his whole manner, he realised that here, at any rate, was someone who felt as uncomfortable as himself. Stone had the look which Mark had often seen before in unpopular boys or new boys

at school, in “outsiders” at Bracton — the look which was for Mark the symbol of all his worst fears, for to be one who must wear that look was, in his scale of values, the greatest evil. His instinct was not to speak to this man Stone. He knew by experience how dangerous it is to be friends with a sinking man or even to be seen with him: you cannot keep him afloat and he may pull you under. But his own craving for companionship was now acute, so that against his better judgement he smiled a sickly smile and said “Hullo!”

Stone gave a start as if to be spoken to were almost a frightening experience. “Good afternoon,” he said nervously and made to pass on.

“Let’s come and talk somewhere, if you’re not busy,” said Mark.

“I am — that is to say — I’m not quite sure how long I shall be free,” said Stone.

“Tell me about this place,” said Mark. “It seems to me perfectly bloody, but I haven’t yet made up my mind. Come to my room.”

“I don’t think that at all. Not at all. Who said I thought that?” answered Stone very quickly. And Mark did not answer because at that moment he saw the Deputy Director approaching them. He was to discover during the next few weeks that no passage and no public room at Belbury was ever safe from the prolonged indoor walks of the Deputy Director. They could not be regarded as a form of espionage for the creak of Wither’s boots and the dreary little tune which he was nearly always humming would have defeated any such purpose. One heard him quite a long way off. Often one saw him a long way off as well, for he was a tall man — without his stoop he would have been very tall indeed — and often, even in a crowd, one saw that face at a distance staring vaguely towards one. But this was Mark’s first experience of that ubiquity, and he felt that the D.D. could not have appeared at a more unfortunate moment. Very slowly he came towards them, looked in their direction though it was not plain from his face whether he recognised them or not, and passed on. Neither of the young men attempted to resume their conversation.

At tea Mark saw Feverstone and went at once to sit beside him. He knew that the worst thing a man in his position could do was to try to force himself on anyone, but he was now feeling desperate.

“I say, Feverstone,” he began gaily, “I’m in search of information” — and was relieved to see Feverstone smile in reply.

“Yes,” said Mark. “I haven’t had exactly what you’d call a glowing reception from Steele. But the D.D. won’t hear of my leaving. And the Fairy seems to want me to write newspaper articles. What the hell *am* I supposed to be doing?”

Feverstone laughed long and loud.

“Because,” concluded Mark, “I’m damned if I can find out. I’ve tried to tackle the old boy direct . . .”

“God!” said Feverstone, laughing even louder.

“Can one *never* get anything out of him?”

“Not what *you* want,” said Feverstone with a chuckle.

“Well, how the devil is one to find out what’s wanted if nobody offers any information?”

“Quite.”

“Oh, and by the way, that reminds me of something else. How on earth did Curry get hold of the idea that I’m resigning my Fellowship?”

“Aren’t you?”

“I never had the faintest notion of resigning it.”

“Really! I was told distinctly by the Fairy that you weren’t coming back.”

“You don’t suppose I’d do it through her if I *was* going to resign?”

Feverstone’s smile brightened and widened. “It doesn’t make any odds, you know,” he said. “If the N.I.C.E. want you to have a nominal job somewhere outside Belbury, you’ll have one: and if they don’t, you won’t. Just like that.”

“Damn the N.I.C.E. I’m merely trying to retain the Fellowship I already had, which is no concern of theirs. One doesn’t want to fall between two stools.”

“One doesn’t *want* to.”

“You mean?”

“Take my advice and get into Wither’s good books again as soon as you can. I gave you a good start but you seem to have rubbed him up the wrong way. His attitude has changed since this morning. You need to humour him, you know. And just between ourselves, I wouldn’t be too thick with the Fairy: it won’t do you any good higher up. There are wheels within wheels.”

“In the meantime,” said Mark, “I’ve written to Curry to explain that it’s all rot about my resignation.”

“No harm if it amuses you,” said Feverstone, still smiling.

“Well, I don’t suppose College wants to kick me out simply because Curry misunderstood something Miss Hardcastle said to you.”

“You *can’t* be deprived of a fellowship under any statute I know, except for gross immorality.”

“No, of course not. I didn’t mean that. I meant not being re-elected when I come up for re-election next term.”

“Oh. I see.”

“And that’s why I must rely on you to get that idea out of Curry’s head.”

Feverstone said nothing.

“You will be sure,” urged Mark against his own better judgement, “to make it quite clear to him that the whole thing was a misunderstanding.”

“Don’t you know Curry? He will have got his whole wangling-machine going on the problem of your successor long ago.”

“That’s why I am relying on you to stop him.”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

“Why me?”

“Well — damn it all, Feverstone, it was you who first put the idea into his head.”

“Do you know,” said Feverstone, helping himself to a muffin, “I find your style of conversation rather difficult. You will come up for re-election in a few months. The College may decide to re-elect you; or, of course, it may not. As far as I can make out, you are at present attempting to canvass my vote in advance. To which the proper answer is the one I now give — go to hell!”

“You know perfectly well that there was no doubt about my re-election until you spoke a word in Curry’s ear.”

Feverstone eyed the muffin critically. “You make me rather tired,” he said. “If you don’t know how to steer your own course in a place like Bracton, why come and pester me? I’m not a bucking nurse. And for your own good I would advise you in talking to people here to adopt a more agreeable manner than you are using now. Otherwise your life may be, in the famous words, ‘nasty, poor, brutish, and short!’”

“Short?” said Mark. “Is that a threat? Do you mean my life at Bracton or at the N.I.C.E.?”

“I shouldn’t stress the distinction too much if I were you,” said Feverstone.

“I shall remember that,” said Mark, rising from his chair. As he made to move away he could not help turning to this smiling man once again and saying, “It was you who brought me here. I thought you at least were my friend.”

“Incurable romantic!” said Lord Feverstone, deftly extending his mouth to an even wider grin and popping the muffin into it entire.

And so Mark knew that if he lost the Belbury job he would lose his Fellowship at Bracton as well.

III

During these days Jane spent as little time as possible in the flat and kept herself awake reading in bed, as long as she could, each night. Sleep had become her enemy. In the daytime she kept on going to Edgestow — nominally in the attempt to find another “woman who would come in twice a week” instead of Mrs. Maggs. On one of these occasions she was delighted to find herself suddenly addressed by Camilla Denniston. Camilla had just stepped out of a car and next moment she introduced a tall dark man as her husband. Jane saw at once that both the Dennistons were the sort of people she liked. She knew that Mr. Denniston had once been a friend of Mark’s but she had never met him; and her first thought was to wonder, as she had wondered before, why Mark’s present friends were so inferior to those he once had. Carey and Wadsden and the Taylors, who had all been members of the set in which she first got to know him, had been nicer than Curry and Busby, not to mention the Feverstone man — and this Mr. Denniston was obviously very much nicer indeed.

“We were just coming to see you,” said Camilla. “Look here, we have lunch with us. Let’s drive you up to the woods beyond Sandown and all feed together in the car. There’s lots to talk about.”

“Or what about your coming to the flat and lunching with me?” said Jane, inwardly wondering how she could manage this. “It’s hardly a day for picnicking.”

“That only means extra washing-up for you,” said Camilla. “Had we better go somewhere in town, Arthur? — if Mrs. Studdock thinks it’s too cold and foggy.”

“A restaurant would hardly do, Mrs. Studdock,” said Denniston, “we want to be private.” The “we” obviously meant “we three” and established at once a pleasant, business-like unity between them. “As well,” he continued. “Don’t you like a rather foggy day in a wood in autumn? You’ll find we shall be perfectly warm sitting in the car.”

Jane said she’d never heard of anyone liking fogs before but she didn’t mind trying. All three got in.

“That’s why Camilla and I got married,” said Denniston as they drove off. “We both like Weather. Not this or that kind of weather, but just Weather. It’s a useful taste if one lives in England.”

“How ever did you learn to do that, Mr. Denniston?” said Jane. “I don’t think I should ever learn to like rain and snow.”

“It’s the other way round,” said Denniston. “Everyone begins as a child by liking weather. You learn the art of disliking it as you grow up. Haven’t you ever noticed it on a snowy day? The grown-ups are all going about with long faces, but look at the children — and the dogs! *They* know what snow’s made for.”

“I’m sure I hated wet days as a child,” said Jane.

“That’s because the grown-ups kept you in,” said Camilla. “Any child loves rain if it’s allowed to go out and paddle about in it.”

Presently they left the unfenced road beyond Sandown and went bumping across grass and among trees and finally came to rest in a sort of little grassy bay with a fir thicket on one side and a group of beeches on the other. There were wet cobwebs and a rich autumnal smell all round them. Then all three sat together in the back of the car, and there was some unstrapping of baskets, and then sandwiches and a little flask of sherry and finally hot coffee and cigarettes. Jane was beginning to enjoy herself.

“Now!” said Camilla.

“Well,” said Denniston, “I suppose I’d better begin. You know, of course, where we’ve come from, Mrs. Studdock?”

“From Miss Ironwood’s,” said Jane.

“Well, from the same house. But we don’t belong to Grace Ironwood. She and we both belong to someone else.”

“Yes?” said Jane.

“Our little household, or company, or society, or whatever you like to call it is run by a Mr. Fisher-King. At least that is the name he has recently taken. You might or might not know his original name if I told it to you. He

is a great traveller but now an invalid. He got a wound in his foot on his last journey which won't heal."

"How did he come to change his name?"

"He had a married sister in India, a Mrs. Fisher-King. She has just died and left him a large fortune on condition that he took the name. She was a remarkable woman in her way; a friend of the great native Christian mystic whom you may have heard of — the Sura. And that's the point. The Sura had reason to believe, or thought he had reason to believe, that a great danger was hanging over the human race. And just before the end — just before he disappeared — he became convinced that it would actually come to a head in this island. And after he'd gone — —"

"Is he dead?" asked Jane.

"That we don't know," answered Denniston. "Some people think he's alive, others not. At any rate he disappeared. And Mrs. Fisher-King more or less handed over the problem to her brother, to our chief. That, in fact, was why she gave him the money. He was to collect a company round him to watch for this danger, and to strike when it came."

"That's not quite right, Arthur," said Camilla. "He was told that a company would in fact collect round him and he was to be its head."

"I didn't think we need go into that," said Arthur. "But I agree. And now, Mrs. Studdock, this is where you come in."

Jane waited.

"The Sura said that when the time came we should find what he called a seer: a person with second sight."

"Not that we'd *get* a seer, Arthur," said Camilla, "that a seer would turn up. Either we or the other side would get her."

"And it looks," said Denniston to Jane, "as if you were the seer."

"But please," said Jane, smiling, "I don't want to be anything so exciting."

"No," said Denniston. "It's rough luck on you." There was just the right amount of sympathy in his tone.

Camilla turned to Jane and said, "I gathered from Grace Ironwood that you weren't quite convinced you *were* a seer. I mean you thought it might be just ordinary dreams. Do you still think that?"

"It's all so strange and — *beastly*!" said Jane. She liked these people, but her habitual inner prompter was whispering, "Take care. Don't get drawn in. Don't commit yourself to anything. You've got your own life to live."

Then an impulse of honesty forced her to add: “As a matter of fact I’ve had another dream since then. And it turns out to have been true. I saw the murder — Mr. Hingest’s murder.”

“There you are,” said Camilla. “Oh, Mrs. Studdock, you *must* come in. You must, you must. That means we’re right on top of it now. Don’t you see? We’ve been wondering all this time exactly where the trouble is going to begin: and now your dream gives us a clue. You’ve seen something within a few miles of Edgestow. In fact, we are apparently in the thick of it already — whatever it is. And we can’t move an inch without your help. You are our secret service, our eyes. It’s all been arranged long before we were born. Don’t spoil everything. Do join us.”

“No, Cam, don’t,” said Denniston. “The Pendragon — the Head, I mean, wouldn’t like us to do that. Mrs. Studdock must come in freely.”

“But,” said Jane, “I don’t know anything about all this. Do I? I don’t want to take sides in something I don’t understand.”

“But don’t you see,” broke in Camilla, “that you can’t be neutral? If you don’t give yourself to us, the enemy will use you.”

The words “give yourself to us” were ill chosen. The very muscles of Jane’s body stiffened a little: if the speaker had been anyone who attracted her less than Camilla she would have become like stone to any further appeal. Denniston laid a hand on his wife’s arm.

“You must see it from Mrs. Studdock’s point of view, dear,” he said. “You forget she knows practically nothing at all about us. And that is the real difficulty. We can’t tell her much until she has joined. We are, in fact, asking her to take a leap in the dark.” He turned to Jane with a slightly quizzical smile on his face which was, nevertheless, grave. “It *is* like that,” he said, “like getting married, or going into the Navy as a boy, or becoming a monk, or trying a new thing to eat. You can’t know what it’s like until you take the plunge.” He did not perhaps know, or again perhaps he did, the complicated resentments and resistances which his choice of illustrations awoke in Jane, nor could she herself analyse them. She merely replied in a colder voice than she had yet used:

“In that case it is rather difficult to see why one should take it at all.”

“I admit frankly,” said Denniston, “that you can only take it on trust. It all depends really, I suppose, what impression the Dimbles and Grace and we two have made on you: and, of course, the Head himself, when you meet *him*.”

Jane softened again.

“What exactly are you asking me to do?” she said.

“To come and see our chief, first of all. And then — well, to join. It would involve making certain promises to him. He is really a Head, you see. We have all agreed to take his orders. Oh — there’s one other thing. What view would Mark take about it? — he and I are old friends, you know.”

“I wonder,” said Camilla. “Need we go into that for the moment?”

“It’s bound to come up sooner or later,” said her husband.

There was a little pause.

“Mark?” said Jane. “How does he come into it? I can’t imagine what he’d say about all this. He’d probably think we were all off our heads.”

“Would he object, though?” said Denniston. “I mean, would he object to your joining us?”

“If he were at home, I suppose he’d be rather surprised if I announced I was going to stay indefinitely at St. Anne’s. Does ‘joining you’ mean that?”

“Isn’t Mark at home?” asked Denniston with some surprise.

“No,” said Jane. “He’s at Belbury. I think he’s going to have a job in the N.I.C.E.” She was rather pleased to be able to say this for she was well aware of the distinction it implied. If Denniston was impressed he did not show it.

“I don’t think,” he said, “that ‘joining us’ would mean, at the moment, coming to live at St. Anne’s: specially in the case of a married woman. Unless old Mark got really interested and came himself — —”

“That is quite out of the question,” said Jane. (“He doesn’t know Mark,” she thought.)

“Anyway,” continued Denniston, “that is hardly the real point at the moment. Would he object to your joining — putting yourself under the Head’s orders and making the promises and all that?”

“Would he object?” asked Jane. “What on earth would it have to do with him?”

“Well,” said Denniston, hesitating a little, “the Head — or the authorities he obeys — have rather old-fashioned notions. He wouldn’t like a married woman to come in, if it could be avoided, without her husband’s — without consulting — —”

“Do you mean I’m to ask Mark’s *permission*?” said Jane with a strained little laugh. The resentment which had been rising and ebbing, but rising

each time a little more than it ebbed, for several minutes, had now overflowed. All this talk of promises and obedience to an unknown Mr. Fisher-King had already repelled her. But the idea of this same person sending her back to get Mark's permission — as if she were a child asking leave to go to a party — was the climax. For a moment she looked on Mr. Denniston with real dislike. She saw him, and Mark, and the Fisher-King man and this preposterous Indian fakir simply as men — complacent, patriarchal figures making arrangements for women as if women were children or bartering them like cattle. ("And so the king promised that if anyone killed the dragon he would *give* him his daughter in marriage.") She was very angry.

"Arthur," said Camilla, "I see a light over there. Do you think it's a bonfire?"

"Yes, I should say it was."

"My feet are getting cold. Let's go for a little walk and look at the fire. I wish we had some chestnuts."

"Oh, do let's," said Jane.

They got out. It was warmer in the open than it had by now become in the car — warm and full of leavy smells, and dampness, and the small noise of dripping branches. The fire was big and in its middle life — a smoking hillside of leaves on one side and great caves and cliffs of glowing red on the other. They stood round it and chatted of indifferent matters for a time.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Jane presently. "I won't join your — your — whatever it is. But I'll promise to let you know if I have any more dreams of that sort."

"That is splendid," said Denniston. "And I think it is as much as we had a right to expect. I quite see your point of view. May I ask for one more promise?"

"What is that?"

"Not to mention us to anyone."

"Oh, certainly."

Later, when they had returned to the car and were driving back, Mr. Denniston said, "I hope the dreams will not *worry* you much, now, Mrs. Studdock. No: I don't mean I hope they'll stop: and I don't think they will either. But now that you know they are not something in yourself but only things going on in the outer world, nasty things, no doubt, but no worse than lots you read in the papers, I believe you'll find them quite bearable.

The less you think of them as *your dreams* and the more you think of them — well, as news — the better you'll feel about them."

SIX

Fog

I

A night (with little sleep) and half another day dragged past before Mark was able to see the Deputy Director again. He went to him in a chastened frame of mind, anxious to get the job on almost any terms.

"I have brought back the Form, sir," he said.

"What Form?" asked the Deputy Director. Mark found he was talking to a new and different Wither. The absent-mindedness was still there, but the courtliness was gone. The man looked at him as if out of a dream, as if divided from him by an immense distance, but with a sort of dreamy distaste which might turn into active hatred if ever that distance were diminished. He still smiled, but there was something cat-like in the smile; an occasional alteration of the lines about the mouth which even hinted at a snarl. Mark in his hands was as a mouse. At Bracton the Progressive Element, having to face only scholars, had passed for very knowing fellows, but here at Belbury, one felt quite different. Wither said he had understood that Mark had already refused the job. He could not, in any event, renew the offer. He spoke vaguely and alarmingly of strains and frictions, of injudicious behaviour, of the danger of making enemies, of the impossibility that the N.I.C.E could harbour a person who appeared to have quarrelled with all its members in the first week. He spoke even more vaguely and alarmingly of conversations he had had with "your colleagues at Bracton" which entirely confirmed this view. He doubted if Mark were really suited to a learned career, but disclaimed any intention of giving advice. Only after he had hinted and murmured Mark into a sufficient state of dejection did he throw him, like a bone to a dog, the suggestion of an appointment for a probationary period at (roughly — he could not commit the Institute) six hundred a year. And Mark took it. He attempted to get answers even then to some of his questions. From whom was he to take orders? Was he to reside at Belbury?

Wither replied, "I think, Mr. Studdock, we have already mentioned elasticity as the keynote of the Institute. Unless you are prepared to treat

membership as . . . er . . . a vocation rather than a mere appointment, I could not conscientiously advise you to come to us. There are no watertight compartments. I fear I could not persuade the committee to invent for your benefit some cut-and-dried position in which you would discharge artificially limited duties and, apart from those, regard your time as your own. Pray allow me to finish, Mr. Studdock. We are, as I have said before, more like a family, or even, perhaps, like a single personality. There must be no question of 'taking your orders,' as you, rather unfortunately, suggest, from some specified official and considering yourself free to adopt an intransigent attitude to your other colleagues. (I must ask you not to interrupt me, please.) That is not the spirit in which I would wish you to approach your duties. You must make yourself useful, Mr. Studdock — generally useful. I do not think the Institute could allow anyone to remain in it who showed a disposition to stand on his rights . . . who grudged this or that piece of service because it fell outside some function which he had chosen to circumscribe by a rigid definition. On the other hand, it would be quite equally disastrous . . . I mean for yourself, Mr. Studdock: I am thinking throughout of your own interests . . . quite equally disastrous if you allowed yourself ever to be distracted from your real work by unauthorised collaboration . . . or, worse still, interference . . . with the work of other members. Do not let casual suggestions distract you or dissipate your energies. Concentration, Mr. Studdock, concentration. And the free spirit of give and take. If you avoid both the errors I have mentioned then . . . ah, I do not think I need despair of correcting on your behalf certain unfortunate impressions which, we must admit, your behaviour has already produced. No, Mr. Studdock, I can allow no further discussion. My time is already fully occupied. I cannot be continually harassed by conversations of this sort. You must find your own level, Mr. Studdock. Good morning, Mr. Studdock, good morning. Remember what I have said. I am trying to do all I can for you. Good morning."

Mark reimbursed himself for the humiliation of this interview by reflecting that if he were not a married man he would not have borne it for a moment. This seemed to him (though he did not put it into words) to throw the burden upon Jane. It also set him free to think of all the things he would have said to Wither if he hadn't had Jane to bother about — and would still say if ever he got a chance. This kept him in a sort of twilight happiness for several minutes; and when he went to tea he found that the reward for his

submission had already begun. The Fairy signed to him to come and sit beside her.

"You haven't done anything about Alcasan yet?" she asked.

"No," said Mark, "because I hadn't really decided to stay, not until this morning. I could come up and look at your materials this afternoon . . . at least as far as I know, for I haven't yet really found out what I'm supposed to be doing."

"Elasticity, sonny, elasticity," said Miss Hardcastle. "You never will. Your line is to do whatever you're told and above all not to bother the old man."

II

During the next few days several processes, which afterwards came to seem important, were steadily going on.

The fog, which covered Edgestow as well as Belbury, continued and grew denser. At Edgestow one regarded it as "coming up from the river," but in reality it lay all over the heart of England. It blanketed the whole town so that walls dripped and you could write your name in the dampness on tables and men worked by artificial light at midday. The workings, where Bragdon Wood had been, ceased to offend conservative eyes and became mere clangings, thuddings, hootings, shouts, curses, and metallic screams in an invisible world.

Some felt glad that the obscenity should thus be covered, for all beyond the Wynd was now an abomination. The grip of the N.I.C.E. on Edgestow was tightening. The river itself, which had once been brownish-green and amber and smooth-skinned silver, tugging at the reeds and playing with the red roots, now flowed opaque, thick with mud, sailed on by endless fleets of empty tins, sheets of paper, cigarette ends, and fragments of wood, sometimes varied by rainbow patches of oil. Then the invasion actually crossed it. The Institute had bought the land up to the left or eastern bank. But now Busby was summoned to meet Feverstone and a Professor Frost as the representatives of the N.I.C.E., and learned for the first time that the Wynd itself was to be diverted: there was to be no river in Edgestow. This was still strictly confidential, but the Institute had already powers to force it. This being so, a new adjustment of boundaries between it and the College was clearly needed. Busby's jaw fell when he realised that the Institute

wanted to come right up to the College walls. He refused, of course. And it was then that he first heard a hint of requisitioning. The College could sell to-day and the Institute offered a good price: if they did not, compulsion and a merely nominal compensation awaited them. Relations between Feverstone and the Bursar deteriorated during this interview. An extraordinary College meeting had to be summoned, and Busby had to put the best face he could on things to his colleagues. He was almost physically shocked by the storm of hatred which met him. In vain did he point out that those who were now abusing him had themselves voted for the sale of the Wood: but equally in vain did they abuse him. The College was caught in the net of necessity. They sold the little strip on their side of the Wynd which meant so much. It was no more than a terrace between the Eastern walls and the water. Twenty-four hours later the N.I.C.E. boarded over the doomed Wynd and converted the terrace into a dump. All day long workmen were trampling across the planks with heavy loads which they flung down against the very walls of Bracton till the pile had covered the boarded blindness which had once been the Henrietta Maria window and reached almost to the east window of chapel.

In these days many members of the Progressive Element dropped off and joined the opposition. Those who were left were hammered closer together by the unpopularity they had to face. And though the College was thus sharply divided within, yet for the very same reason it also took on a new unity perforce in its relations to the outer world. Bracton as a whole bore the blame for bringing the N.I.C.E. to Edgestow at all. This was unfair, for many high authorities in the University had thoroughly approved Bracton's action in doing so, but now that the result was becoming apparent people refused to remember this. Busby, though he had heard the hint of requisitioning in confidence, lost no time in spreading it through Edgestow common rooms— "It would have done no good if we *had* refused to sell," he said. But nobody believed that this was why Bracton had sold, and the unpopularity of that College steadily increased. The undergraduates got wind of it, and stopped attending the lectures of Bracton dons. Busby, and even the wholly innocent warden, were mobbed in the streets.

The Town, which did not usually share the opinions of the University, was also in an unsettled condition. The disturbance in which the Bracton windows had been broken was taken little notice of in the London papers or even in the *Edgestow Telegraph*. But it was followed by other episodes.

There was an indecent assault in one of the mean streets down by the station. There were two “beatings up” in a public-house. There were increasing complaints of threatening and disorderly behaviour on the part of the N.I.C.E. workmen. But these complaints never appeared in the papers. Those who had actually seen ugly incidents were surprised to read in the *Telegraph* that the new Institute was settling down very comfortably in Edgestow and the most cordial relations developing between it and the natives. Those who had not seen them but only heard of them, finding nothing in the *Telegraph*, dismissed the stories as rumours or exaggerations. Those who had seen them wrote letters to it, but it did not print their letters.

But if episodes could be doubted, no one could doubt that nearly all the hotels of the town had passed into the hands of the Institute, so that a man could no longer drink with a friend in his accustomed bar; that familiar shops were crowded with strangers who seemed to have plenty of money, and that prices were higher; that there was a queue for every omnibus and a difficulty in getting into every cinema. Quiet houses that had looked out on quiet streets were shaken all day long by heavy and unaccustomed traffic: wherever one went one was jostled by crowds of strangers. To a little midland market town like Edgestow even visitors from the other side of the county had hitherto ranked as aliens: the day-long clamour of Northern, Welsh, and even Irish voices, the shouts, the cat-calls, the songs, the wild faces passing in the fog, were utterly detestable. “There’s going to be trouble here” was the comment of many a citizen: and in a few days, “You’d think they *wanted* trouble.” It is not recorded who first said, “We need more police.” And then at last the *Edgestow Telegraph* took notice. A shy little article — a cloud no bigger than a man’s hand — appeared suggesting that the local police were quite incapable of dealing with the new population.

Of all these things Jane took little notice. She was, during these days, merely “hanging on.” Perhaps Mark would summon her to Belbury. Perhaps he would give up the whole Belbury scheme and come home — his letters were vague and unsatisfactory. Perhaps she would go out to St. Anne’s and see the Dennistons. The dreams continued. But Mr. Denniston had been right; it was better when one had given in to regarding them as “news.” If it had not been she could hardly have endured her nights. There was one recurrent dream in which nothing exactly happened. She seemed indeed to be lying in her own bed. But there was someone beside the bed — someone

who had apparently drawn a chair up to the bedside and then sat down to watch. He had a note-book in which he occasionally made an entry. Otherwise he sat perfectly still and patiently attentive — like a doctor. She knew his face already, and came to know it infinitely well: the pince-nez, the well-chiselled, rather white features, and the little pointed beard. And presumably — if he could see her — he must by now know hers equally well: it was certainly herself whom he appeared to be studying. Jane did not write about this to the Dennistons the first time it occurred. Even after the second she delayed until it was too late to post the letter that day. She had a sort of hope that the longer she kept silent the more likely they would be to come in and see her again. She wanted comfort, but she wanted it, if possible, without going out to St. Anne's, without meeting this Fisher-King man and getting drawn into his orbit.

Mark meanwhile was working at the rehabilitation of Alcasan. He had never seen a police dossier before and found it difficult to understand. In spite of his efforts to conceal his ignorance the Fairy soon discovered it. "I'll put you onto the Captain," she said. "He'll show you the ropes." That was how Mark came to spend most of his working hours with her second in command, Captain O'Hara, a big white-haired man with a handsome face, talking in what English people called a Southern brogue and Irish people "a Dublin accent you could cut with a knife." He claimed to be of ancient family and had a seat at Castlemortle. Mark did not really understand his explanations of the dossier, the Q Register, the Sliding File system, and what the Captain called "weeding." But he was ashamed to confess this and so it came about that the whole selection of facts really remained in O'Hara's hands and Mark found himself working merely as a writer. He did his best to conceal this from O'Hara and to make it appear that they were really working together: this naturally made it impossible for him to repeat his original protests against being treated as a mere journalist. He had, indeed, a taking style (which had helped his academic career much more than he would have liked to acknowledge) and his journalism was a success. His articles and letters about Alcasan appeared in papers where he would never have had the *entrée* over his own signature: papers read by millions. He could not help feeling a little thrill of pleasurable excitement.

He also confided to Captain O'Hara his minor financial anxieties. When was one paid? And in the meantime he was short of petty cash. He had lost his wallet on his very first night at Belbury and it had never been recovered.

O’Hara roared with laughter. “Sure you can have any money you like by asking the Steward.”

“You mean it’s then deducted from one’s next cheque?” asked Mark.

“Man,” said the Captain, “once you’re in the Institute, God bless it, you needn’t bother your head about that. Aren’t we going to take over the whole currency question? It’s we that *make* money.”

“Do you mean?” gasped Mark and then paused and added, “But they’d come down on you for the lot if you left?”

“What do you want to be talking about leaving for at all?” said O’Hara. “No one leaves the Institute. At least the only one that ever I heard of was old Hingest.”

About this time, Hingest’s inquest came to an end with a verdict of murder by a person or persons unknown. The funeral service was held in the College chapel at Bracton.

It was the third and thickest day of the fog, which was now so dense and white that men’s eyes smarted from looking at it and all distant sounds were annihilated; only the drip from eaves and trees and the shouts of the workmen outside the chapel were audible within the College. Inside the chapel the candles burned with straight flames, each flame the centre of a globe of greasy luminosity, and cast almost no light on the building as a whole: but for the coughing and shuffling of feet one would not have known that the stalls were quite full. Curry, black-suited and black-gowned and looming unnaturally large, went to and fro at the western end of the chapel, whispering and peering, anxious lest the fog might delay the arrival of what he called the Remains, and not unpleasingly conscious of the weight wherewith his responsibility for the whole ceremony pressed upon his shoulders. Curry was very great at College funerals. There was no taint of the undertaker about him; he was the restrained, manly friend, stricken by a heavy blow but still mindful that he was (in some undefined sense) the father of the College and that amid all the spoils of mutability he, at any rate, must not give way. Strangers who had been present on such occasions often said to one another as they drove off, “You could see that sub-warden chap felt it, though he wasn’t going to show it.” There was no hypocrisy in this. Curry was so used to superintending the lives of his colleagues that it came naturally to him to superintend their deaths; and possibly, if he had possessed an analytic mind, he might have discovered in himself a vague

feeling that his influence, his power of smoothing paths and pulling suitable wires, could not really quite cease once the breath was out of the body.

The organ began to play and drowned both the coughing within and the harsher noises without — the monotonously ill-tempered voices, the rattle of iron, and the vibrating shocks with which loads were flung from time to time against the chapel wall. But the fog had, as Curry feared, delayed the coffin, and the organist had been playing for half an hour before there came a stir about the door and the family mourners, the black-clad Hingests of both sexes with their ram-rod backs and county faces, began to be ushered into the stalls reserved for them. Then came maces and beadles and censors and the Grand Rector of Edgestow, then, singing, the choir, and finally the coffin — an island of appalling flowers drifting indistinctly through the fog, which seemed to have poured in, thicker, colder, and wetter, with the opening of the door. The service began.

Canon Storey took it. His voice was still beautiful, and there was beauty, too, in his isolation from all that company. He was isolated both by his faith and by his deafness. He felt no qualm about the appropriateness of the words which he read over the corpse of the proud old unbeliever, for he had never suspected his unbelief; and he was wholly unconscious of the strange antiphony between his own voice reading and the other voices from without. Glossop might wince when one of those voices, impossible to ignore in the silence of the chapel, was heard shouting, “Take your bucking great foot out of the light or I’ll let you have the whole lot on top of it”; but Storey, unmoved and unaware, replied, “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die.”

“I’ll give you one across your ugly face in a moment, see if I don’t,” said the voice again.

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body,” said Storey.

“Disgraceful, disgraceful,” muttered Curry to the Bursar who sat next to him. But some of the junior Fellows saw, as they said, the funny side of it and thought how Feverstone, who had been unable to be present, would enjoy the story.

III

The pleasantest of the rewards which fell to Mark for his obedience was admission to the library. Shortly after his brief intrusion into it on that

miserable morning he had discovered that this room, though nominally public, was in practice reserved for what one had learned, at school, to call “bloods” and, at Bracton, “the Progressive Element.” It was on the library hearthrug and during the hours between ten and midnight that the important and confidential talks took place; and that was why, when Feverstone one evening sidled up to Mark in the lounge and said, “What about a drink in the library?” Mark smiled and agreed and harboured no resentment for the last conversation he had had with Feverstone. If he felt a little contempt of himself for doing so, he repressed and forgot it: that sort of thing was childish and unrealistic.

The circle in the library usually consisted of Feverstone, the Fairy, Filostrato, and — more surprising — Straik. It was balm to Mark’s wounds to find that Steele never appeared there. He had apparently got in beyond, or behind, Steele, as they had promised him he would; all was working according to programme. One person whose frequent appearance in the library he did not understand was the silent man with the pince-nez and the pointed beard, Professor Frost. The Deputy Director — or, as Mark now called him, the D.D. or Old Man — was often there, but in a peculiar mode. He had a habit of drifting in and sauntering about the room, creaking and humming as usual. Sometimes he came up to the circle by the fire and listened and looked on with a vaguely parental expression on his face: but he seldom said anything and he never joined the party. He drifted away again, and then, perhaps, would return about an hour later and once more potter about the empty parts of the room and once more go away. He had never spoken to Mark since the humiliating interview in his study, and Mark learned from the Fairy that he was still out of favour. “The Old Man will thaw in time,” she said. “But I told you he didn’t like people to talk about leaving.”

The least satisfactory member of the circle in Mark’s eyes was Straik. Straik made no effort to adapt himself to the ribald and realistic tone in which his colleagues spoke. He never drank nor smoked. He would sit silent, nursing a threadbare knee with a lean hand and turning his large unhappy eyes from one speaker to another, without attempting to combat them or to join in the joke when they laughed. Then — perhaps once in the whole evening — something said would start him off: usually something about the opposition of reactionaries in the outer world and the measures which the N.I.C.E. would take to deal with it. At such moments he would

burst into loud and prolonged speech, threatening, denouncing, prophesying. The strange thing was that the others neither interrupted him nor laughed. There was some deeper unity between this uncouth man and them which apparently held in check the obvious lack of sympathy, but what it was Mark did not discover. Sometimes Straik addressed him in particular, talking, to Mark's great discomfort and bewilderment, about resurrection. "Neither a historical fact nor a fable, young man," he said, "but a prophecy. All the miracles . . . shadows of things to come. Get rid of false spirituality. It is all going to happen, here in this world, in the only world there is. What did the Master tell us? Heal the sick, cast out devils, raise the dead. We shall. The Son of Man — that is, Man himself, full grown — has power to judge the world — to distribute life without end, and punishment without end. You shall see. Here and now." It was all very unpleasant.

It was on the day after Hingest's funeral that Mark first ventured to walk into the library on his own; hitherto he had always been supported by Feverstone or Filostrato. He was a little uncertain of his reception, and yet also afraid that if he did not soon assert his right to the *entrée* this modesty might damage him. He knew that in such matters the error in either direction is equally fatal; one has to guess and take the risk.

It was a brilliant success. The circle were all there and before he had closed the door behind him all had turned with welcoming faces and Filostrato had said "*Ecco*" and the Fairy, "Here's the very man." A glow of sheer pleasure passed over Mark's whole body. Never had the fire seemed to burn more brightly nor the smell of the drinks to be more attractive. He was actually being waited for. He was wanted.

"How quick can you write two leading articles, Mark?" said Feverstone.

"Can you work all night?" asked Miss Hardcastle.

"I *have* done," said Mark. "What's it all about?"

"You are satisfied?" asked Filostrato. "That it — the disturbance — must go forward at once, yes?"

"That's the joke of it," said Feverstone. "She's done her work too well. She hasn't read her Ovid. *Ad metam properate simul.*"

"We cannot delay it if we wished," said Straik.

"What are we talking about?" said Mark.

"The disturbances at Edgestow," answered Feverstone.

“Oh. . . . I haven’t been following them very much. Are they becoming serious?”

“They’re going to become serious, sonny,” said the Fairy. “And that’s the point. The real riot was timed for next week. All this little stuff was only meant to prepare the ground. But it’s been going on too well, damn it. The balloon will have to go up to-morrow, or the day after at latest.”

Mark glanced in bewilderment from her face to Feverstone’s. The latter doubled himself up with laughter and Mark, almost automatically, gave a jocular turn to his own bewilderment.

“I think the penny hasn’t dropped, Fairy,” he said.

“You surely didn’t imagine,” grinned Feverstone, “that the Fairy left the initiative with the natives?”

“You mean she herself is the Disturbance?” said Mark.

“Yes, yes,” said Filostrato, his little eyes glistening above his fat cheeks.

“It’s all fair and square,” said Miss Hardcastle. “You can’t put a few hundred thousand imported workmen — —”

“Not the sort you enrolled!” interjected Feverstone.

“Into a sleepy little hole like Edgestow,” Miss Hardcastle continued, “without having trouble. I mean there’d have been trouble anyway. As it turns out, I don’t believe my boys needed to do anything. But, since the trouble was bound to come, there was no harm in seeing it came at the right moment.”

“You mean you’ve *engineered* the disturbances?” said Mark. To do him justice, his mind was reeling from this new revelation. Nor was he aware of any decision to conceal his state of mind: in the snugness and intimacy of that circle he found his facial muscles and his voice, without any conscious volition, taking on the tone of his colleagues.

“That’s a crude way of putting it,” said Feverstone.

“It makes no difference,” said Filostrato. “This is how things have to be managed.”

“Quite,” said Miss Hardcastle. “It’s always done. Anyone who knows police work will tell you. And as I say, the real thing — the big riot — must take place within the next forty-eight hours.”

“It’s nice to get the tip straight from the horse’s mouth!” said Mark. “I wish I’d got my wife out of the town, though.”

“Where does she live?” said the Fairy.

“Up at Sandown.”

“Ah. It’ll hardly affect her. In the meantime, you and I have got to get busy about the account of the riot.”

“But — what’s it all for?”

“Emergency regulations,” said Feverstone. “You’ll never get the powers we want at Edgestow until the Government declares that a state of emergency exists there.”

“Exactly,” said Filostrato. “It is folly to talk of peaceful revolutions. Not that the *canaglia* would always resist — often they have to be prodded into it — but until there is the disturbance, the firing, the barricades — no one gets powers to act effectively. There is not enough what you call weigh on the boat to steer him.”

“And the stuff must be all ready to appear in the papers the very day after the riot,” said Miss Hardcastle. “That means it must be handed in to the D.D. by six to-morrow morning at latest.”

“But how are we to write it to-night if the thing doesn’t even happen till to-morrow at the earliest?”

Everyone burst out laughing.

“You’ll never manage publicity that way, Mark,” said Feverstone. “You surely don’t need to wait for a thing to happen before you tell the story of it!”

“Well, I admit,” said Mark, and his face also was full of laughter, “I had a faint prejudice for doing so, not living in Mr. Dunne’s sort of time nor in looking-glass land.”

“No good, sonny,” said Miss Hardcastle. “We’ve got to get on with it at once. Time for one more drink and you and I’d better go upstairs and begin. We’ll get them to give us devilled bones and coffee at two.”

This was the first thing Mark had been asked to do which he himself, before he did it, clearly knew to be criminal. But the moment of his consent almost escaped his notice; certainly, there was no struggle, no sense of turning a corner. There may have been a time in the world’s history when such moments fully revealed their gravity, with witches prophesying on a blasted heath or visible Rubicons to be crossed. But, for him, it all slipped past in a chatter of laughter, of that intimate laughter between fellow professionals, which of all earthly powers is strongest to make men do very bad things before they are yet, individually, very bad men. A few moments later he was trotting upstairs with the Fairy. They passed Cosser on the way and Mark, talking busily to his companion, saw out of the corner of his eye

that Cosser was watching them. To think that he had once been afraid of Cosser!

"Who has the job of waking the D.D. up at six?" asked Mark.

"Probably not necessary," said the Fairy. "I suppose the old man must sleep sometime. But I've never discovered when he does it."

IV

At four o'clock Mark sat in the Fairy's office re-reading the last two articles he had written — one for the most respectable of our papers, the other for a more popular organ. This was the only part of the night's work which had anything in it to flatter literary vanity. The earlier hours had been spent in the sterner labour of concocting the news itself. These two Leaders had been kept for the end, and the ink was still wet. The first was as follows:

"While it would be premature to make any final comment on last night's riot at Edgestow, two conclusions seem to emerge from the first accounts, which we publish elsewhere, with a clarity which is not likely to be shaken by subsequent developments. In the first place, the whole episode will administer a rude shock to any complacency which may still lurk among us as to the enlightenment of our own civilisation. It must, of course, be admitted that the transformation of a small university town into a centre of national research cannot be carried out without some friction and some cases of hardship to the local inhabitants. But the Englishman has always had his own quiet and humorous way of dealing with frictions and has never showed himself unwilling, when the issue is properly put before him, to make sacrifices much greater than those small alterations of habit and sentiment which progress demands of the people of Edgestow. It is gratifying to note that there is no suggestion in any authoritative quarter that the N.I.C.E. has in any way exceeded its powers or failed in that consideration and courtesy which was expected of it; and there is little doubt that the actual starting-point of the disturbances was some quarrel, probably in a public-house, between one of the N.I.C.E. workmen and some local Sir Oracle. But as the Stagyrite said long ago, disorders which have trivial occasions have deeper causes, and there seems little doubt that this petty *fracas* must have been inflamed, if not exploited, by sectional interests or widespread prejudice.

“It is disquieting to be forced to suspect that the old distrust of planned efficiency and the old jealousy of what is ambiguously called ‘Bureaucracy’ can be so easily, though, we hope, temporarily, revived; though at the same time, this very suspicion, by revealing the gaps and weaknesses in our national level of education, emphasises one of the very diseases which the National Institute exists to cure. That it will cure it we need have no doubt. The will of the nation is behind this magnificent ‘peace-effort,’ as Mr. Jules so happily described the Institute, and any ill-informed opposition which ventures to try conclusions with it will be, we hope gently, but certainly firmly, resisted.

“The second moral to be drawn from last night’s events is a more cheering one. The original proposal to provide the N.I.C.E. with what is misleadingly called its own ‘police force’ was viewed with distrust in many quarters. Our readers will remember that while not sharing that distrust, we extended to it a certain sympathy. Even the false fears of those who love liberty should be respected as we respect even the ill-grounded anxieties of a mother. At the same time we insisted that the complexity of modern society rendered it an anachronism to confine the actual execution of the will of society to a body of men whose real function was the prevention and detection of crime: that the police, in fact, must be relieved sooner or later of that growing body of coercive functions which do not properly fall within their sphere. That this problem has been solved by other countries in a manner which proved fatal to liberty and justice, by creating a real *imperium in imperio*, is a fact which no one is likely to forget. The so-called ‘Police’ of the N.I.C.E. — who should rather be called its ‘Sanitary Executive’ — is the characteristically English solution. Its relation to the National Police cannot, perhaps, be defined with perfect logical accuracy; but, as a nation, we have never been much enamoured of logic. The executive of the N.I.C.E. has no connection with politics: and if it ever comes into relation with criminal justice, it does so in the gracious role of a rescuer — a rescuer who can remove the criminal from the harsh sphere of punishment into that of remedial treatment. If any doubt as to the value of such a force existed, it has been amply set at rest by the episodes at Edgestow. The happiest relations seem to have been maintained throughout between the officers of the Institute and the National Police, who, but for the assistance of the Institute, would have found themselves faced with an impossible situation. As an eminent police

officer observed to one of our representatives this morning, ‘But for the N.I.C.E. Police, things would have taken quite a different turn.’ If in the light of these events it is found convenient to place the whole Edgestow area under the exclusive control of the Institutional ‘police’ for some limited period, we do not believe that the British people — always realists at heart — will have the slightest objection. A special tribute is due to the female members of the force, who appear to have acted throughout with that mixture of courage and common sense which the last few years have taught us to expect of Englishwomen almost as a matter of course. The wild rumours, current in London this morning, of machine-gun fire in the streets and casualties by the hundred, remain to be sifted. Probably, when accurate details are available, it will be found, in the words of a recent Prime Minister, that ‘when blood flowed, it was generally from the nose.’”

The second ran thus:

“What is happening at Edgestow?

“That is the question which John Citizen wants to have answered. The Institute which has settled at Edgestow is a *National* Institute. That means it is yours and mine. We are not scientists and we do not pretend to know what the master-brains of the Institute are thinking. We do know what each man or woman expects of it. We expect a solution of the unemployment problem; the cancer problem; the housing problem; the problems of currency, of war, of education. We expect from it a brighter, cleaner, and fuller life for our children in which we and they can march ever onward and onward and develop to the full the urge of life which God has given each one of us. The N.I.C.E. is the people’s instrument for bringing about all the things we fought for.

“Meanwhile — what is happening at Edgestow?

“Do you believe this riot arose simply because Mrs. Snooks or Mr. Buggins found that the landlords had sold their shop or their allotment to the N.I.C.E.? Mrs. Snooks and Mr. Buggins know better. They know that the Institute means more trade in Edgestow, more public amenities, a larger population, a burst of undreamed-of prosperity. I say these disturbances have been ENGINEERED.

“Therefore I ask yet again: What is happening at Edgestow?

“There are traitors in the camp. I am not afraid to say so, whoever they may be. They may be so-called religious people. They may be financial interests. They may be the old cobweb-spinning professors and philosophers of Edgestow University itself. They may be Jews. They may be lawyers. I don’t care who they are, but I have one thing to tell them. Take care. The people of England are not going to stand this. We are not going to have the Institute sabotaged.

“What is to be done at Edgestow?

“I say, put the whole place under the Institutional Police. Some of you may have been to Edgestow for a holiday. If so, you’ll know as well as I do what it is like — a little, sleepy, country town with half a dozen policemen who have had nothing to do for ten years but stop cyclists because their lamps had gone out. It doesn’t make sense to expect these poor old bobbies to deal with an ENGINEERED RIOT. Last night the N.I.C.E. police showed that they could. What I say is — hats off to Miss Hardcastle and her brave boys, yes, and her brave girls too. Give them a free hand and let them get on with the job. Cut out the red tape.

“I’ve one bit of advice. If you hear anyone backbiting the N.I.C.E. police, tell him where he gets off. If you hear anyone comparing them to the Gestapo or the Ogpu, tell him you’ve heard that one before. If you hear anyone talking about the liberties of England, by which he means the liberties of the obscurantists, the Mrs. Grundies, the Bishops, and the capitalists, watch that man. He’s the enemy. Tell him from me that the N.I.C.E. is the boxing-glove on the democracy’s fist, and if he doesn’t like it he’d best get out of the way.

“Meanwhile — WATCH EDGESTOW.”

It might be supposed that after enjoying these articles in the heat of composition, Mark would awake to reason, and with it to disgust, when reading through the finished product. Unfortunately the process had been almost the reverse. He had become more and more reconciled to the job the longer he worked at it.

The complete reconciliation came when he fair-copied both articles. When a man has crossed the Ts and dotted the Is, and likes the look of his work, he does not wish it to be committed to the waste-paper basket. The more often he re-read the articles the better he liked them. And anyway, the thing was a kind of joke. He had in his mind a picture of himself, old and rich, probably with a peerage, certainly very distinguished, when all this — all the unpleasant side of the N.I.C.E. — was over, regaling his juniors with wild, unbelievable tales of this present time. ("Ah . . . it was a rum show in those early days. I remember once . . .") And then, too, for a man whose writings had hitherto appeared only in learned periodicals or at best in books which only other dons would read, there was an all but irresistible lure in the thought of the daily press — editors waiting for copy — readers all over Europe — something really depending on his words. The idea of the immense dynamo which had been placed for the moment at his disposal, thrilled through his whole being. It was, after all, not so long ago that he had been excited by admission to the Progressive Element at Bracton. But what was the Progressive Element to this? It wasn't as if he were taken in by the articles himself. He was writing with his tongue in his cheek — a phrase that somehow comforted him by making the whole thing appear like a practical joke. And anyway, if he didn't do it, someone else would. And all the while the child inside him whispered how splendid and how triumphantly grown up it was to be sitting like this, so full of alcohol and yet not drunk, writing, with his tongue in his cheek, articles for great newspapers, against time, "with the printer's devil at the door" and all the inner ring of the N.I.C.E. depending on him, and nobody ever again having the least right to consider him a nonentity or cipher.

V

Jane stretched out her hand in the darkness but did not feel the table which ought to have been there at her bed's head. Then with a shock of surprise she discovered that she was not in bed at all, but standing. There was utter darkness all about her and it was intensely cold. Groping, she touched what appeared to be uneven surfaces of stone. The air, also, had some odd quality about it — dead air, imprisoned air, it seemed. Somewhere far away, possibly overhead, there were noises which came to her muffled and shuddering as if through earth. So the worst had happened . . . a bomb had

fallen on the house and she was buried alive. But before she had time to feel the full impact of this idea she remembered that the war was over . . . oh, and all sorts of things had happened since then . . . she had married Mark . . . she had seen Alcasan in his cell . . . she had met Camilla. Then, with great and swift relief she thought, “It is one of my dreams. It is a piece of news. It’ll stop presently. There’s nothing to be frightened of.”

The place, whatever it was, did not seem to be very large. She groped all along one of the rough walls and then, turning at the corner, struck her foot against something hard. She stooped down and felt. There was a sort of raised platform or table of stone, about three feet high. And on it? Did she dare to explore? But it would be worse not to. She began trying the surface of the stone table with her hand, and next moment bit her lip to save herself from screaming, for she had touched a human foot. It was a naked foot, and dead to judge by its coldness. To go on groping seemed the hardest thing she had ever done, but somehow she was impelled to do it. The corpse was clothed in some very coarse stuff which was also uneven, as though it were heavily embroidered, and very voluminous. It must be a very large man, she thought, still groping upwards towards his head. On his chest the texture suddenly changed — as if the skin of some hairy animal had been laid over the coarse robe. So she thought at first; then she realised that the hair really belonged to a beard. She hesitated about feeling the face; she had a fear lest the man should stir or wake or speak if she did so. She therefore became still for a moment. It was only a dream; she could bear it: but it was so dreary and it all seemed to be happening so long ago, as if she had slipped through a cleft in the present, down into some cold, sunless pit of the remote past. She hoped they wouldn’t leave her here long. If only someone would come quickly and let her out. And immediately she had a picture of someone, someone bearded but also (it was odd) divinely young, someone all golden and strong and warm coming with a mighty earth-shaking tread down into that black place. The dream became chaotic at this point. Jane had an impression that she ought to curtsey to this person (who never actually arrived though the impression of him lay bright and heavy on her mind) and felt great consternation on realising that some dim memories of dancing lessons at school were not sufficient to show her how to do so. At this point she woke.

She went into Edgestow immediately after breakfast to hunt, as she now hunted every day, for someone who would replace Mrs. Maggs. At the top

of Market Street something happened which finally determined her to go to St. Anne's that very day and by the 10.23 train. She came to a place where a big car was standing beside the pavement, an N.I.C.E. car. Just as she reached it a man came out of a shop, cut across her path to speak to the chauffeur of the car, and then got in. He was so close to her that, despite the fog, she saw him very clearly, in isolation from all other objects: the background was all grey fog and passing feet and the harsh sounds of that unaccustomed traffic which now never ceased in Edgestow. She would have known him, anywhere: not Mark's face, not her own face in a mirror, was by now more familiar. She saw the pointed beard, the pince-nez, the face which somehow reminded her of a waxworks face. She had no need to think what she would do. Her body, walking quickly past, seemed of itself to have decided that it was heading for the station and thence for St. Anne's. It was something different from fear (though she was frightened, too, almost to the point of nausea) that drove her so unerringly forward. It was a total rejection of, or revulsion from, this man on all levels of her being at once. Dreams sank into insignificance compared with the blinding reality of the man's presence. She shuddered to think that their hands might have touched as she passed him.

The train was blessedly warm, her compartment empty, the fact of sitting down delightful. The slow journey through the fog almost sent her to sleep. She hardly thought about St. Anne's until she found herself there: even as she walked up the steep hill she made no plans, rehearsed nothing that she meant to say, but only thought of Camilla and Mrs. Dimble. The childish levels, the undersoil of the mind, had been turned up. She wanted to be with Nice people, away from Nasty people — that nursery distinction seeming at the moment more important than any later categories of Good and Bad or Friend and Enemy.

She was roused from this state by noticing that it was lighter. She looked ahead: surely that bend in the road was more visible than it ought to be in such a fog? Or was it only that a country fog was different from a town one? Certainly what had been grey was becoming white, almost dazzlingly white. A few yards farther and luminous blue was showing overhead, and trees cast shadows (she had not seen a shadow for days), and then all of a sudden the enormous spaces of the sky had become visible and the pale golden sun, and looking back, as she took the turn to the Manor, Jane saw that she was standing on the shore of a little green sunlit island looking

down on a sea of white fog, furrowed and ridged yet level on the whole, which spread as far as she could see. There were other islands too. That dark one to the West was the wooded hills above Sandown where she had picnicked with the Dennistons; and the far bigger and brighter one to the North was the many-caverned hills — mountains one could nearly call them — in which the Wynd had its source. She took a deep breath. It was the *size* of this world above the fog which impressed her. Down in Edgestow all these days one had lived, even when out of doors, as if in a room, for only objects close at hand were visible. She felt she had come near to forgetting how big the sky is, how remote the horizon.

SEVEN

The Pendragon

I

Before she reached the door in the wall Jane met Mr. Denniston and he guided her into the Manor, not by that door but by the main gate which opened on the same road a few hundred yards farther on. She told him her story as they walked. In his company she had that curious sensation which most married people know of being with someone whom (for the final but wholly mysterious reason) one could never have married but who is nevertheless more of one's own world than the person one has married in fact. As they entered the house they met Mrs. Maggs.

"What? Mrs. Studdock! Fancy!" said Mrs. Maggs.

"Yes, Ivy," said Denniston, "and bringing great news. Things are beginning to move. We must see Grace at once. And is MacPhee about?"

"He's out gardening hours ago," said Mrs. Maggs. "And Dr. Dimble's gone into College. And Camilla's in the kitchen. Shall I send her along?"

"Yes, do. And if you can prevent Mr. Bultitude from butting in — —"

"That's right. I'll keep him out of mischief all right. You'd like a cup of tea, Mrs. Studdock, wouldn't you? Coming by train and all that."

A few minutes later Jane found herself once more in Grace Ironwood's room. Miss Ironwood and the Dennistons all sat facing her so that she felt as if she were the candidate in a *viva voce* examination. And when Ivy Maggs brought in the tea she did not go away again, but sat down as if she also were one of the examiners.

"Now!" said Camilla, her eyes and nostrils widened with a sort of fresh mental hunger — it was too concentrated to be called excitement.

Jane glanced round the room.

"You need not mind Ivy, young lady," said Miss Ironwood. "She is one of our company."

There was a pause. "We have your letter of the 10th," continued Miss Ironwood, "describing your dream of the man with the pointed beard sitting making notes in your bedroom. Perhaps I ought to tell you that he wasn't really there: at least, the Director does not think it possible. But he was

really studying *you*. He was getting information about you from some other source which, unfortunately, was not visible to you in the dream."

"Will you tell us, if you don't mind," said Mr. Denniston, "what you were telling me as we came along."

Jane told them about the dream of the corpse (if it was a corpse) in the dark place and how she had met the bearded man that morning in Market Street: and at once she was aware of having created intense interest.

"Fancy!" said Ivy Maggs. "So we were right about Bragdon Wood!" said Camilla. "It *is* really Belbury," said her husband. "But in that case, where does Alcasan come in?"

"Excuse me," said Miss Ironwood in her level voice, and the others became instantly silent. "We must not discuss the matter here. Mrs. Studdock has not yet joined us."

"Am I to be told nothing?" asked Jane.

"Young lady," said Miss Ironwood, "you must excuse me. It would not be wise at the moment: indeed, we are not at liberty to do so. Will you allow me to ask you two more questions?"

"If you like," said Jane, a little sulkily but only a very little. The presence of Camilla and Camilla's husband somehow put her on her best behaviour.

Miss Ironwood had opened a drawer and for a few moments there was silence while she hunted in it. Then she handed a photograph across to Jane and asked, "Do you recognise that person?"

"Yes," said Jane in a low voice; "that is the man I dreamed of and the man I saw this morning in Edgestow."

It was a good photograph and beneath it was the name Augustus Frost, with a few other details which Jane did not at the moment take in.

"In the second place," continued Miss Ironwood, holding out her hand for Jane to return the photograph, "are you prepared to see the Director . . . *now*?"

"Well — yes, if you like."

"In that case, Arthur," said Miss Ironwood to Denniston, "you had better go and tell him what we have just heard and find out if he is well enough to meet Mrs. Studdock."

Denniston at once rose.

"In the meantime," said Miss Ironwood, "I would like a word with Mrs. Studdock alone." At this the others rose also and preceded Denniston out of

the room. A very large cat which Jane had not noticed before jumped up and occupied the chair which Ivy Maggs had just vacated.

“I have very little doubt,” said Miss Ironwood, “that the Director will see you.”

Jane said nothing.

“And at that interview,” continued the other, “you will, I presume, be called upon to make a final decision.”

Jane gave a little cough which had no other purpose than to dispel a certain air of unwelcome solemnity which seemed to have settled on the room as soon as she and Miss Ironwood were left alone.

“There are also certain things,” said Miss Ironwood, “which you ought to know about the Director before you see him. He will appear to you, Mrs. Studdock, to be a very young man: younger than yourself. You will please understand that this is not the case. He is nearer fifty than forty. He is a man of very great experience, who has travelled where no other human being ever travelled before and mixed in societies of which you and I have no conception.”

“That is very interesting,” said Jane, though displaying no interest.

“And thirdly,” said Miss Ironwood, “I must ask you to remember that he is often in great pain. Whatever decision you come to, I trust you will not say or do anything that may put an unnecessary strain upon him.”

“If Mr. Fisher-King is not well enough to see visitors . . . ,” said Jane vaguely.

“You must excuse me,” said Miss Ironwood, “for impressing these points upon you. I am a doctor, and I am the only doctor in our company. I am therefore responsible for protecting him as far as I can. If you will now come with me I will show you to the Blue Room.”

She rose and held the door open for Jane. They passed out into the plain, narrow passage and thence up shallow steps into a large entrance hall whence a fine Georgian staircase led to the upper floors. The house, larger than Jane had at first supposed, was warm and very silent, and after so many days spent in fog the autumn sunlight, falling on soft carpets and on walls, seemed to her bright and golden. On the first floor, but raised above it by six steps, they found a little square place with white pillars where Camilla, quiet and alert, sat waiting for them. There was a door behind her.

“He will see her,” she said to Miss Ironwood, getting up.

“Is he in much pain this morning?”

“It is not continuous. It is one of his good days.”

As Miss Ironwood raised her hand to knock on the door, Jane thought to herself, “Be careful. Don’t get let in for anything. All these long passages and low voices will make a fool of you if you don’t look out. You’ll become another of this man’s female adorers.” Next moment she found herself going in. It was light — it seemed all windows. And it was warm — a fire blazed on the hearth. And blue was the prevailing colour. Before her eyes had taken it in she was annoyed, and in a way ashamed, to see that Miss Ironwood was curtseying. “I won’t” contended in Jane’s mind with “I can’t”: for it had been true in her dream, she couldn’t.

“This is the young lady, sir,” said Miss Ironwood.

Jane looked; and instantly her world was unmade.

On a sofa before her, with one foot bandaged as if he had a wound, lay what appeared to be a boy, twenty years old.

On one of the long window-sills a tame jackdaw was walking up and down. The light of the fire with its weak reflection, and the light of the sun with its stronger reflection, contended on the ceiling. But all the light in the room seemed to run towards the gold hair and the gold beard of the wounded man.

Of course he was not a boy — how could she have thought so? The fresh skin on his forehead and cheeks and, above all, on his hands, had suggested the idea. But no boy could have so full a beard. And no boy could be so strong. She had expected to see an invalid. Now, it was manifest that the grip of those hands would be inescapable, and imagination suggested that those arms and shoulders could support the whole house. Miss Ironwood at her side struck her as a little old woman, shrivelled and pale — a thing you could have blown away.

The sofa was placed on a kind of dais divided from the rest of the room by a step. She had an impression of massed hangings of blue — later, she saw that it was only a screen — behind the man, so that the effect was that of a throne room. She would have called it silly if, instead of seeing it, she had been told of it by another. Through the window she saw no trees nor hills nor shapes of other houses: only the level floor of mist, as if this man and she were perched in a blue tower overlooking the world.

Pain came and went in his face: sudden jabs of sickening and burning pain. But as lightning goes through the darkness and the darkness closes up again and shows no trace, so the tranquillity of his countenance swallowed

up each shock of torture. How could she have thought him young? Or old either? It came over her, with a sensation of quick fear, that this face was of no age at all. She had, or so she had believed, disliked bearded faces except for old men with white hair. But that was because she had long since forgotten the imagined Arthur of her childhood — and the imagined Solomon too. Solomon . . . for the first time in many years the bright solar blend of king and lover and magician which hangs about that name stole back upon her mind. For the first time in all those years she tasted the word *King* itself with all its linked associations of battle, marriage, priesthood, mercy, and power. At that moment, as her eyes first rested on his face, Jane forgot who she was, and where, and her faint grudge against Grace Ironwood, and her more obscure grudge against Mark, and her childhood and her father's house. It was, of course, only for a flash. Next moment she was once more the ordinary social Jane, flushed and confused to find that she had been staring rudely (at least she hoped that rudeness would be the main impression produced) at a total stranger. But her world was unmade; she knew that. Anything might happen now.

"Thank you, Grace," the man was saying. "Is this Mrs. Studdock?"

And the voice also seemed to be like sunlight and gold. Like gold not only as gold is beautiful but as it is heavy: like sunlight not only as it falls gently on English walls in autumn but as it beats down on the jungle or the desert to engender life or destroy it. And now it was addressing her.

"You must forgive me for not getting up, Mrs. Studdock," it said. "My foot is hurt."

And Jane heard her own voice saying "Yes, sir," soft and chastened like Miss Ironwood's voice. She had meant to say, "Good morning, Mr. Fisher-King," in an easy tone that would have counteracted the absurdity of her behaviour on first entering the room. But the other was what actually came out of her mouth. Shortly after this she found herself seated before the Director. She was shaken: she was even shaking. She hoped intensely that she was not going to cry, or be unable to speak, or do anything silly. For her world was unmade: anything might happen now. If only the conversation were over so that she could get out of that room without disgrace, and go away, not for good, but for a long time.

"Do you wish me to remain, sir?" said Miss Ironwood.

"No, Grace," said the Director, "I don't think you need stay. Thank you."

“And now,” thought Jane, “it’s coming — it’s coming — it’s coming now.” All the most intolerable questions he might ask, all the most extravagant things he might make her do, flashed through her mind in a fatuous medley. For all power of resistance seemed to have been drained away from her and she was left without protection.

II

For the first few minutes after Grace Ironwood had left them alone, Jane hardly took in what the Director was saying. It was not that her attention wandered: on the contrary, her attention was so fixed on him that it defeated itself. Every tone, every look (how could they have supposed she would think him *young*?), every gesture, was printing itself upon her memory: and it was not until she found that he had ceased speaking and was apparently awaiting an answer that she realised she had taken in so little of what he had been saying.

“I — I beg your pardon,” she said, wishing that she did not keep on turning red like a schoolgirl.

“I was saying,” he answered, “that you have already done us the greatest possible service. We knew that one of the most dangerous attacks ever made upon the human race was coming very soon and in this island. We had an idea that Belbury might be connected with it. But we were not certain. We certainly did not know that Belbury was so important. That is why your information is so valuable. But in another way, it presents us with a difficulty. I mean a difficulty as far as you are concerned. We had hoped you would be able to join us — to become one of our army.”

“Can I not, sir?” said Jane.

“It is difficult,” said the Director after a pause. “You see, your husband is in Belbury.”

Jane glanced up. It had been on the tip of her tongue to say “Do you mean that Mark is in any danger?” But she had realised that anxiety about Mark did not, in fact, make any part of the complex emotions she was feeling, and that to reply thus would be hypocrisy. It was a sort of scruple she had not often felt before. Finally she said, “What do you mean?”

“Why,” said the Director, “it would be hard for the same person to be the wife of an official in the N.I.C.E. and also a member of my company.”

“You mean you couldn’t trust me?”

“I mean nothing we need be afraid to speak of. I mean that, in the circumstances, you and I and your husband could not all be trusting one another.”

Jane bit her lip in anger, not at the Director but at Mark. Why should he and his affairs with the Feverstone man intrude themselves at such a moment as this?

“I must do what I think right, mustn’t I?” she said softly. “I mean — if Mark — if my husband — is on the wrong side, I can’t let that make any difference to what *I* do. Can I?”

“You are thinking about what is *right*?” said the Director. Jane started, and flushed. She had not, she realised, been thinking about that.

“Of course,” said the Director, “things might come to such a point that you would be justified in coming here, even wholly against his will, even secretly. It depends on how close the danger is — the danger to us all, and to you personally.”

“I thought the danger was right on top of us now . . . from the way Mrs. Denniston talked.”

“That is just the question,” said the Director, with a smile. “I am not allowed to be *too* prudent. I am not allowed to use desperate remedies until desperate diseases are really apparent. Otherwise we become just like our enemies — breaking all the rules whenever we imagine that it might possibly do some vague good to humanity in the remote future.”

“But will it do anyone any harm if I come here?” asked Jane.

He did not directly answer this. Presently he spoke again.

“It looks as if you will have to go back; at least for the present. You will, no doubt, be seeing your husband again fairly soon. I think you must make at least one effort to detach him from the N.I.C.E.”

“But how can I, sir?” said Jane. “What have I to say to him. He’d think it all nonsense. He wouldn’t believe all that about an attack on the human race.” As soon as she had said it she wondered, “Did that sound cunning?” then, more disconcertingly, “*Was* it cunning?”

“No,” said the Director. “And you must not tell him. You must not mention me nor the company at all. We have put our lives in your hands. You must simply ask him to leave Belbury. You must put it on your own wishes. You are his wife.”

“Mark never takes any notice of what I say,” answered Jane. She and Mark each thought that of the other.

“Perhaps,” said the Director, “you have never asked anything as you will be able to ask this. Do you not *want* to save him as well as yourself?”

Jane ignored this question. Now that the threat of expulsion from the house was imminent, she felt a kind of desperation. Heedless of that inner commentator who had more than once during this conversation shown her her own words and wishes in such a novel light, she began speaking rapidly.

“Don’t send me back,” she said. “I am all alone at home, with terrible dreams. It isn’t as if Mark and I saw much of one another at the best of times. I am so unhappy. He won’t care whether I come here or not. He’d only laugh at it all if he knew. Is it fair that my whole life should be spoiled just because he’s got mixed up with some horrible people? You don’t think a woman is to have no life of her own just because she’s married?”

“Are you unhappy *now*?” said the Director. A dozen affirmatives died on Jane’s lips as she looked up in answer to his question. Then suddenly, in a kind of deep calm, like the stillness at the centre of a whirlpool, she saw the truth, and ceased at last to think how her words might make him think of her, and answered, “No.”

“But,” she added after a short pause, “it will be worse now, if I go back.”

“Will it?”

“I don’t know. No. I suppose not.” And for a little time Jane was hardly conscious of anything but peace and well-being, the comfort of her own body in the chair where she sat, and a sort of clear beauty in the colours and proportions of the room. But soon she began thinking to herself, “This is the end. In a moment he will send for the Ironwood woman to take you away.” It seemed to her that her fate depended on what she said in the next minute.

“But is it really necessary?” she began. “I don’t think I look on marriage quite as you do. It seems to me extraordinary that everything should hang on what Mark says . . . about something he doesn’t understand.”

“Child,” said the Director, “it is not a question of how you or I look on marriage but how my Masters look on it.”

“Someone said they were very old fashioned. But — —”

“That was a joke. They are not old fashioned: but they are very very old.”

“They would never think of finding out first whether Mark and I believed in their ideas of marriage?”

“Well — no,” said the Director with a curious smile. “No. Quite definitely they wouldn’t think of doing that.”

“And would it make no difference to them what a marriage was actually like . . . whether it was a success? Whether the woman loved her husband?”

Jane had not exactly intended to say this: much less to say it in the cheaply pathetic tone which, it now seemed to her, she had used. Hating herself, and fearing the Director’s silence, she added, “But I suppose you will say I oughtn’t to have told you that.”

“My dear child,” said the Director, “you have been telling me that ever since your husband was mentioned.”

“Does it make no difference?”

“I suppose,” said the Director, “it would depend on how he lost your love.”

Jane was silent. Though she could not tell the Director the truth, and indeed did not know it herself, yet when she tried to explore her inarticulate grievance against Mark, a novel sense of her own injustice and even of pity for her husband, arose in her mind. And her heart sank, for now it seemed to her that this conversation, to which she had vaguely looked for some sort of deliverance from all problems, was in fact involving her in new ones.

“It was not his fault,” she said at last. “I suppose our marriage was just a mistake.”

The Director said nothing.

“What would you — what would the people you are talking of — say about a case like that?”

“I will tell you if you really want to know,” said the Director.

“Please,” said Jane reluctantly.

“They would say,” he answered, “that you do not fail in obedience through lack of love, but have lost love because you never attempted obedience.”

Something in Jane that would normally have reacted to such a remark with anger or laughter was banished to a remote distance (where she could still, but only just, hear its voice) by the fact that the word obedience — but certainly not obedience to Mark — came over her, in that room and in that presence, like a strange oriental perfume, perilous, seductive, and ambiguous. . . .

“Stop it!” said the Director sharply.

Jane stared at him, open-mouthed. There were a few moments of silence during which the exotic fragrance faded away.

“You were saying, my dear?” resumed the Director.

“I thought love meant equality,” she said, “and free companionship.”

“Ah, equality!” said the Director. “We must talk of that some other time. Yes; we must all be guarded by equal rights from one another’s greed, because we are fallen. Just as we must all wear clothes for the same reason. But the naked body should be there underneath the clothes, ripening for the day when we shall need them no longer. Equality is not the deepest thing, you know.”

“I always thought that was just what it was. I thought it was in their souls that people were equal.”

“You were mistaken,” said he gravely; “that is the last place where they are equal. Equality before the law, equality of incomes — that is very well. Equality guards life; it doesn’t make it. It is medicine, not food. You might as well try to warm yourself with a blue-book.”

“But surely in marriage . . . ?”

“Worse and worse,” said the Director. “Courtship knows nothing of it; nor does fruition. What has free companionship to do with that? Those who are enjoying something, or suffering something together, are companions. Those who enjoy or suffer one another, are not. Do you not know how bashful friendship is? Friends . . . comrades . . . do not look *at* each other. Friendship would be ashamed. . . .”

“I thought,” said Jane and then stopped.

“I see,” said the Director. “It is not your fault. They never warned you. No one has ever told you that obedience — humility — is an erotic necessity. You are putting equality just where it ought not to be. As to your coming here, that may admit of some doubt. For the present, I must send you back. You can come out and see us. In the meantime, talk to your husband and I will talk to my authorities.”

“When will you be seeing them?”

“They come to me when they please. But we’ve been talking too solemnly about obedience all this time. I’d like to show you some of its drolleries. You are not afraid of mice are you?”

“Afraid of what?” said Jane in astonishment.

“Mice,” said the Director.

“No,” said Jane in a puzzled voice.

The Director struck a little bell beside his sofa which was almost immediately answered by Mrs. Maggs.

“I think,” said the Director, “I should like my lunch now, if you please. They will give you lunch downstairs, Mrs. Studdock — something more substantial than mine. But if you will sit with me while I eat and drink, I will show you some of the amenities of our house.”

Mrs. Maggs presently returned with a tray, bearing a glass, a small flagon of red wine, and a roll of bread. She set it down on a table at the Director’s side and left the room.

“You see,” said the Director, “I live like the King in *Curdie*. It is a surprisingly pleasant diet.” With these words he broke the bread and poured himself out a glass of wine.

“I never read the book you are speaking of,” said Jane.

They talked of the book a little while the Director ate and drank; but presently he took up the plate and tipped the crumbs off on to the floor. “Now, Mrs. Studdock,” he said, “you shall see a diversion. But you must be perfectly still.” With these words he took from his pocket a little silver whistle and blew a note on it. And Jane sat still till the room became filled with silence like a solid thing and there was first a scratching and then a rustling and presently she saw three plump mice working their passage across what was to them the thick undergrowth of the carpet, nosing this way and that so that if their course had been drawn it would have resembled that of a winding river, until they were so close that she could see the twinkling of their eyes and even the palpitation of their noses. In spite of what she had said she did not really care for mice in the neighbourhood of her feet and it was with an effort that she sat still. Thanks to this effort she saw mice for the first time as they really are — not as creeping things but as dainty quadrupeds, almost, when they sat up, like tiny kangaroos, with sensitive kid-gloved forepaws and transparent ears. With quick, inaudible movements they ranged to and fro till not a crumb was left on the floor. Then he blew a second time on his whistle and with a sudden whisk of tails all three of them were racing for home and in a few seconds had disappeared behind the coal box. The Director looked at her with laughter in his eyes. “It is impossible,” thought Jane, “to regard him as old.” “There,” he said, “a very simple adjustment. Humans want crumbs removed; mice are anxious to remove them. It ought never to have been a cause of war. But you see that obedience and rule are more like a dance than a drill — specially between man and woman where the roles are always changing.”

“How huge we must seem to them,” said Jane.

This inconsequent remark had a very curious cause. Hugeness was what she was thinking of and for one moment it had seemed she was thinking of her own hugeness in comparison with the mice. But almost at once this identification collapsed. She was really thinking simply of hugeness. Or rather, she was not thinking of it. She was, in some strange fashion, experiencing it. Something intolerably big, something from Brobdingnag, was pressing on her, was approaching, was almost in the room. She felt herself shrinking, suffocated, emptied of all power and virtue. She darted a glance at the Director which was really a cry for help, and that glance, in some inexplicable way, revealed him as being, like herself, a very small object. The whole room was a tiny place, a mouse’s hole, and it seemed to her to be tilted aslant — as though the insupportable mass and splendour of this formless hugeness, in approaching, had knocked it askew. She heard the Director’s voice.

“Quick,” he said gently, “you must leave me now. This is no place for us small ones, but I am inured. Go!”

III

When Jane left the hilltop village of St. Anne’s and came down to the station she found that, even down there, the fog had begun to lift. Great windows had opened in it, and as the train carried her on it passed repeatedly through pools of afternoon sunlight.

During this journey she was so divided against herself that one might say there were three, if not four, Janes in the compartment.

The first was a Jane simply receptive of the Director, recalling every word and every look, and delighting in them — a Jane taken utterly off her guard, shaken out of the modest little outfit of contemporary ideas which had hitherto made her portion of wisdom, and swept away on the flood-tide of an experience which she did not understand and could not control. For she was trying to control it; that was the function of the second Jane. This second Jane regarded the first with disgust, as the kind of woman, in fact, whom she had always particularly despised. Once, coming out of a cinema, she had heard a little shop girl say to her friend “Oh, wasn’t he lovely! If he’d looked at me the way he looked at her, I’d have followed him to the end of the world.” A little, tawdry, made-up girl, sucking a peppermint.

Whether the second Jane was right in equating the first Jane with that girl, may be questioned, but she did. And she found her intolerable. To have surrendered without terms at the mere voice and look of this stranger, to have abandoned (without noticing it) that prim little grasp on her own destiny, that perpetual reservation, which she thought essential to her status as a grown-up, integrated, intelligent person . . . the thing was utterly degrading, vulgar, uncivilised.

The third Jane was a new and unexpected visitant. Of the first there had been traces in girlhood, and the second was what Jane took to be her "real" or normal self. But the third one, this moral Jane, was one whose existence she had never suspected. Risen from some unknown region of grace or heredity, it uttered all sorts of things which Jane had often heard before but which had never, till that moment, seemed to be connected with real life. If it had simply told her that her feelings about the Director were wrong, she would not have been very surprised, and would have discounted it as the voice of tradition. But it did not. It kept on blaming her for not having similar feelings about Mark. It kept on pressing into her mind those new feelings about Mark, feelings of guilt and pity, which she had first experienced in the Director's room. It was Mark who had made the fatal mistake; she must, must, must be "nice" to Mark. The Director obviously insisted on it. At the very moment when her mind was most filled with another man there arose, clouded with some undefined emotion, a resolution to give Mark much more than she had ever given him before, and a feeling that in so doing she would be really giving it to the Director. And this produced in her such a confusion of sensations that the whole inner debate became indistinct and flowed over into the larger experience of the fourth Jane, who was Jane herself and dominated all the rest at every moment without effort and even without choice.

This fourth and supreme Jane was simply in the state of joy. The other three had no power upon her, for she was in the sphere of Jove, amid light and music and festal pomp, brimmed with life and radiant in health, jocund and clothed in shining garments. She thought scarcely at all of the curious sensations which had immediately preceded the Director's dismissal of her and made that dismissal almost a relief. When she tried to, it immediately led her thoughts back to the Director himself. Whatever she tried to think of led back to the Director himself and, in him, to joy. She saw from the windows of the train the outlined beams of sunlight pouring over stubble or

burnished woods and felt that they were like the notes of a trumpet. Her eyes rested on the rabbits and cows as they flitted by and she embraced them in heart with merry, holiday love. She delighted in the occasional speech of the one wizened old man who shared her compartment and saw, as never before, the beauty of his shrewd and sunny old mind, sweet as a nut and English as a chalk down. She reflected with surprise how long it was since music had played any part in her life, and resolved to listen to many chorales by Bach on the gramophone that evening. Or else — perhaps — she would read a great many Shakespeare sonnets. She rejoiced also in her hunger and thirst and decided that she would make herself buttered toast for tea — a great deal of buttered toast. And she rejoiced also in the consciousness of her own beauty; for she had the sensation — it may have been false in fact, but it had nothing to do with vanity — that it was growing and expanding like a magic flower with every minute that passed. In such a mood it was only natural, after the old countryman had got out at Cure Hardy, to stand up and look at herself in the mirror which confronted her on the wall of the compartment. Certainly she was looking well: she was looking unusually well. And, once more, there was little vanity in this. For beauty was made for others. Her beauty belonged to the Director. It belonged to him so completely that he could even decide not to keep it for himself but to order that it be given to another, by an act of obedience lower, and therefore higher, more unconditional and therefore more delighting, than if he had demanded it for himself.

As the train came into Edgestow Station Jane was just deciding that she would not try to get a ‘bus. She would enjoy the walk up to Sandown. And then — what on earth was all this? The platform, usually almost deserted at this hour, was like a London platform on a bank holiday. “Here you are, mate!” cried a voice as she opened the door, and half a dozen men crowded into her carriage so roughly that for a moment she could not get out. She found difficulty in crossing the platform. People seemed to be going in all directions at once — angry, rough, and excited people. “Get back into the train, quick!” shouted someone. “Get out of the station, if you’re not travelling,” bawled another voice. “What the devil?” asked a third just beside her, and then a woman’s voice said “Oh dear, oh dear! Why don’t they *stop* it!” And from outside, beyond the station came a great roaring noise like the noise of a football crowd. There seemed to be a lot of unfamiliar lights about.

IV

Hours later, bruised, frightened, and tired to death, Jane found herself in a street she did not even know, surrounded by N.I.C.E. policemen and a few of their females, the Waips. Her course had been like that of a man trying to get home along the beach when the tide is coming in. She had been driven out of her natural route along Warwick Street — they were looting shops and making bonfires there — and forced to take a much wider circle, up by the Asylum, which would have brought her home in the end. Then even that wider circle had proved impracticable, for the same reason. She had been forced to try a still longer way round: and each time the tide had got there before her. Finally she had seen Bone Lane, straight and empty and still, and apparently her last chance of getting home that night at all. A couple of N.I.C.E. police — one seemed to meet them everywhere except where the rioting was most violent — had shouted out, “You can’t go down there, miss.” But as they then turned their backs on her, and it was poorly lit, and because she was now desperate, Jane had made a bolt for it. They caught her. And that was how she found herself being taken into a lighted room and questioned by a uniformed woman with short grey hair, a square face, and an unlighted cheroot. The room was in disorder — as if a private house had been suddenly and roughly converted into a temporary police station. The woman with the cheroot took no particular interest until Jane had given her name. Then Miss Hardcastle looked her in the face for the first time, and Jane felt quite a new sensation. She was already tired and frightened, but this was different. The face of the other woman affected her as the face of some men — fat men with small greedy eyes and strange disquieting smiles — had affected her when she was in her ‘teens. It was dreadfully quiet and yet dreadfully interested in her. And Jane saw that some quite new idea was dawning on the woman as she stared at her: some idea that the woman found attractive, and then tried to put aside, and then returned to dally with, and then finally, with a little sigh of contentment, accepted. Miss Hardcastle lit her cheroot and blew a cloud of smoke towards her. If Jane had known how seldom Miss Hardcastle actually smoked she would have been even more alarmed. The policemen and policewomen who surrounded her probably did. The whole atmosphere of the room became a little different.

“Jane Studdock,” said the Fairy. “I know all about you, honey. You’ll be the wife of my friend Mark.” While she spoke she was writing something on a green form.

“*That’s* all right,” said Miss Hardcastle. “You’ll be able to see Hubby again now. We’ll take you out to Belbury to-night. Now, just one question, dear. What were you doing down here at this time of night?”

“I had just come off a train.”

“And where had you been, honey?”

Jane said nothing.

“You hadn’t been getting up to mischief while Hubby was away, had you?”

“Will you please let me go,” said Jane. “I want to get home. I am very tired and it’s very late.”

“But you’re not going home,” said Miss Hardcastle. “You’re coming out to Belbury.”

“My husband has said nothing about my joining him there.”

Miss Hardcastle nodded. “That was one of his mistakes. But you’re coming with *us*.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s an arrest, honey,” said Miss Hardcastle, holding out the piece of green paper on which she had been writing. It appeared to Jane as all official forms always appeared — a mass of compartments, some empty, some full of small print, some scrawled with signatures in pencil, and one bearing her own name; all meaningless.

“O-oh!” screamed Jane suddenly, overcome with a sensation of nightmare, and made a dash for the door. Of course she never reached it. A moment later she came to her senses and found herself held by the two policewomen.

“What a naughty temper!” said Miss Hardcastle playfully. “But we’ll put the nasty men outside, shall we?” She said something and the policemen removed themselves and shut the door behind them. As soon as they were gone Jane felt that a protection had been withdrawn from her.

“Well,” said Miss Hardcastle, addressing the two uniformed girls. “Let’s see. Quarter to one . . . and all going nicely. I think, Daisy, we can afford ourselves a little stand-easy. Be careful, Kitty, make your top grip under her shoulder just a little tighter. That’s right.” While she was speaking Miss Hardcastle was undoing her belt, and when she had finished she removed

her tunic and flung it on the sofa, revealing a huge torso, uncorseted (as Bill the Blizzard had complained), rank, floppy, and thinly clad; such things as Rubens might have painted in delirium. Then she resumed her seat, removed the cheroot from her mouth, blew another cloud of smoke in Jane's direction, and addressed her.

"Where had you been by that train?" she said.

And Jane said nothing; partly because she could not speak, and partly because she now knew beyond all doubt that these were the enemies of the human race whom the Director was fighting against and one must tell them nothing. She did not feel heroic in making this decision. The whole scene was becoming unreal to her: and it was as if between sleeping and waking that she heard Miss Hardcastle say, "I think, Kitty dear, you and Daisy had better bring her round here." And it was still only half real when the two women forced her round to the other side of the table, and she saw Miss Hardcastle sitting with her legs wide apart and settling herself in the chair as if in the saddle; long leather-clad legs projecting from beneath her short skirt. The women forced her on, with a skilled, quiet increase of pressure whenever she resisted, until she stood between Miss Hardcastle's feet: whereupon Miss Hardcastle brought her feet together so that she had Jane's ankles pinioned between her own. This proximity to the ogress affected Jane with such horror that she had no fears left for what they might be going to do with her. And for what seemed an endless time Miss Hardcastle stared at her, smiling a little and blowing smoke in her face.

"Do you know," said Miss Hardcastle at last, "you're rather a pretty little thing in your way."

There was another silence.

"Where had you been by that train?" said Miss Hardcastle.

And Jane stared as if her eyes would start out of her head and said nothing. Then suddenly Miss Hardcastle leant forward and, after very carefully turning down the edge of Jane's dress, thrust the lighted end of the cheroot against her shoulder. After that there was another pause and another silence.

"Where had you been by that train?" said Miss Hardcastle.

How many times this happened Jane could never remember. But somehow or other there came a time when Miss Hardcastle was talking not to her but to one of the women. "What *are* you fussing about, Daisy?" she was saying.

“I was only saying, ma’am, it was five past one.”

“How time flies, doesn’t it, Daisy? But what if it is? Aren’t you comfortable, Daisy? You’re not getting tired, holding a little bit of a thing like her?”

“No ma’am, thank you. But you did say, ma’am, you’d meet Captain O’Hara at one sharp.”

“Captain O’Hara?” said Miss Hardcastle dreamily at first, and then louder, like one waking from a dream. Next moment she had jumped up and was putting on her tunic. “Bless the girl!” she said, “what a pair of blockheads you are! Why didn’t you remind me before?”

“Well, ma’am, I didn’t exactly like to.”

“Like to! What do you think you’re there for?”

“You don’t like us to interrupt, ma’am, sometimes, when you’re examining,” said the girl sulkily.

“Don’t argue!” shouted Miss Hardcastle, wheeling round and hitting her cheek a resounding blow with the palm of her hand. “Look sharp. Get the prisoner into the car. Don’t wait to button up her dress, idiots. I’ll be after you the moment I’ve dipped my face in cold water.”

A few seconds later, pinioned between Daisy and Kitty, but still close to Miss Hardcastle (there seemed to be room for five in the back of the car), Jane found herself gliding through the darkness. “Better go through the town as little as possible, Joe,” said Miss Hardcastle’s voice. “It’ll be pretty lively by now. Go on to the Asylum and work down those little streets at the back of the close.” There seemed to be all sorts of strange noises and lights about. At places, too, there seemed to be a great many people. Then there came a moment when Jane found that the car had drawn up. “What the hell are you stopping for?” said Miss Hardcastle. For a second or two there was no answer from the driver except grunts and the noise of unsuccessful attempts to start up the engine. “What’s the matter?” repeated Miss Hardcastle sharply. “Don’t know, ma’am,” said the driver, still working away. “God!” said Miss Hardcastle, “can’t you even look after a car? Some of you people want a little humane remedial treatment yourselves.” The street in which they were was empty but, to judge by the noise, it was near some other street which was very full and very angry. The man got out, swearing under his breath, and opened the bonnet of the car. “Here,” said Miss Hardcastle. “You two hop out. Look round for another car — anywhere within five minutes’ walk — commandeer it. If you don’t find

one, be back here in ten minutes, whatever happens. Sharp." The two other policemen alighted, and disappeared at the double. Miss Hardcastle continued pouring abuse on the driver and the driver continued working at the engine. The noise grew louder. Suddenly the driver straightened himself and turned his face (Jane saw the sweat shining on it in the lamplight) towards Miss Hardcastle. "Look here, miss," he said, "that's about enough, see? You keep a civil tongue in your head, or else come and mend the bloody car yourself if you're so bloody clever." "Don't you try taking that line with me, Joe," said Miss Hardcastle, "or you'll find me saying a little word about you to the ordinary police." "Well, suppose you do?" said Joe. "I'm beginning to think I might as well be in clink as in your bucking tea-party. 'Struth! I've been in the military police and I've been in the Black and Tans and I've been in the B.U.F., but they were all ruddy picnics to this lot. A man got some decent treatment there. And he had men over him, not a bloody lot of old women." "Yes, Joe," said Miss Hardcastle, "but it wouldn't be clink for you this time if I passed the word to the ordinary cops."

"Oh, it wouldn't, wouldn't it? I might have a story or two to tell about yourself if it came to that."

"For the lord's sake speak to him nicely, ma'am," wailed Kitty. "They're coming. We'll catch it proper." And in fact men running, by twos and threes, had begun to trickle into the street.

"Foot it, girls," said Miss Hardcastle. "Sharp's the word. This way."

Jane found herself hustled out of the car and hurried along between Daisy and Kitty. Miss Hardcastle walked in front. The little party darted across the street and up an alley on the far side.

"Any of you know the way here?" asked Miss Hardcastle when they had walked a few steps.

"Don't know, I'm sure, ma'am," said Daisy.

"I'm a stranger here myself, ma'am," said Kitty.

"Nice useful lot I've got," said Miss Hardcastle. "Is there anything you do know?"

"It doesn't seem to go no farther, ma'am," said Kitty.

The alley had indeed turned out to be a dead end. Miss Hardcastle stood still for a moment. Unlike her subordinates, she did not seem to be frightened, but only pleasantly excited, and rather amused at the white faces and shaky voices of the girls.

“Well,” she said, “this is what I call a night out. You’re seeing life, Daisy, aren’t you? I wonder are any of these houses empty? All locked anyway. Perhaps we’d best stay where we are.”

The shouting in the street they had left had grown louder and they could see a confused mass of humanity surging vaguely in a westward direction. Suddenly it became much louder still and angrier.

“They’ve caught Joe,” said Miss Hardcastle. “If he can make himself heard he’ll send them up here. Blast! This means losing the prisoner. Stop blubbering, Daisy, you little fool. Quick. We must go down into the crowd separately. We’ve a very good chance of getting through. Keep your heads. Don’t shoot, whatever you do. Try to get to Billingham at the cross roads. Ta-ta Babs! The quieter you keep the less likely we are to meet again.”

Miss Hardcastle set off at once. Jane saw her stand for a few seconds on the fringes of the crowd and then disappear into it. The two girls hesitated and then followed. Jane sat down on a doorstep. The burns were painful where her dress had rubbed against them, but what chiefly troubled her was extreme weariness. She was also deadly cold and a little sick. But, above all, tired; so tired she could drop asleep almost. . . .

She shook herself. There was complete silence all about her: she was colder than she had ever been before and her limbs ached. “I believe I *have* been asleep,” she thought. She rose, stretched herself, and walked down the desolate lamp-lit alley into the larger street. It was quite empty except for one man in a railway uniform who said “Good morning, miss” as he walked smartly past. She stood for a moment, undecided, and then began to walk slowly to her right. She put her hand in the pocket of the coat which Daisy and Kitty had flung round her before leaving the flat and found three-quarters of a large slab of chocolate. She was ravenous and began munching it. Just as she finished she was overtaken by a car which drew up shortly after it had passed her. “Are you all right?” said a man, poking his head out.

“Were you hurt in the riot?” said a woman’s voice from within.

“No . . . not much . . . I don’t know,” said Jane stupidly.

The man stared at her and then got out. “I say,” he said, “You don’t look too good. Are you sure you’re quite well?” Then he turned and spoke to the woman inside. It seemed so long to Jane since she had heard kind, or even sane, voices that she felt like crying. The unknown couple made her sit in the car and gave her brandy and, after that, sandwiches. Finally they asked if they could give her a lift home. Where was her home? And Jane,

somewhat to her surprise, heard her own voice very sleepily answering, “The Manor, at St. Anne’s.” “That’s fine,” said the man, “We’re making for Birmingham and we have to pass it.” Then Jane fell asleep at once again, and awoke only to find herself entering a lighted doorway and being received by a woman in pyjamas and an overcoat who turned out to be Mrs. Maggs. But she was too tired to remember how or where she got to bed.

EIGHT

Moonlight at Belbury

I

“I am the last person, Miss Hardcastle,” said the Deputy Director, “to wish to interfere with your — er — private pleasures. But, really! . . .” It was some hours before breakfast-time and the old gentleman was fully dressed and unshaven. But if he had been up all night, it was odd that he had let his fire out. He and the Fairy were standing by a cold and blackened grate in his study.

“She can’t be far away,” said Fairy Hardcastle. “We’ll pick her up some other time. It was well worth trying. If I’d got out of her where she’d been — and I should have got it if I’d had a few minutes longer — why, it might have turned out to be enemy headquarters. We might have rounded up the whole gang.”

“It was hardly a suitable occasion . . .” began Wither, but she interrupted him.

“We haven’t so much time to waste, you know. You tell me Frost is already complaining that the woman’s mind is less accessible. And according to your own metapsychology, or whatever you call the damned jargon, that means she’s falling under the influence of the other side. You told me that yourself! Where’ll we be if you lose touch with her mind before I’ve got her body locked up here?”

“I am always, of course,” said Wither, “most ready and — er — interested to hear expressions of your own opinions and would not for a moment deny that they are, in certain respects, of course, if not in all, of a very real value. On the other hand, there are matters on which your — ah — necessarily specialised experience does not entirely qualify you. . . . An arrest was not contemplated at this stage. The Head will, I fear, take the view that you have exceeded your authority. Trespassed beyond your proper sphere, Miss Hardcastle. I do not say that I necessarily agree with him. But we must *all* agree that unauthorised action — —”

“Oh, cut it out, Wither!” said the Fairy, seating herself on the side of the table. “Try that game on the Steeles and Stones. I know too much about it.

It’s no bloody good trying the elasticity stunt on me. It was a golden opportunity, running into that girl. If I hadn’t taken it you’d have talked about lack of initiative: as I did, you talk about exceeding my authority. You can’t frighten me. I know bloody well we’re all for it if the N.I.C.E. fails: and in the meantime I’d like to see you do without me. We’ve got to get the girl, haven’t we?”

“But not by an arrest. We have always deprecated anything like violence. If a mere arrest could have secured the — er — goodwill and collaboration of Mrs. Studdock, we should hardly have embarrassed ourselves with the presence of her husband. And even supposing, merely, of course, for the purpose of argument, that your action in arresting her could be justified, I am afraid your conduct of the affair after that is open to serious criticism.”

“I couldn’t tell that the bucking car was going to break down, could I?”

“I do not think,” said Wither, “the Head could be induced to regard that as the only miscarriage. Once the slightest resistance on this woman’s part developed, it was not, in my opinion, reasonable to expect success by the method you employed. As you are aware, I always deplore anything that is not perfectly humane: but that is quite consistent with the position that if more drastic expedients have to be used then they must be used thoroughly. *Moderate* pain, such as any ordinary degree of endurance can resist, is always a mistake. It is no true kindness to the prisoner. The more scientific and, may I add, more civilised facilities for coercive examination which we have placed at your disposal here, might have been successful. I am not speaking officially, Miss Hardcastle, and I would not in any sense attempt to anticipate the reactions of our Head. But I should not be doing my duty if I failed to remind you that complaints from that quarter have already been made, though not, of course, minuted, as to your tendency to allow a certain — er — emotional excitement in the disciplinary or remedial side of your work to distract you from the demands of policy.”

“You won’t find anyone can do a job like mine well unless they get some kick out of it,” said the Fairy sulkily.

The Deputy Director looked at his watch.

“Anyway,” said the Fairy, “what does the Head want to see me *now* for? I’ve been on my feet the whole bloody night. I might be allowed a bath and some breakfast.”

“The path of duty, Miss Hardcastle,” said Wither, “can never be an easy one. You will not forget that punctuality is one of the points on which

emphasis has sometimes been laid."

Miss Hardcastle got up and rubbed her face with her hands. "Well, I must have something to drink before I go in," she said. Wither held out his hands in deprecation.

"Come on, Wither. I *must*," said Miss Hardcastle.

"You don't think he'll smell it?" said Wither.

"I'm not going in without it, anyway," said she.

The old man unlocked his cupboard and gave her whisky. Then the two left the study and went a long way, right over to the other side of the house where it joined on to the actual Blood Transfusion Offices. It was all dark at this hour in the morning, and they went by the light of Miss Hardcastle's torch — on through carpeted and pictured passages into blank passages with rubberoid floors and distempered walls and then through a door they had to unlock, and then through another. All the way Miss Hardcastle's booted feet made a noise, but the slippered feet of the Deputy Director made no noise at all. At last they came to a place where the lights were on and there was a mixture of animal and chemical smells, and then to a door which was opened to them after they had parleyed through a speaking tube. Filostrato, wearing a white coat, confronted them in the doorway.

"Enter," said Filostrato. "He expect you for some time."

"Is it in a bad temper?" said Miss Hardcastle.

"Sh!" said Wither. "And in any case, my dear lady, I don't think that is quite the way in which one should speak of our Head. His sufferings — in his peculiar condition, you know — —"

"You are to go in at once," said Filostrato, "as soon as you have made yourselves ready."

"Stop! Half a moment," said Miss Hardcastle suddenly.

"What is it? Be quick, please," said Filostrato.

"I'm going to be sick."

"You cannot be sick here. Go back. I will give you some X54 at once."

"It's all right now," said Miss Hardcastle. "It was only momentary. It'd take more than this to upset me."

"Silence, please," said the Italian. "Do not attempt to open the second door until my assistant has shut the first one behind you. Do not speak more than you can help. Do not even say yes when you are given an order. The Head will assume your obedience. Do not make sudden movements, do not get too close, do not shout, and, above all, do not argue. Now!"

II

Long after sunrise there came into Jane's sleeping mind a sensation which, had she put it into words, would have sung, "Be glad thou sleeper and thy sorrow offcast. I am the gate to all good adventure." And after she had waked and found herself lying in pleasant languor with winter morning sunlight falling across her bed, the mood continued. "He *must* let me stay here now," she thought. Sometime after this Mrs. Maggs came in and lit the fire and brought her breakfast. Jane winced as she sat up in bed for some of the burns had stuck to the strange night-dress (rather too large for her) in which she found herself clad. There was an indefinable difference in Mrs. Maggs' behaviour.

"It's ever so nice, us both being here, isn't it, Mrs. Studdock?" she said, and somehow the tone seemed to imply a closer relation than Jane had envisaged between them. But she was too lazy to wonder much about it.

Shortly after breakfast came Miss Ironwood. She examined and dressed the burns, which were not serious.

"You can get up in the afternoon, if you like, Mrs. Studdock," she said. "I should just take a quiet day till then. What would you like to read? There's a pretty large library."

"I'd like the *Curdie* books, please," said Jane, "and *Mansfield Park* and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*."

Having thus been provided with reading matter for several hours, she very comfortably went to sleep again.

When Mrs. Maggs looked in at about four o'clock to see if Jane was awake, Jane said she would like to get up.

"All right, Mrs. Studdock," said Mrs. Maggs, "just as you like. I'll bring you along a nice cup of tea in a minute and then I'll get the bathroom ready for you. There's a bathroom next door almost, only I'll have to get that Mr. Bultitude out of it. He's that lazy, and he *will* go in and sit there all day when it's cold weather."

As soon as Mrs. Maggs had gone, however, Jane decided to get up. She felt that her social abilities were quite equal to dealing with the eccentric Mr. Bultitude, and she did not want to waste any more time in bed. She had an idea that if once she were "up and about" all sorts of pleasant and interesting things might happen. Accordingly she put on her coat, took her towel, and proceeded to explore: and that was why Mrs. Maggs, coming

upstairs with the tea a moment later, heard a suppressed shriek and saw Jane emerge from the bathroom with a white face and slam the door behind her.

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Maggs, bursting into laughter. "I ought to have told you. Never mind. I'll soon have him out of that." She set the tea-tray down on the passage floor and turned to the bathroom.

"Is it safe?" asked Jane.

"Oh yes, he's *safe* alright," said Mrs. Maggs. "But he's not that easy to shift. Not for you or me, Mrs. Studdock. Of course if it was Miss Ironwood or the Director it would be another matter." With that she opened the bathroom door. Inside, sitting up on its hunkers beside the bath and occupying most of the room, was a great, snuffly, wheezy, beady-eyed, loose-skinned, gor-bellied brown bear, which, after a great many reproaches, appeals, exhortations, pushes, and blows from Mrs. Maggs, heaved up its enormous bulk and came very slowly out into the passage.

"Why don't you go out and take some exercise that lovely afternoon, you great lazy thing?" said Mrs. Maggs. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sitting there getting in everyone's way. Don't be frightened, Mrs. Studdock. He's as tame as tame. He'll let you stroke him. Go on, Mr. Bultitude. Go and say how do you do to the lady."

Jane extended a hesitant and unconvincing hand to touch the animal's back, but Mr. Bultitude was sulking, and without a glance at Jane continued his slow walk along the passage to a point about ten yards away where he quite suddenly sat down. The tea things rattled at Jane's feet, and everyone on the floor below must have known that Mr. Bultitude had sat down.

"Is it really safe to have a creature like that loose about the house?" said Jane.

"Mrs. Studdock," said Ivy Maggs with some solemnity, "if the Director wanted to have a tiger about the house it would be safe. That's the way he has with animals. There isn't a creature in the place that would go for another or for us once he's had his little talk with them. Just the same as he does with us. You'll see."

"If you would put the tea in my room . . ." said Jane rather coldly, and went into the bathroom.

"Yes," said Mrs. Maggs, standing in the open doorway, "you might have had your bath with Mr. Bultitude sitting there beside you — though he's that big and that human I don't somehow feel it would be Nice myself."

Jane made to shut the door.

“Well, I’ll leave you *to* it, then,” said Mrs. Maggs without moving.

“Thank you,” said Jane.

“Sure you got everything you want?” said Mrs. Maggs.

“Quite sure,” said Jane.

“Well, I’ll be getting along, then,” said Mrs. Maggs, turning as if to go, but almost instantly turning back again to say, “You’ll find us in the kitchen, I expect, Mother Dimble and me and the rest.”

“Is Mrs. Dimble staying in the house?” asked Jane with a slight emphasis on the *Mrs*.

“*Mother* Dimble we all call her here,” said Mrs. Maggs. “And I’m sure she won’t mind you doing the same. You’ll get used to our ways in a day or two, *I’m* sure. It’s a funny house really, when you come to think of it. Well, I’ll be getting along, then. Don’t take too long or your tea won’t be worth drinking. But I dare say you’d better not have a bath, not with those nasty places on your chest. Got all you want?”

When Jane had washed and had tea and dressed herself with as much care as strange hairbrushes and a strange mirror allowed, she set out to look for the inhabited rooms. She passed down one long passage, through that silence which is not quite like any other in the world — the silence upstairs, in a big house, on a winter afternoon. Presently she came to a place where two passages met, and here the silence was broken by a faint irregular noise . . . *pob* . . . *pob* . . . *pob-pob*. Looking to her right she saw the explanation, for where the passage ended in a bay window stood Mr. Bultitude, this time on his hind legs, meditatively boxing a punch-ball. Jane chose the way to her left and came to a gallery whence she looked down the staircase into a large hall where daylight mixed with firelight. On the same level with herself, but only to be reached by descending to a landing and ascending again, were shadowy regions which she recognised as leading to the Director’s room. A sort of solemnity seemed to her to emanate from them and she went down into the hall almost on tiptoes, and now, for the first time, her memory of that last and curious experience in the blue room came back to her with a weight which even the thought of the Director himself could not counteract. When she reached the hall she saw at once where the back premises of the house must lie — down two steps and along a paved passage, past a stuffed pike in a glass case and then past a grandfather clock, and then, guided by voices and other sounds, to the kitchen itself.

A wide, open hearth glowing with burning wood lit up the comfortable form of Mrs. Dimble who was seated in a kitchen chair at one side of it, apparently, from the basin in her lap and other indications on a table beside her, engaged in preparing vegetables. Mrs. Maggs and Camilla were doing something at a stove — the hearth was apparently not used for cooking — and in a doorway, which doubtless led to the scullery, a tall grizzle-headed man, who wore gum-boots and seemed to have just come from the garden, was drying his hands.

"Come in, Jane," said Mother Dimble. "We're not expecting you to do any work to-day. Come and sit on the other side of the fire and talk to me. This is Mr. MacPhee — who has no right to be here, but he'd better be introduced to you."

Mr. MacPhee, having finished the drying process and carefully hung the towel behind the door, advanced rather ceremoniously and shook hands with Jane. His own hand was very large and coarse in texture, and he had a shrewd hard-featured face.

"I am very glad to see you, Mrs. Studdock," he said in what Jane took to be a Scotch accent, though it was really that of an Ulsterman.

"Don't believe a word he says, Jane," said Mother Dimble. "He's your prime enemy in this house. He doesn't believe in your dreams."

"Mrs. Dimble," said MacPhee, "I have repeatedly explained to you the distinction between a personal feeling of confidence and a logical satisfaction of the claims of evidence. The one is a psychological event — —"

"And the other a perpetual nuisance," said Mrs. Dimble.

"Never heed her, Mrs. Studdock," said MacPhee. "I am, as I was saying, very glad to welcome you among us. The fact that I have found it my duty on several occasions to point out that no *experimentum crucis* has yet confirmed the hypothesis that your dreams are veridical, has no connection in the world with my personal attitude."

"Of course," said Jane vaguely, and a little confused. "I'm sure you have a right to your own opinions."

All the women laughed as MacPhee in a somewhat louder tone replied, "Mrs. Studdock, I have *no* opinions — on any subject in the world. I state the facts and exhibit the implications. If everyone indulged in fewer opinions" (he pronounced the word with emphatic disgust) "there'd be less silly talking and printing in the world."

“I know who talks most in this house,” said Mrs. Maggs, somewhat to Jane’s surprise.

The Ulsterman eyed the last speaker with an unaltered face while producing a small pewter box from his pocket and helping himself to a pinch of snuff.

“What are you waiting for, anyway?” said Mrs. Maggs. “Women’s day in the kitchen to-day.”

“I was wondering,” said MacPhee, “whether you had a cup of tea saved for me.”

“And why didn’t you come in at the right time, then?” said Mrs. Maggs. Jane noticed that she talked to him much as she had talked to the bear.

“I was busy,” said the other, seating himself at one end of the table; and added after a pause, “trenching celery. The wee woman does the best she can, but she has a poor notion of what needs doing in a garden.”

“What is ‘women’s day’ in the kitchen?” asked Jane of Mother Dimble.

“There are no servants here,” said Mother Dimble, “and we all do the work. The women do it one day and the men the next. . . . What? . . . No, it’s a very sensible arrangement. The Director’s idea is that men and women can’t do housework together without quarrelling. There’s something in it. Of course it doesn’t do to look at the cups too closely on the men’s day, but on the whole we get along pretty well.”

“But why should they quarrel?” asked Jane.

“Different methods, my dear. Men can’t *help* in a job, you know. They can be induced to do it: not to help while you’re doing it. At least it makes them grumpy.”

“The cardinal difficulty,” said MacPhee, “in collaboration between the sexes is that women speak a language without nouns. If two men are doing a bit of work one will say to the other, ‘Put this bowl inside the bigger bowl which you’ll find on the top shelf of the green cupboard.’ The female for this is ‘Put that in the other one in there.’ And then if you ask them ‘in where?’ they say ‘in *there* of course.’ There is consequently a phatic hiatus.” He pronounced this so as to rhyme with “get *at* us.”

“There’s your tea now,” said Ivy Maggs, “and I’ll go and get you a piece of cake, which is more than you deserve. And when you’ve had it you can go upstairs and talk about nouns for the rest of the evening.”

“Not *about* nouns: *by means of* nouns,” said MacPhee; but Mrs. Maggs had already left the room. Jane took advantage of this to say to Mother

Dimble in a lower voice, “Mrs. Maggs seems to make herself very much at home here.”

“My dear, she *is* at home here.”

“As a maid, you mean?”

“Well, no more than anyone else. She’s here chiefly because her house has been taken from her. She had nowhere else to go.”

“You mean she is . . . one of the Director’s charities.”

“Certainly that. Why do you ask?”

“Well . . . I don’t know. It *did* seem a little odd that she should call you Mother Dimble. I hope I’m not being snobbish . . .”

“You’re forgetting that Cecil and I are another of the Director’s charities.”

“Isn’t that rather playing on words?”

“Not a bit. Ivy and Cecil and I are all here because we were turned out of our homes. At least Ivy and I are. It may be rather different for Cecil.”

“And does the Director know that Mrs. Maggs talks to everyone like that?”

“My dear child, don’t ask me what the Director knows.”

“I think what’s puzzling me is that when I saw him he said something about equality not being the important thing. But his own house seems to be run on . . . well on very democratic lines indeed.”

“I never attempt to understand what he says on that subject,” said Mother Dimble. “He’s usually talking either about spiritual ranks — and you were never goose enough to think yourself *spiritually* superior to Ivy — or else about marriage.”

“Did you understand his views on marriage?”

“My dear, the Director is a very wise man. But he *is* a man, after all, and an unmarried man at that. Some of what he says, or what the Masters say, about marriage does seem to me to be a lot of fuss about something so simple and natural that it oughtn’t to need saying at all. But I suppose there are young women nowadays who need to be told it.”

“You haven’t got much use for young women who do, I see.”

“Well, perhaps I’m unfair. Things were easier for us. We were brought up on stories with happy endings and on the Prayer Book. We always intended to love, honour, and obey, and we had figures and we wore petticoats and we liked waltzes . . .”

“Waltzes are ever so nice,” said Mrs. Maggs — who had just returned and given MacPhee his slab of cake— “so old-fashioned.”

At that moment the door opened and a voice from behind it said, “Well, go in then, if you’re going.” Thus admonished, a very fine jackdaw hopped into the room, followed firstly by Mr. Bultitude and secondly by Arthur Denniston.

“I’ve told you before, Arthur,” said Ivy Maggs, “not to bring that bear in here when we’re cooking the dinner.” While she was speaking Mr. Bultitude, who was apparently himself uncertain of his welcome, walked across the room in what he believed (erroneously) to be an unobtrusive manner and sat down behind Mrs. Dimble’s chair.

“Dr. Dimble’s just come back, Mother Dimble,” said Denniston. “But he’s had to go straight to the Blue Room. And the Director wants you to go to him, too, MacPhee.”

III

Mark sat down to lunch that day in good spirits. Everyone reported that the riot had gone off most satisfactorily, and he had enjoyed reading his own accounts of it in the morning papers. He enjoyed it even more when he heard Steele and Cosser talking about it in a way which showed that they did not even know how it had been engineered, much less who had written it up in the newspapers. And he had enjoyed his morning, too. It had involved a conversation with Frost, the Fairy, and Wither himself, about the future of Edgestow. All were agreed that the government would follow the almost unanimous opinion of the nation (as expressed in the newspapers) and put it temporarily under the control of the Institutional Police. An emergency governor of Edgestow must be appointed. Feverstone was the obvious man. As a member of Parliament he represented the Nation, as a Fellow of Bracton he represented the University, as a member of the Institute he represented the Institute. All the competing claims that might otherwise have come into collision were reconciled in the person of Lord Feverstone; the articles on this subject which Mark was to write that afternoon would almost write themselves! But that had not been all. As the conversation proceeded it had become clear that there was really a double object in getting this invidious post for Feverstone. When the time came, and the local unpopularity of the N.I.C.E. rose to its height, he could be

sacrificed. This, of course, was not said in so many words, but Mark realised perfectly clearly that even Feverstone was no longer quite in the Inner Ring. The Fairy said that old Dick was a mere politician at heart and always would be. Wither, deeply sighing, confessed that his talents had been perhaps more useful at an earlier stage of the movement than they were likely to be in the period on which they were now entering. There was in Mark's mind no plan for undermining Feverstone nor even a fully formed wish that he should be undermined: but the whole atmosphere of the discussion became somehow more agreeable to him as he began to understand the real situation. He was also pleased that he had (as he would have put it) "got to know" Frost. He knew by experience that there is in almost every organisation some quiet, inconspicuous person whom the small fry suppose to be of no importance but who is really one of the mainsprings of the whole machine. Even to recognise such people for what they are shows that one has made considerable progress. There was, to be sure, a cold fish-like quality about Frost which Mark did not like and something even repulsive about the regularity of his features. But every word he spoke (he did not speak many) went to the root of what was being discussed, and Mark found it delightful to speak to him. The pleasures of conversation were coming, for Mark, to have less and less connection with his spontaneous liking or disliking of the people he talked to. He was aware of this change — which had begun when he joined the Progressive Element in College — and welcomed it as a sign of maturity.

Wither had thawed in a most encouraging manner. At the end of the conversation he had taken Mark aside, spoken vaguely but paternally of the great work he was doing, and finally asked after his wife. The D.D. hoped there was no truth in the rumour which had reached him that she was suffering from — er — some nervous disorder. "Who the devil has been telling him that?" thought Mark. "Because," said Wither, "it had occurred to me, in view of the great pressure of work which rests on you at present and the difficulty, therefore, of your being at home as much as we should all (for your sake) wish, that in *your* case the Institute might be induced . . . I am speaking in a quite informal way . . . that we should all be delighted to welcome Mrs. Studdock here."

Until the D.D. had said this Mark had not realised that there was nothing he would dislike so much as having Jane at Belbury. There were so many things that Jane would not understand: not only the pretty heavy drinking

which was becoming his habit but — oh, everything from morning to night. For it is only justice both to Mark and to Jane to record that he would have found it impossible to conduct in her hearing any one of the hundred conversations which his life at Belbury involved. Her mere presence would have made all the laughter of the Inner Ring sound metallic, unreal; and what he now regarded as common prudence would seem to her, and through her to himself, mere flattery, back-biting, and toad eating. Jane in the middle of Belbury would turn the whole of Belbury into a vast vulgarity, flashy and yet furtive. His mind sickened at the thought of trying to teach Jane that she must help to keep Wither in a good temper and must play up to Fairy Hardcastle. He excused himself vaguely to the D.D., with profuse thanks, and got away as quickly as he could.

That afternoon, while he was having tea, Fairy Hardcastle came and leaned over the back of his chair and said in his ear:

"*You've* torn it, Studdock."

"What's the matter now, Fairy?" said he.

"I can't make out what's the matter with *you*, young Studdock, and that's a fact. Have you made up your mind to annoy the Old Man? Because it's a dangerous game, you know."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Well, here we've all been working on your behalf and soothing him down and this morning we thought we'd finally succeeded. He was talking about giving you the appointment originally intended for you and waiving the probationary period. Not a cloud in the sky: and then you have five minutes' chat with him — barely five minutes, in fact — and in that time you've managed to undo it all. I begin to think you're mental."

"What the devil's wrong with him this time?"

"Well *you* ought to know! Didn't he say something about bringing your wife here?"

"Yes he did. What about it?"

"And what did you say?"

"I said not to bother about it . . . and, of course, thanked him very much and all that." The Fairy whistled.

"Don't you see, honey," she said, gently rapping Mark's scalp with her knuckles, "that you could hardly have made a worse bloomer? It was a most terrific concession for him to make. He's never done it to anyone else. You might have known he'd be offended if you cold-shouldered him. He's

burbling away now about lack of confidence. Says he's 'hurt': which means that somebody else soon will be! He takes your refusal as a sign that you are not really 'settled' here."

"But that is sheer madness. I mean . . ."

"Why the blazes couldn't you tell him you'd have your wife here?"

"Isn't that my own business?"

"Don't you want to have her? You're not very polite to little wifie, Studdock. And they tell me she's a damned pretty girl."

At that moment the form of Wither, slowly sauntering in their direction, became apparent to both and the conversation ended.

At dinner he sat next to Filostrato. There were no other members of the inner circle within earshot. The Italian was in good spirits and talkative. He had just given orders for the cutting down of some fine beech trees in the grounds.

"Why have you done that, Professor?" said a Mr. Winter who sat opposite. "I shouldn't have thought they did much harm at that distance from the house. I'm rather fond of trees myself."

"Oh yes, yes," replied Filostrato. "The pretty trees, the garden trees. But not the savages. I put the rose in my garden, but not the briar. The forest tree is a weed. But I tell you I have seen the civilised tree in Persia. It was a French *attaché* who had it, because he was in a place where trees do not grow. It was made of metal. A poor, crude thing. But how if it were perfected? Light, made of aluminium. So natural, it would even deceive."

"It would hardly be the same as a real tree," said Winter.

"But consider the advantages! You get tired of him in one place: two workmen carry him somewhere else: wherever you please. It never dies. No leaves to fall, no twigs, no birds building nests, no muck and mess."

"I suppose one or two, as curiosities, might be rather amusing."

"Why one or two? At present, I allow, we must have forest for the atmosphere. Presently we find a chemical substitute. And then, why *any* natural trees? I foresee nothing but the *art* tree all over the earth. In fact, we *clean* the planet."

"Do you mean," put in a man called Gould, "that we are to have no vegetation at all?"

"Exactly. You shave your face: even, in the English fashion, you shave him every day. One day we shave the planet."

"I wonder what the birds will make of it?"

“I would not have any birds either. On the art tree I would have the art birds all singing when you press a switch inside the house. When you are tired of the singing you switch them off. Consider again the improvement. No feathers dropped about, no nests, no eggs, no dirt.”

“It sounds,” said Mark, “like abolishing pretty well all organic life.”

“And why not? It is simple hygiene. Listen, my friends. If you pick up some rotten thing and find this organic life crawling over it, do you not say, ‘Oh, the horrid thing. It is alive,’ and then drop it?”

“Go on,” said Winter.

“And you, especially you English, are you not hostile to any organic life except your own on your own body? Rather than permit it you have invented the daily bath.”

“That’s true.”

“And what do you call dirty dirt? Is it not precisely the organic? Minerals are clean dirt. But the real filth is what comes from organisms — sweat, spittles, excretions. Is not your whole idea of purity one huge example? The impure and the organic are interchangeable conceptions.”

“What are you driving at, Professor?” said Gould. “After all we are organisms ourselves.”

“I grant it. That is the point. In us organic life has produced Mind. It has done its work. After that we want no more of it. We do not want the world any longer furred over with organic life, like what you call the blue mould — all sprouting and budding and breeding and decaying. We must get rid of it. By little and little, of course; slowly we learn how. Learn to make our brains live with less and less body: learn to build our bodies directly with chemicals, no longer have to stuff them full of dead brutes and weeds. Learn how to reproduce ourselves without copulation.”

“I don’t think that would be much fun,” said Winter.

“My friend, you have already separated the Fun, as you call it, from the fertility. The Fun itself begins to pass away. Bah! I know that is not what you think. But look at your English women. Six out of ten are frigid are they not? You see? Nature herself begins to throw away the anachronism. When she has quite thrown it away, then real civilisation becomes possible. You would understand if you were peasants. Who would try to work with stallions and bulls? No, no; we want geldings and oxen. There will never be peace and order and discipline so long as there is sex. When man has thrown it away, then he will become finally governable.”

This brought them to the end of dinner, and as they rose from the table Filostrato whispered in Mark's ear, "I would not advise the Library for you to-night. You understand? You are not in favour. Come and have a little conversation with me in my room."

Mark rose and followed him, glad and surprised that in this new crisis with the D.D. Filostrato was apparently still his friend. They went up to the Italian's sitting-room on the first floor. There Mark sat down before the fire, but his host continued to walk up and down the room.

"I am very sorry, my young friend," said Filostrato, "to hear of this new trouble between you and the Deputy Director. It must be stopped, you understand? If he invite you to bring your wife here why do you not bring her?"

"Well, really," said Mark, "I never knew he attached so much importance to it. I thought he was merely being polite." His objection to having Jane at Belbury had been, if not removed, at least temporarily deadened by the wine he had drunk at dinner and by the sharp pang he had felt at the threat of expulsion from the library circle.

"It is of no importance in itself," said Filostrato. "But I have reason to believe it came not from Wither but from the Head himself."

"The Head? You mean Jules?" said Mark in some surprise. "I thought he was a mere figure head. And why should *he* care whether I bring my wife here or not?"

"You were mistaken," said Filostrato. "Our Head is no figure head." There was something odd about his manner, Mark thought. For some time neither man spoke.

"It is all true," said Filostrato at last, "what I said at dinner."

"But about Jules," said Mark. "What business is it of his?"

"Jules?" said Filostrato, "why do you speak of him? I say it was all true. The world I look forward to is the world of perfect purity. The clean mind and the clean minerals. What are the things that most offend the dignity of man? Birth and breeding and death. How if we are about to discover that Mind can live without any of the three?"

Mark stared. Filostrato's conversation appeared so disjointed and his manner so unusual that he began to wonder if he were quite sane or quite sober.

"As for your wife," resumed Filostrato, "I attach no importance to it. What have I to do with men's wives? The whole subject disgusts me. But if

they make a point of it . . . Look, my friend, the real question is whether you mean to be truly at one with us or no."

"I don't quite follow," said Mark.

"Do you want to be a mere hireling? But you have already come too far in for that. You are at the turning-point of your career, Mr. Studdock. If you try to go back you will be as unfortunate as the fool Hingest. If you come really in — the world . . . bah, what do I say? . . . the universe is at your feet."

"But of course I want to come in," said Mark. A certain excitement was stealing over him.

"The Head thinks that you cannot be really one of us if you will not bring your wife here. He will have all of you, and all that is yours — or else nothing. You must bring the woman in too. She also must be one of us."

This remark was like a shock of cold water in Mark's face. And yet . . . and yet . . . in that room and at that moment, fixed with the little, bright eyes of the Professor, he could hardly make the thought of Jane quite real to himself.

"You shall hear it from the lips of the Head himself," said Filostrato suddenly.

"Is Jules *here*?" said Mark.

Instead of answering Filostrato turned sharply from him and with a great scraping movement flung back the window curtains. Then he switched off the light. The fog had all gone, the wind had risen. Small clouds were scudding across the stars and the full moon — Mark had never seen her so bright — stared down upon them. As the clouds passed her she looked like a ball that was rolling through them. Her bloodless light filled the room.

"There is a world for you, no?" said Filostrato. "There is cleanness, purity. Thousands of square miles of polished rock with not one blade of grass, not one fibre of lichen, not one grain of dust. Not even air. Have you thought what it would be like, my friend, if you could walk on that land? No crumbling, no erosion. The peaks of those mountains are real peaks: sharp as needles, they would go through your hand. Cliffs as high as Everest and as straight as the wall of a house. And cast by those cliffs, acres of shadow black as ebony, and in the shadow hundreds of degrees of frost. And then, one step beyond the shadow, light that would pierce your eyeballs like steel and rock that would burn your feet. The temperature is at boiling-point. You would die, yes? But even then you would not become filth. In a

few moments you are a little heap of ash; clean, white powder. And mark, no wind to blow that powder about. Every grain in the little heap remain in its place, just where you died, till the end of the world . . . but that is nonsense. The universe will have no end."

"Yes. A dead world," said Mark, gazing at the moon.

"No!" said Filostrato. He had come close to Mark and spoke almost in a whisper, the bat-like whisper of a voice that is naturally high-pitched. "No. There is life there."

"Do we *know* that?" asked Mark.

"Oh, *si*. Intelligent life. Under the surface. A great race, further advanced than we. An inspiration. A *pure* race. They have cleaned their world, broken free (almost) from the organic."

"But how —— ?"

"They do not need to be born and breed and die; only their common people, their *canaglia* do that. The Masters live on. They retain their intelligence: they can keep it artificially alive after the organic body has been dispensed with — a miracle of applied biochemistry. They do not need organic food. You understand? They are almost free of Nature, attached to her only by the thinnest, finest cord."

"Do you mean that all *that*," Mark pointed to the mottled white globe of the moon, "is their own doing?"

"Why not? If you remove all the vegetation, presently you have no atmosphere, no water."

"But what was the purpose?"

"Hygiene. Why should they have their world all crawling with organisms? And specially, they would banish one organism. Her surface is not all as you see. There are still surface-dwellers — savages. One great dirty patch on the far side of her where there is still water and air and forests — yes, and germs and death. They are slowly spreading their hygiene over their whole globe. Disinfecting her. The savages fight against them. There are frontiers, and fierce wars, in the caves and galleries down below. But the great race press on. If you could see the other side you would see year by year the clean rock — like this side of the moon — encroaching: the organic stain, all the green and blue and mist, growing smaller. Like cleaning tarnished silver."

"But how do we know all this?"

“I will tell you all that another time. The Head has many sources of information. For the moment, I speak only to inspire you. I speak that you may know what can be done: what shall be done here. This Institute — *Dio mio*, it is for something better than housing and vaccinations and faster trains and curing the people of cancer. It is for the conquest of death: or for the conquest of organic life, if you prefer. They are the same thing. It is to bring out of that cocoon of organic life which sheltered the babyhood of mind the New Man, the man who will not die, the artificial man, free from Nature. Nature is the ladder we have climbed up by, now we kick her away.”

“And you think that some day we shall really find a means of keeping the brain alive indefinitely?”

“We have begun already. The Head himself . . .”

“Go on,” said Mark. His heart was beating wildly and he had forgotten both Jane and Wither. This at last was the real thing.

“The Head himself has already survived death, and you shall speak to him this night.”

“Do you mean that Jules has died?”

“Bah! Jules is nothing. He is not the Head.”

“Then who is?”

At this moment there was a knock on the door. Someone, without waiting for an answer, came in.

“Is the young man ready?” asked the voice of Straik.

“Oh yes. You are ready, are you not, Mr. Studdock?”

“You have explained it to him, then?” said Straik. He turned to Mark and the moonlight in the room was so bright that Mark could now partially recognise his face — its harsh furrows emphasised by that cold light and shade.

“Do you mean really to join us, young man?” said Straik. “There is no turning back once you have set your hand to the plough. And there are no reservations. The Head has sent for you. Do you understand — *the Head*? You will look upon one who was killed and is still alive. The resurrection of Jesus in the Bible was a symbol: to-night you shall see what it symbolised. This is real Man at last, and it claims all our allegiance.”

“What the devil are you talking about?” said Mark. The tension of his nerves distorted his voice into a hoarse blustering cry.

“My friend is quite right,” said Filostrato. “Our Head is the first of the New Men — the first that lives beyond animal life. As far as Nature is concerned he is already dead: if Nature had her way his brain would now be mouldering in the grave. But he will speak to you within this hour, and — a word in your ear, my friend — you will obey his orders.”

“But who *is* it?” said Mark.

“It is François Alcasan,” said Filostrato.

“You mean the man who was guillotined?” gasped Mark. Both the heads nodded. Both faces were close to him: in that disastrous light they looked like masks hanging in the air.

“You are frightened?” said Filostrato. “You will get over that. We are offering to make you one of us. *Ahi* — if you were outside, if you were mere *canaglia* you would have reason to be frightened. It is the beginning of all power. He live forever. The giant time is conquered. And the giant space — he was already conquered too. One of our company has already travelled in space. True, he was betrayed and murdered and his manuscripts are imperfect: we have not yet been able to reconstruct his space ship. But that will come.”

“It is the beginning of Man Immortal and Man Ubiquitous,” said Straik. “Man on the throne of the universe. It is what all the prophecies really meant.”

“At first, of course,” said Filostrato, “the power will be confined to a number — a small number — of individual men. Those who are selected for eternal life.”

“And you mean,” said Mark, “it will then be extended to all men?”

“No,” said Filostrato. “I mean it will then be reduced to one man. You are not a fool, are you, my young friend? All that talk about the power of Man over Nature — Man in the abstract — is only for the *canaglia*. You know as well as I do that Man’s power over Nature means the power of some men over other men with Nature as the instrument. There is no such thing as Man — it is a word. There are only men. No! It is not Man who will be omnipotent, it is some one man, some immortal man. Alcasan, our Head, is the first sketch of it. The completed product may be someone else. It may be you. It may be me.”

“A king cometh,” said Straik, “who shall rule the universe with righteousness and the heavens with judgement. You thought all that was mythology, no doubt. You thought because fables had clustered about the

phrase ‘Son of Man’ that Man would never really have a son who will wield all power. But he will.”

“I don’t understand, I don’t understand,” said Mark.

“But it is very easy,” said Filostrato. “We have found how to make a dead man live. He was a wise man even in his natural life. He live now forever: he get wiser. Later, we make them live better — for at present, one must concede, this second life is probably not very agreeable to him who has it. You see? Later we make it pleasant for some — perhaps not so pleasant for others. For we can make the dead live whether they wish it or not. He who shall be finally king of the universe can give this life to whom he pleases. They cannot refuse the little present.”

“And so,” said Straik, “the lessons you learned at your mother’s knee return. God will have power to give eternal reward and eternal punishment.”

“God?” said Mark. “How does He come into it? I don’t believe in God.”

“But, my friend,” said Filostrato, “does it follow that because there was no God in the past that there will be no God also in the future?”

“Don’t you see,” said Straik, “that we are offering you the unspeakable glory of being present at the creation of God Almighty? Here, in this house, you shall meet the first draught of the real God. It is a man — or a being made by man — who will finally ascend the throne of the universe. And rule forever.”

“You will come with us?” said Filostrato. “He has sent for you.”

“Of course he will come,” said Straik. “Does he think he could hold back and live?”

“And that little affair of the wife,” added Filostrato. “You will not mention a triviality like that. You will do as you are told. One does not argue with the Head.”

Mark had nothing now to help him but the rapidly ebbing exhilaration of the alcohol taken at dinner-time and some faint gleams of memory from hours with Jane and with friends made before he went to Bracton, during which the world had had a different taste from this exciting horror which now pressed upon him. These, and a merely instinctive dislike for both the moonlit faces which so held his attention. On the other side was fear. What would they do to him if he refused now? And aiding fear was this young man’s belief that if one gave in for the present things would somehow right themselves “in the morning.” And, aiding the fear and the hope, there was

still, even then, a not wholly disagreeable thrill at the thought of sharing so stupendous a secret.

“Yes,” he said, halting in his speech as if he were out of breath, “Yes — of course — I’ll come.”

They led him out. The passages were already still and the sound of talk and laughter from the public rooms on the ground floor had ceased. He stumbled, and they linked arms with him. The journey seemed long: passage after passage, passages he had never seen before, doors to unlock, and then into a place where all the lights were on, and there were strange smells. Then Filostrato spoke through a speaking-tube and a door was opened to them.

Mark found himself in a surgical-looking room with glaring lights, and sinks, and bottles, and glittering instruments. A young man whom he hardly knew, dressed in a white coat, received them.

“Strip to your underclothes,” said Filostrato. While Mark was obeying he noticed that the opposite wall of the room was covered with dials. Numbers of flexible tubes came out of the floor and went into the wall just beneath the dials. The staring dial faces and the bunches of tubes beneath them, which seemed to be faintly pulsating, gave one the impression of looking at some creature with many eyes and many tentacles. The young man kept his eyes fixed on the vibrating needles of the dials. When the three newcomers had removed their outer clothes, they washed their hands and faces, and after that Filostrato plucked white clothes for them out of a glass container with a pair of forceps. When they had put these on he gave them also gloves and masks such as surgeons wear. There followed a moment’s silence while Filostrato studied the dials. “Yes, yes,” he said. “A little more air. Not much: point nought three. Turn on the chamber air . . . slowly . . . to Full. Now the lights. Now air in the lock. A little less of the solution. And now” (here he turned to Straik and Studdock) “are you ready to go in?”

He led them to a door in the same wall as the dials.

NINE

The Saracen's Head

I

"It was the worst dream I've had yet," said Jane next morning. She was seated in the Blue Room with the Director and Grace Ironwood.

"Yes," said the Director. "Yours is perhaps the hardest post: until the real struggle begins."

"I dreamed I was in a dark room," said Jane, "with queer smells in it and a sort of low humming noise. Then the light came on — but not very much light, and for a long time I didn't realise what I was looking at. And when I made it out . . . I should have waked up if I hadn't made a great effort not to. I thought I saw a face floating just in front of me. A face, not a head, if you understand what I mean. That is, there was a beard and nose and eyes — at least, you couldn't see the eyes because it had coloured glasses on, but there didn't seem to be anything above the eyes. Not at first. But as I got used to the light, I got a horrible shock. I thought the face was a mask tied on to a kind of balloon thing. But it wasn't, exactly. Perhaps it looked a bit like a man wearing a sort of turban . . . I'm telling this dreadfully badly. What it really was, was a head (the rest of a head) which had had the top part of the skull taken off and then . . . then . . . as if something inside had boiled over. A great big mass which bulged out from inside what was left of the skull. Wrapped in some kind of composition stuff, but very thin stuff. You could see it twitch. Even in my fright I remember thinking, 'Oh, kill it, kill it. Put it out of its pain.' But only for a second, because I thought the thing was dead, really. It was green looking and the mouth was wide open and quite dry. You realise I was a long time, looking at it, before anything else happened. And soon I saw that it wasn't exactly floating. It was fixed up on some kind of bracket, or shelf, or pedestal — I don't know quite what, and there were things hanging from it. From the neck, I mean. Yes, it had a neck and a sort of collar thing round it, but nothing below the collar: no shoulders or body. Only these hanging things. In the dream I thought it was some kind of new man that had only head and entrails: I thought all those tubes were its insides. But presently — I don't quite know how, I saw

that they were artificial. Little rubber tubes and bulbs and little metal things too. I couldn't understand them. All the tubes went into the wall. Then at last something happened."

"You're all right, Jane, are you?" said Miss Ironwood.

"Oh yes," said Jane, "as far as that goes. Only one somehow doesn't *want* to tell it. Well, quite suddenly, like when an engine is started, there came a puff of air out of its mouth, with a hard dry rasping sound. And then there came another, and it settled down into a sort of rhythm — *huff, huff, huff* — like an imitation of breathing. Then came a most horrible thing: the mouth began to dribble. I know it sounds silly but in a way I felt sorry for it, because it had no hands and couldn't wipe its mouth. It seems a small thing compared with all the rest but that is how I felt. Then it began working its mouth about and even licking its lips. It was like someone getting a machine into working order. To see it doing that just as if it was alive, and at the same time dribbling over the beard which was all stiff and dead looking. . . . Then three people came into the room, all dressed up in white, with masks on, walking as carefully as cats on the top of a wall. One was a great fat man, and another was lanky and boney. The third . . ." here Jane paused involuntarily. "The third . . . I think it was Mark . . . I mean my husband."

"You are uncertain?" said the Director.

"No," said Jane. "It was Mark. I knew his walk. And I knew the shoes he was wearing. And his voice. It *was* Mark."

"I am sorry," said the Director.

"And then," said Jane, "all three of them came round and stood in front of the Head. They bowed to it. You couldn't tell if it was looking at them because of its dark glasses. It kept on with that rhythmical huffing noise. Then it spoke."

"In English?" said Grace Ironwood.

"No, in French."

"What did it say?"

"Well, my French wasn't quite good enough to follow it. It spoke in a queer way. In starts — like a man who's out of breath. With no proper expression. And of course it couldn't turn itself this way or that, the way a — a real person — does."

"Did you understand any of what was said?"

“Not very much. The fat man seemed to be introducing Mark to it. It said something to him. Then Mark tried to answer. I could follow him all right, his French isn’t much better than mine.”

“What did he say?”

“He said something about ‘doing it in a few days if it was possible.’”

“Was that all?”

“Very nearly. You see Mark couldn’t stand it. I knew he wouldn’t be able to: I remember, idiotically, in the dream, I wanted to tell him. I saw he was going to fall. I think I tried to shout out to the other two, ‘He’s going to fall.’ But, of course, I couldn’t. He was sick too. Then they got him out of the room.”

All three were silent for a few seconds.

“Was that all?” said Miss Ironwood.

“Yes,” said Jane. “That’s all I remember. I think I woke up then.”

The Director took a deep breath. “Well!” he said, glancing at Miss Ironwood, “it becomes plainer and plainer. We must hold a council at once. Is everyone here?”

“No. Dr. Dimble has had to go into Edgestow, into College, to take pupils. He won’t be back till evening.”

“Then we must hold the council this evening. Make all arrangements.” He paused for a moment and then turned to Jane.

“I am afraid this is very bad for you, my dear,” he said; “and worse for him.”

“You mean for Mark, sir?”

“Yes. Don’t think hardly of him. He is suffering. If we are defeated we shall all go down with him. If we win we will rescue him; he cannot be far gone yet.” He paused, smiled, and added, “We are quite used to trouble about husbands here, you know. Poor Ivy’s is in jail.”

“In jail?”

“Oh yes — for ordinary theft. But quite a good fellow. He’ll be all right again.”

Though Jane had felt horror, even to the point of nausea, at the sight (in her dream) of Mark’s real surroundings and associates, it had been horror that carried a certain grandeur and mystery with it. The sudden equation between his predicament and that of a common convict whipped the blood to her cheeks. She said nothing.

“One other thing,” continued the Director. “You will not misunderstand it if I exclude you from our council to-night.”

“Of course not, sir,” said Jane, in fact, misunderstanding it very much.

“You see,” he said, “MacPhee takes the line that if you hear things talked of you will carry ideas of them into your sleep and that will destroy the evidential value of your dreams. And it’s not very easy to refute him. He is our sceptic; a very important office.”

“I quite understand,” said Jane.

“That applies, of course,” said the Director, “only to things we don’t know yet. You mustn’t hear our guesses, you mustn’t be there when we’re puzzling over the evidence. But we have no secrets from you about the earlier history of our family. In fact, MacPhee himself will insist on being the one who tells you all that. He’d be afraid Grace’s account, or mine, wouldn’t be objective enough.”

“I see.”

“I want you to like him if you can. He’s one of my oldest friends. And he’ll be about our best man if we’re going to be defeated. You couldn’t have a better man at your side in a losing battle. What he’ll do if we win, I can’t imagine.”

II

Mark woke next morning to the consciousness that his head ached all over, but specially at the back. He remembered that he had fallen — that was how he had hurt his head — fallen in that other room, with Filostrato and Straik . . . and then, as one of the poets says, he “discovered in his mind an inflammation swollen and deformed, his memory.” Oh, but impossible, not to be accepted for a moment: it had been a nightmare, it must be shoved away, it would vanish away now that he was fully awake. It was an absurdity. Once in delirium he had seen the front part of a horse, by itself, with no body or hind legs, running across a lawn, had felt it ridiculous at the very moment of seeing it, but not the less horrible for that. This was an absurdity of the same sort. A head without any body underneath. A head that could speak when they turned on the air and the artificial saliva with taps in the next room. His own head began to throb so hard that he had to stop thinking.

But he knew it was true. And he could not, as they say, “take it.” He was very ashamed of this, for he wished to be considered one of the tough ones. But the truth is that his toughness was only of the will, not of the nerves, and the virtues he had almost succeeded in banishing from his mind still lived, if only negatively and as weaknesses, in his body. He approved of vivisection, but had never worked in a dissecting room. He recommended that certain classes of people should be gradually eliminated: but he had never been there when a small shopkeeper went to the workhouse or a starved old woman of the governess type came to the very last day and hour and minute in the cold attic. He knew nothing about the last half-cup of cocoa drunk slowly ten days before.

Meantime he must get up. He must do something about Jane. Apparently he would *have* to bring her to Belbury. His mind had made this decision for him at some moment he did not remember. He must get her, to save his life. All his anxieties about being in the inner ring or getting a job had shrunk into insignificance. It was a question of life or death. They would kill him if he annoyed them; perhaps behead him . . . oh God, if only they would really kill that monstrous little lump of torture, that lump with a face, which they kept there talking on its steel bracket. All the minor fears at Belbury — for he knew now that all except the leaders were always afraid — were only emanations from that central fear. He must get Jane; he wasn’t fighting against that now.

It must be remembered that in Mark’s mind hardly one rag of noble thought, either Christian or Pagan, had a secure lodging. His education had been neither scientific nor classical — merely “Modern.” The severities both of abstraction and of high human tradition had passed him by: and he had neither peasant shrewdness nor aristocratic honour to help him. He was a man of straw, a glib examinee in subjects that require no exact knowledge (he had always done well on Essays and General Papers) and the first hint of a real threat to his bodily life knocked him sprawling. And his head ached so terribly and he felt so sick. Luckily he now kept a bottle of whisky in his room. A stiff one enabled him to shave and dress.

He was late for breakfast but that made little difference for he could not eat. He drank several cups of black coffee and then went into the writing-room. Here he sat for a long time drawing things on the blotting-paper. This letter to Jane proved almost impossible now that it came to the point. And why did they want Jane? Formless fears stirred in his mind. And Jane of all

people! Would they take *her* to the Head? For almost the first time in his life a gleam of something like disinterested love came into his mind; he wished he had never married her, never dragged her into this whole outfit of horrors which was, apparently, to be his life.

"Hullo, Studdock!" said a voice. "Writing to little wifie, eh?"

"Damn!" said Mark. "You've made me drop my pen."

"Then pick it up, sonny," said Miss Hardcastle, seating herself on the table. Mark did so, and then sat still, without looking up at her. Not since he had been bullied at school had he known what it was to hate and dread anyone with every nerve of his body as he now hated and dreaded this woman.

"I've got bad news for you, sonny," she said presently. His heart gave a jump.

"Take it like a man, Studdock," said the Fairy.

"What is it?"

She did not answer quite at once and he knew she was studying him, watching how the instrument responded to her playing.

"I'm worried about little wifie, and that's a fact," she said at last.

"What do you mean?" said Mark sharply, this time looking up. The cheroot between her teeth was still unlit, but she had got as far as taking out her matches.

"I looked her up," said Miss Hardcastle, "all on your account, too. I thought Edgestow wasn't too healthy a place for her to be at present."

"What's wrong with her?" shouted Mark.

"Ssh!" said Miss Hardcastle. "You don't want everyone to hear."

"Can't you tell me what's wrong?"

She waited for a few seconds before replying. "How much do you know about her family, Studdock?"

"Lots. What's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing . . . queer . . . on either side?"

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Don't be rude, honey. I'm doing all I can for you. It's only — well, I thought she was behaving pretty oddly when I saw her."

Mark well remembered his conversation with his wife on the morning he left for Belbury. A new stab of fear pierced him. Might not this detestable woman be speaking the truth?

"What did she say?" he asked.

“If there is anything wrong with her in that way,” said the Fairy, “take my advice, Studdock, and have her over here at once. She’ll be properly looked after here.”

“You haven’t yet told me what she said or did.”

“I wouldn’t like to have anyone belonging to me popped into Edgestow Asylum. Specially now that we’re getting our emergency powers. They’ll be using the ordinary patients experimentally, you know. Whereas if you’ll just sign this form I’ll run over after lunch and have her here this evening.”

“I shall do nothing of the sort. Specially as you haven’t given me the slightest notion what’s wrong with her.”

“I’ve been trying to tell you but you don’t let me. She kept on talking about someone who’d broken into your flat — or else met her at the station (one couldn’t make out which) and burned her with cigars. Then, most unfortunately, she noticed my cheroot, and, if you please, she identified *me* with this imaginary persecutor. Of course after that I could do no good.”

“I must go home at once,” said Mark, getting up.

“Here — whoa! You can’t do that,” said the Fairy, also rising.

“Can’t go home? I’ve bloody well got to, if all this is true.”

“Don’t be a fool, lovey,” said Miss Hardcastle. “Honest! I know what I’m talking about. You’re in a dam dangerous position already. You’ll about do yourself in if you’re absent without leave now. Send me. Sign the form. That’s the sensible way to do it.”

“But a moment ago you said she couldn’t stand you at any price.”

“Oh, that wouldn’t make any odds. Of course it would be easier if she hadn’t taken a dislike to me. I say, Studdock, you don’t think little Wifie could be jealous, do you?”

“Jealous? Of you?” said Mark with uncontrollable disgust.

“Where are you off to?” said the Fairy sharply.

“To see the D.D. and then home.”

“Stop. You won’t do that unless you mean to make me your enemy for life — and let me tell you, you can’t afford many more enemies.”

“Oh, go to the Devil,” said Mark.

“Come back, Studdock,” shouted the Fairy. “Wait! Don’t be a bloody fool.” But Mark was already in the hall. For the moment everything seemed to have become clear. He would look in on Wither, not to ask for leave but simply to announce that he had to go home at once because his wife was dangerously ill: he would be out of the room before Wither could reply —

and then off. The further future was vague, but that did not seem to matter. He put on his hat and coat, ran upstairs and knocked at the door of the Deputy Director's office.

There was no answer. Then Mark noticed that the door was not quite shut. He ventured to push it open a little farther, and saw the Deputy Director sitting inside with his back to the door. "Excuse me, sir," said Mark. "Might I speak to you for a few minutes." There was no answer. "Excuse me, sir," said Mark in a louder voice, but the figure neither spoke nor moved. With some hesitation, Mark went into the room and walked round to the other side of the desk; but when he turned to look at Wither he caught his breath, for he thought he was looking into the face of a corpse. A moment later he recognised his mistake. In the stillness of the room he could hear the man breathing. He was not even asleep, for his eyes were open. He was not unconscious, for his eyes rested momentarily on Mark and then looked away. "I beg your pardon, sir," began Mark, and then stopped. The Deputy Director was not listening. He was so far from listening that Mark felt an insane doubt whether he was there at all, whether the soul of the Deputy Director were not floating far away, spreading and dissipating itself like a gas through formless and lightless worlds, waste lands and lumber rooms of the universe. What looked out of those pale watery eyes was, in a sense, infinity — the shapeless and the interminable. The room was still and cold: there was no clock and the fire had gone out. It was impossible to speak to a face like that. Yet it seemed impossible also to get out of the room, for the man had seen him. Mark was afraid; it was so unlike any experience he had ever had before.

When at last Mr. Wither spoke, his eyes were not fixed on Mark but on some remote point beyond him, beyond the window, perhaps in the sky.

"I know who it is," said Wither. "Your name is Studdock. What do you mean by coming here? You had better have stayed outside. Go away."

It was then that Mark's nerve suddenly broke. All the slowly mounting fears of the last few days ran together into one fixed determination and a few seconds later he was going downstairs three steps at a time. Then he was crossing the hall. Then he was out, and walking down the drive. Once again, his immediate course seemed quite plain to him. Opposite the entrance was a thick belt of trees pierced by a field path. That path would bring him in half an hour to Courthampton and there he could get a country 'bus to Edgestow. About the future he did not think at all. Only two things

mattered: firstly, to get out of that house, and secondly to get back to Jane. He was devoured with a longing for Jane, which was physical without being at all sensual: as if comfort and fortitude would flow from her body, as if her very skin would clean away all the filth that seemed to hang about him. The idea that she might be really mad had somehow dropped out of his mind. And he was still young enough to be incredulous of misery. He could not quite rid himself of the belief that if only he made a dash for it the net must somehow break, the sky must somehow clear, and it would all end up with Jane and Mark having tea together as if none of all this had happened.

He was out of the grounds now: he was crossing the road: he had entered the belt of trees. He stopped suddenly. Something impossible was happening. There was a figure before him on the path; a tall, very tall, slightly stooping figure, sauntering and humming a little dreary tune; the Deputy Director himself. And in one moment all that brittle hardihood was gone from Mark's mood. He turned back. He stood in the road; this seemed to him the worst pain that he had ever felt. Then, tired, so tired that he felt his legs would hardly carry him, he walked very slowly back into Belbury.

III

Mr. MacPhee had a little room on the ground floor at the Manor which he called his office, and to which no woman was ever admitted except under his own conduct; and in this tidy but dusty apartment he sat with Jane Studdock shortly before dinner that evening, having invited her there to give her what he called "a brief, objective outline of the situation."

"I should premise at the outset, Mrs. Studdock," he said, "that I have known the Director for a great many years and that for most of his life he was a philologist. I'm not just satisfied myself that philology can be regarded as an exact science, but I mention the fact as a testimony to his general intellectual capacity. And, not to forejudge any issue, I will not say, as I would in ordinary conversation, that he has always been a man of what you might call an imaginative turn. His original name was Ransom."

"Not Ransom's *Dialect and Semantics*?" said Jane.

"Aye. That's the man," said MacPhee. "Well, about six years ago — I have all the dates in a wee book there, but it doesn't concern us at the moment — came his first disappearance. He was clean gone — not a trace of him — for about nine months. I thought he'd most likely been drowned

bathing or something of the kind. And then one day what does he do but turn up again in his rooms at Cambridge and go down sick and into hospital for three months more. And he wouldn't say where he'd been except privately to a few friends."

"Well?" said Jane eagerly.

"He said," answered MacPhee, producing his snuff-box and laying great emphasis on the word *said*, "He said he'd been to the planet Mars."

"You mean he said this . . . while he was ill?"

"No, no. He says so still. Make what you can of it, that's his story."

"I believe it," said Jane.

MacPhee selected a pinch of snuff with as much care as if those particular grains had differed from all the others in his box and spoke before applying them to his nostrils.

"I'm giving you the facts," he said. "He told us he'd been to Mars, kidnapped, by Professor Weston and Mr. Devine — Lord Feverstone as he now is. And by his own account he'd escaped from them — on Mars, you'll understand — and been wandering about there alone for a bit. Alone."

"It's uninhabited, I suppose?"

"We have no evidence on that point except his own story. You are doubtless aware, Mrs. Studdock, that a man in complete solitude even on this earth — an explorer, for example — gets into very remarkable states of consciousness. I'm told a man might forget his own identity."

"You mean he might have imagined things on Mars that weren't there?"

"I'm making no comments," said MacPhee. "I'm merely recording. By his own accounts there are all kinds of creatures walking about there; that's maybe why he has turned this house into a sort of menagerie, but no matter for that. But he also says he met one kind of creature there which specially concerns us at this moment. He called them eldils."

"A kind of animal, do you mean?"

"Did ever you try to define the word animal, Mrs. Studdock?"

"Not that I remember. I meant, were these things . . . well, intelligent? Could they talk?"

"Aye. They could talk. They were intelligent, forbye, which is not always the same thing."

"In fact these were the Martians?"

"That's just what they weren't, according to his account. They were on Mars, but they didn't rightly belong there. He says they are creatures that

live in empty space."

"But there's no air."

"I'm telling you his story. He says they don't breathe. He said also that they don't reproduce their species and don't die. But you'll observe that even if we assume the rest of his story to be correct this last statement could not rest on observation."

"What on earth are they like?"

"I'm telling you how he described them."

"I mean, what do they look like?"

"I'm not just exactly prepared to answer that question," said MacPhee.

"Are they perfectly *huge*?" said Jane almost involuntarily.

MacPhee blew his nose and continued. "The point, Mrs. Studdock," he said, "is this. Dr. Ransom claims that he has received continual visits from these creatures since he returned to Earth. So much for his first disappearance. Then came the second. He was away for more than a year and that time he said he'd been in the planet Venus — taken there by these eldils."

"Venus is inhabited by them, too?"

"You'll forgive me observing that this remark shows you have not grasped what I'm telling you. These creatures are not planetary creatures at all. Supposing them to exist, you are to conceive them floating about the depth of space, though they may alight on a planet here and there; like a bird alighting on a tree, you understand. There's some of them, he says, are more or less permanently attached to particular planets, but they're not native there. They're just a clean different kind of thing."

There were a few seconds of silence, and then Jane asked, "They are, I gather, more or less friendly?"

"That is certainly the Director's idea about them, with one important exception."

"What's that?"

"The eldils that have for many centuries concentrated on our own planet. We seem to have had no luck at all in choosing our particular complement of parasites. And that, Mrs. Studdock, brings me to the point."

Jane waited. It was extraordinary how MacPhee's manner almost neutralised the strangeness of what he was telling her.

"The long and the short of it is," said he, "that this house is dominated either by the creatures I'm talking about, or by a sheer delusion. It is by

advices he thinks he has received from eldils that the Director has discovered the conspiracy against the human race; and what's more, it's on instructions from eldils that he's conducting the campaign — if you can call it conducting! It may have occurred to you to wonder, Mrs. Studdock, how any man in his senses thinks we're going to defeat a powerful conspiracy by sitting here growing winter vegetables and training performing bears. It is a question I have propounded on more than one occasion. The answer is always the same: we're waiting for orders."

"From the eldils? It was them he meant when he spoke of his Masters?"

"I doubt it would be; though he doesn't use that word in speaking to me."

"But, Mr. MacPhee, I don't understand. I thought you said the ones on our planet were hostile."

"That's a very good question," said MacPhee, "but it's not our own ones that the Director claims to be in communication with. It's his friends from outer space. Our own crew, the terrestrial eldils, are at the back of the whole conspiracy. You are to imagine us, Mrs. Studdock, living on a world where the criminal classes of the eldils have established their headquarters. And what's happening now, if the Director's views are correct, is that their own respectable kith and kin are visiting this planet to red the place up."

"You mean that the other eldils, out of space, actually come here — to this house?"

"That is what the Director thinks."

"But you must know whether it's true or not."

"How?"

"Have you seen them?"

"That's not a question to be answered Aye or No. I've seen a good many things in my time that weren't there or weren't what they pretended to be; rainbows and reflections and sunsets, not to mention dreams. And there's hetero-suggestion too. I will not deny that I have observed a class of phenomena in this house that I have not yet fully accounted for. But they never occurred at a moment when I had a note-book handy or any facilities for verification."

"Isn't seeing believing?"

"It may be — for children or beasts," said MacPhee.

"But not for sensible people, you mean?"

“My uncle, Dr. Duncanson,” said MacPhee, “whose name may be familiar to you — he was Moderator of the General Assembly over the water, in Scotland — used to say, ‘Show it me in the word of God.’ And then he’d slap down the big Bible on the table. It was a way he had of shutting up people that came to him blathering about religious experiences. And granting his premises, he was quite right. I don’t hold his views, Mrs. Studdock, you understand, but I work on the same principles. If anything wants Andrew MacPhee to believe in its existence, I’ll be obliged if it will present itself in full daylight, with a sufficient number of witnesses present, and not get shy if you hold up a camera or a thermometer.”

“You have seen something, then?”

“Aye. But we must keep an open mind. It might be a hallucination. It might be a conjuring trick . . .”

“By the Director?” asked Jane angrily. Mr. MacPhee once more had recourse to his snuff-box. “Do you really expect me,” said Jane, “to believe that the Director is that sort of man? A charlatan?”

“I wish, ma’am,” said MacPhee, “you could see your way to consider the matter without constantly using such terms as *believe*. Obviously, conjuring is one of the hypotheses that any impartial investigator must take into account. The fact that it is a hypothesis specially uncongenial to the emotions of this investigator or that, is neither here nor there. Unless, maybe, it is an extra ground for emphasising the hypothesis in question, just because there is a strong psychological danger of neglecting it.”

“There’s such a thing as loyalty,” said Jane.

MacPhee, who had been carefully shutting up the snuff-box, suddenly looked up with a hundred Covenanters in his eyes.

“There is, ma’am,” he said. “As you get older you will learn that it is a virtue too important to be lavished on individual personalities.”

At that moment there was a knock at the door. “Come in,” said MacPhee, and Camilla entered.

“Have you finished with Jane, Mr. MacPhee?” she said. “She promised to come out for a breath of air with me before dinner.”

“Och, breath of air your grandmother!” said MacPhee with a gesture of despair. “Very well, ladies, very well. Away out to the garden. I doubt they’re doing something more to the purpose on the enemy’s side. They’ll have all this country under their hands before we move, at this rate.”

“I wish you’d read the poem I’m reading,” said Camilla. “For it says in one line just what I feel about this waiting:
Fool,
All lies in a passion of patience, my lord’s rule.”

“What’s that from?” asked Jane.

“*Taliessin through Logres.*”

“Mr. MacPhee probably approves of no poets except Burns.”

“Burns!” said MacPhee with profound contempt, opening the drawer of his table with great energy and producing a formidable sheaf of papers. “If you’re going to the garden, don’t let me delay you, ladies.”

“He’s been telling you?” said Camilla, as the two girls went together down the passage. Moved by a kind of impulse which was rare to her experience, Jane seized her friend’s hand as she answered “Yes!” Both were filled with some passion, but what passion they did not know. They came to the front door, and as they opened it a sight met their eyes which, though natural, seemed at the moment apocalyptic.

All day the wind had been rising and they found themselves looking out on a sky swept almost clean. The air was intensely cold; the stars severe and bright. High above the last rags of scurrying cloud hung the Moon in all her wildness — not the voluptuous moon of a thousand southern love-songs, but the huntress, the untameable virgin, the spear-head of madness. If that cold satellite had just then joined our planet for the first time, it could hardly have looked more like an omen. The wildness crept into Jane’s blood.

“That Mr. MacPhee . . .” said Jane, as they walked steeply uphill to the very summit of the garden.

“I know,” said Camilla: and then, “*You* believed it?”

“Of course.”

“How does Mr. MacPhee explain the Director’s age?”

“You mean his looking — or being — so young — if you call it young?”

“Yes. That is what people are like who come back from the stars. Or at least from Perelandra. Paradise is still going on there; make him tell you about it some time. He will never grow a year or a month older again.”

“Will he die?”

“He will be taken away, I believe. Back into Deep Heaven. It has happened to one or two people, perhaps about six, since the world began.”

“Camilla!”

“Yes.”

“What — what *is* he?”

“He’s a man, my dear. And he is the Pendragon of Logres. This house, all of us here, and Mr. Bultitude and Pinch, are all that’s left of Logres: all the rest has become merely Britain. Go on. Let’s go right to the top. How it’s blowing. They might come to him to-night.”

IV

That evening Jane washed up under the attentive eye of Baron Corvo, the jackdaw, while the others held council in the Blue Room.

“Well,” said Ransom, as Grace Ironwood concluded reading from her notes. “That is the dream, and everything in it seems to be objective.”

“Objective?” said Dimble. “I don’t understand, sir. You don’t mean they could really have a thing like that?”

“What do you think, MacPhee?” asked Ransom.

“Oh aye, it’s possible,” said MacPhee. “You see it’s an old experiment with animals’ heads. They do it often in laboratories. You cut off a cat’s head, maybe, and throw the body away. You can keep the head going for a bit if you supply it with blood at the right pressure.”

“Fancy!” said Ivy Maggs.

“Do you mean, keep it *alive*?” said Dimble.

“*Alive* is an ambiguous word. You can keep all the functions. It’s what would be popularly called alive. But a human head — and consciousness — I don’t know what would happen if you tried that.”

“It has been tried,” said Miss Ironwood. “A German tried it before the first war. With the head of a criminal.”

“Is that a fact?” said MacPhee with great interest. “And do you know what result he got?”

“It failed. The head simply decayed in the ordinary way.”

“I’ve had enough of this, I have,” said Ivy Maggs, rising and abruptly leaving the room.

“Then this filthy abomination,” said Dr. Dimble, “is real — not only a dream.” His face was white and his expression strained. His wife’s face, on the other hand, showed nothing more than that controlled distaste with

which a lady of the old school listens to any disgusting detail when its mention becomes unavoidable.

“We have no evidence of that,” said MacPhee. “I’m only stating the facts. What the girl has dreamed is possible.”

“And what about this turban business,” said Denniston, “this sort of swelling on top of the head?”

“You see what it *might* be,” said the Director.

“I’m not sure that I do, sir,” said Dimble.

“Supposing the dream to be veridical,” said MacPhee. “You can guess what it would be. Once they’d got it kept alive, the first thing that would occur to boys like them would be to increase its brain. They’d try all sorts of stimulants. And then, maybe, they’d ease open the skull-cap and just — well, just let it boil over, as you might say. That’s the idea, I don’t doubt. A cerebral hypertrophy artificially induced to support a superhuman power of ideation.”

“Is it at all probable,” said the Director, “that a hypertrophy like that would increase thinking power?”

“That seems to me the weak point,” said Miss Ironwood. “I should have thought it was just as likely to produce lunacy — or nothing at all. But it *might* have the opposite effect.”

“Then what we are up against,” said Dimble, “is a criminal’s brain swollen to superhuman proportions and experiencing a mode of consciousness which we can’t imagine, but which is presumably a consciousness of agony and hatred.”

“It’s not certain,” said Miss Ironwood, “that there would be very much actual pain. Some from the neck, perhaps, at first.”

“What concerns us much more immediately,” said MacPhee, “is to determine what conclusions we can draw from these carryings-on with Alcasan’s head and what practical steps should be taken on our part — always, and simply as a working hypothesis, assuming the dream to be veridical.”

“It tells us one thing straightaway,” said Denniston.

“What’s that?” asked MacPhee.

“That the enemy movement is international. To get that head they must have been hand-in-glove with at least one foreign police force.”

MacPhee rubbed his hands. “Man,” he said, “you have the makings of a logical thinker. But the deduction’s not all that certain. Bribery might

account for it without actual consolidation."

"It tells us something in the long run even more important," said the Director. "It means that if this technique is really successful, the Belbury people have for all practical purposes discovered a way of making themselves immortal." There was a moment's silence, and then he continued: "It is the beginning of what is really a new species — the Chosen Heads who never die. They will call it the next step in evolution. And henceforward all the creatures that you and I call human are mere candidates for admission to the new species or else its slaves — perhaps its food."

"The emergence of the Bodiless Men!" said Dimble.

"Very likely, very likely," said MacPhee, extending his snuff-box to the last speaker. It was refused, and he took a very deliberate pinch before proceeding. "But there's no good at all applying the forces of rhetoric to make ourselves skeery or daffing our own heads off our shoulders because some other fellows have had the shoulders taken from under their heads. I'll back the Director's head, and yours Dr. Dimble, and my own, against this lad's whether the brains is boiling out of it or no. Provided we use them. I should be glad to hear what practical measures on our side are suggested."

With these words he tapped his knuckles gently on his knee and stared hard at the Director.

"It is," said MacPhee, "a question I have ventured to propound before."

A sudden transformation, like the leaping up of a flame in embers, passed over Grace Ironwood's face. "Can the Director not be trusted to produce his own plan in his own time, Mr. MacPhee?" she said fiercely.

"By the same token, Doctor," said he, "can the Director's council not be trusted to hear his plan?"

"What do you mean, MacPhee?" asked Dimble.

"Mr. Director," said MacPhee. "You'll excuse me for speaking frankly. Your enemies have provided themselves with this Head. They have taken possession of Edgestow, and they're in a fair way to suspend the laws of England. And still you tell us it is not time to move. If you had taken my advice six months ago we would have had an organisation all over this island by now and maybe a party in the House of Commons. I know well what you'll say — that those are not the right methods. And maybe no. But if you can neither take our advice nor give us anything to do, what are we

all sitting here for? Have you seriously considered sending us away and getting some other colleagues that you *can* work with?"

"Dissolve the Company, do you mean?" said Dimble.

"Aye, I do," said MacPhee.

The Director looked up with a smile. "But," he said, "I have no power to dissolve it."

"In that case," said MacPhee, "I must ask what authority you had to bring it together?"

"I never brought it together," said the Director. Then, after glancing round the company, he added: "There is some strange misunderstanding here! Were you all under the impression I had *selected* you?"

"Were you?" he repeated, when no one answered.

"Well," said Dimble, "as regards myself I fully realise that the thing has come about more or less unconsciously — even accidentally. There was no moment at which you asked me to join a definite movement, or anything of that kind. That is why I have always regarded myself as a sort of camp follower. I had assumed that the others were in a more regular position."

"You know why Camilla and I are here, sir," said Denniston. "We certainly didn't intend or foresee how we were going to be employed."

Grace Ironwood looked up with a set expression on her face, which had grown rather pale. "Do you wish . . . ?" she began.

The Director laid his hand on her arm. "No," he said, "no. There is no need for all these stories to be told."

MacPhee's stern features relaxed into a broad grin. "I see what you're driving at," he said. "We've all been playing blind-man's buff, I doubt. But I'll take leave to observe, Dr. Ransom, that you carry things a wee bit high. I don't just remember how you came to be called Director: but from that title and from one or two other indications a man would have thought you behaved more like the leader of an organisation than the host at a house-party."

"I am the Director," said Ransom, smiling. "Do you think I would claim the authority I do if the relation between us depended either on your choice or mine? You never chose me. I never chose you. Even the great Oyéresu whom I serve never chose me. I came into their worlds by what seemed, at first, a chance; as you came to me — as the very animals in this house first came to it. You and I have not started or devised this: it has descended on us — sucked us into itself, if you like. It is, no doubt, an organisation: but we

are not the organisers. And that is why I have no authority to give any one of you permission to leave my household."

For a time there was complete silence in the Blue Room, except for the crackling of the fire.

"If there is nothing more to discuss," said Grace Ironwood presently, "perhaps we had better leave the Director to rest."

MacPhee rose and dusted some snuff off the baggy knees of his trousers — thus preparing a wholly novel adventure for the mice when they next came out in obedience to the Director's whistle.

"I have no notion," he said, "of leaving this house if anyone wishes me to stay. But as regards the general hypothesis on which the Director appears to be acting and the very peculiar authority he claims, I absolutely reserve my judgement. You know well, Mr. Director, in what sense I have, and in what sense I have not, complete confidence in yourself."

The Director laughed. "Heaven forbid," he said, "that I should claim to know what goes on in the two halves of your head, MacPhee, much less how you connect them. But I know — what matters much more — the kind of confidence I have in you. But won't you sit down? There is much more to be said."

MacPhee resumed his chair, Grace Ironwood, who had been sitting bolt upright in hers, relaxed, and the Director spoke.

"We have learned to-night," he said, "if not what the real power behind our enemies is doing, at least the form in which it is embodied at Belbury. We therefore know something about one of the two attacks which are about to be made on our race. But I'm thinking of the other."

"Yes," said Camilla earnestly, "the other."

"Meaning by that?" asked MacPhee.

"Meaning," said Ransom, "whatever is under Bragdon Wood."

"You're still thinking about *that*?" said the Ulsterman.

"I am thinking of almost nothing else," said the Director. "We knew already that the enemy wanted the Wood. Some of us guessed why. Now Jane has seen — or rather felt — in a vision what it is they are looking for in Bragdon. It may be the greater danger of the two. But what is certain is that the greatest danger of all is the junction of the enemies' forces. He is staking everything on that. When the new power from Belbury joins up with the old power under Bragdon Wood, Logres — indeed Man — will be almost surrounded. For us everything turns on preventing that junction.

That is the point at which we must be ready both to kill and die. But we cannot strike yet. We cannot get into Bragdon and start excavating for ourselves. There must be a moment when they find him — it. I have no doubt we shall be told in one way or another. Till then we must wait."

"I don't believe a word of all that other story," said MacPhee.

"I thought," said Miss Ironwood, "we weren't to use words like *believe*. I thought we were only to state facts and exhibit implications."

"If you two quarrel much more," said the Director, "I think I'll make you marry one another."

V

At the beginning the grand mystery for the Company had been why the enemy wanted Bragdon Wood. The land was unsuitable and could be made fit to bear a building on the scale they proposed only by the costliest preliminary work; and Edgestow itself was not an obviously convenient place. By intense study in collaboration with Dr. Dimble and despite the continued scepticism of MacPhee the Director had at last come to a certain conclusion. Dimble and he and the Dennistons shared between them a knowledge of Arthurian Britain which orthodox scholarship will probably not reach for some centuries. They knew that Edgestow lay in what had been the very heart of ancient Logres, that the village of Cure Hardy preserved the name of Ozana le Coeur Hardi, and that a historical Merlin had once worked in what was now Bragdon Wood.

What exactly he had done there they did not know; but they had all, by various routes, come too far either to consider his art mere legend and imposture, or to equate it exactly with what the Renaissance called Magic. Dimble even maintained that a good critic, by his sensibility alone, could detect the difference between the traces which the two things had left on literature. "What common measure is there," he would ask, "between ceremonial occultists like Faustus and Prospero and Archimago with their midnight studies, their forbidden books, their attendant fiends or elementals, and a figure like Merlin who seems to produce his results simply by being Merlin?" And Ransom agreed. He thought that Merlin's art was the last survival of something older and different — something brought to Western Europe after the fall of Numinor and going back to an era in which the general relations of mind and matter on this planet had been other than

those we know. It had probably differed from Renaissance Magic profoundly. It had possibly (though this was doubtful) been less guilty: it had certainly been more effective. For Paracelsus and Agrippa and the rest had achieved little or nothing: Bacon himself — no enemy to magic except on this account — reported that the magicians “attained not to greatness and certainty of works.” The whole Renaissance outburst of forbidden arts had, it seemed, been a method of losing one’s soul on singularly unfavourable terms. But the older Art had been a different proposition.

But if the only possible attraction of Bragdon lay in its association with the last vestiges of Atlantean magic, this told the Company something else. It told them that the N.I.C.E., at its core, was not concerned solely with modern or materialistic forms of power. It told the Director, in fact, that there was Eldilic energy and Eldilic knowledge behind it. It was, of course, another question whether its human members knew of the dark powers who were their real organisers. And in the long run this question was not perhaps important. As Ransom himself had said more than once, “Whether they know it or whether they don’t, much the same sort of things are going to happen. It’s not a question of how the Belbury people are going to act — the Dark-Eldils will see to that — but of how they will think about their actions. They’ll go to Bragdon: it remains to be seen whether any of them will know the real reason why they’re going there, or whether they’ll all fudge up some theory of soils, or air, or etheric tensions, to explain it.”

Up to a certain point the Director had supposed that the powers for which the enemy hankered were resident in the mere site at Bragdon — for there is an old and widespread belief that locality itself is of importance in such matters. But from Jane’s dream of the cold sleeper he had learned better. It was something much more definite, something located under the soil of Bragdon Wood, something to be discovered by digging. It was, in fact, the body of Merlin. What the eldils had told him about the possibility of such discovery he had received, while they were with him, almost without wonder. It was no wonder to them. In their eyes the normal Tellurian modes of being — engendering and birth and death and decay — which are to us the framework of thought, were no less wonderful than the countless other patterns of being which were continually present to their unsleeping minds. To those high creatures whose activity builds what we call Nature, nothing is “natural.” From their station the essential arbitrariness (so to call it) of every actual creation is ceaselessly visible; for

them there are no basic assumptions: all springs with the wilful beauty of a jest or a tune from that miraculous moment of self-limitation wherein the Infinite, rejecting a myriad possibilities, throws out of Himself the positive and elected invention. That a body should lie uncorrupted for fifteen hundred years, did not seem strange to them; they knew worlds where there was no corruption at all. That its individual life should remain latent in it all that time, was to them no more strange: they had seen innumerable different modes in which soul and matter could be combined and separated, separated without loss of reciprocal influence, combined without true incarnation, fused so utterly as to be a third thing, or periodically brought together in a union as short, and as momentous, as the nuptial embrace. It was not as a marvel in natural philosophy, but as an information in time of war that they brought the Director their tidings. Merlin had not died. His life had been hidden, side-tracked, moved out of our one-dimensioned time, for fifteen centuries. But under certain conditions it would return to his body.

They had not told him this till recently because they had not known it. One of Ransom's greatest difficulties in disputing with MacPhee, who consistently professed to disbelieve the very existence of the eldils, was that MacPhee made the common, but curious assumption that if there are creatures wiser and stronger than man they must be forthwith omniscient and omnipotent. In vain did Ransom endeavour to explain the truth. Doubtless the great beings who now so often came to him had power sufficient to sweep Belbury from the face of England and England from the face of the globe; perhaps to blot the globe itself out of existence. But no power of that kind would be used. Nor had they any direct vision into the minds of men. It was in a different place, and approaching their knowledge from the other side, that they had discovered the state of Merlin: not from inspection of the thing that slept under Bragdon Wood, but from observing a certain unique configuration in that place where those things remain that are taken off time's mainroad, behind the invisible hedges, into the unimaginable fields. Not all the times that are outside the present are therefore past or future.

It was this that kept the Director wakeful, with knitted brow, in the small cold hours of that morning when the others had left him. There was no doubt in his mind now that the enemy had bought Bragdon to find Merlin: and if they found him they would re-awake him. The old Druid would

inevitably cast in his lot with the new planners — what could prevent his doing so? A junction would be effected between two kinds of power which between them would determine the fate of our planet. Doubtless that had been the will of the Dark-Eldils for centuries. The physical sciences, good and innocent in themselves, had already, even in Ransom's own time, begun to be warped, had been subtly manoeuvred in a certain direction. Despair of objective truth had been increasingly insinuated into the scientists; indifference to it, and a concentration upon mere power, had been the result. Babble about the *élan vital* and flirtations with pan-psychism were bidding fair to restore the *Anima Mundi* of the magicians. Dreams of the far future destiny of man were dragging up from its shallow and unquiet grave the old dream of Man as God. The very experiences of the dissecting-room and the pathological laboratory were breeding a conviction that the stifling of all deep-set repugnances was the first essential for progress. And now all this had reached the stage at which its dark contrivers thought they could safely begin to bend it back so that it would meet that other and earlier kind of power. Indeed, they were choosing the first moment at which this could have been done. You could not have done it with nineteenth-century scientists. Their firm objective materialism would have excluded it from their minds; and even if they could have been made to believe, their inherited morality would have kept them from touching dirt. MacPhee was a survivor from that tradition. It was different now. Perhaps few or none of the people at Belbury knew what was happening: but once it happened, they would be like straw in fire. What should they find incredible, since they believed no longer in a rational universe? What should they regard as too obscene, since they held that all morality was a mere subjective by-product of the physical and economic situations of men? The time was ripe. From the point of view which is accepted in hell, the whole history of our Earth had led up to this moment. There was now at last a real chance for fallen Man to shake off that limitation of his powers which mercy had imposed upon him as a protection from the full results of his fall. If this succeeded, hell would be at last incarnate. Bad men, while still in the body, still crawling on this little globe, would enter that state which, heretofore, they had entered only after death, would have the diuturnity and power of evil spirits. Nature, all over the globe of Tellus, would become their slave: and of that dominion no end, before the end of time itself, could be certainly foreseen.

TEN

The Conquered City

I

Up till now, whatever his days had been like, Mark had usually slept well: this night, sleep failed him. He had not written to Jane; he had spent the day keeping out of sight and doing nothing in particular. The wakeful night moved all his fears on to a new level. He was, of course, a materialist in theory: and, also in theory, he was past the age at which one can have night fears. But now, as the wind rattled his window hour after hour, he felt the nursery terrors again: the old exquisite thrill, as of cold fingers delicately travelling down his back. Materialism is in fact no protection. Those who seek it in that hope (they are not a negligible class) will be disappointed. The thing you fear is impossible. Well and good. Can you therefore cease to fear it? Not here and now. And what then? If you must see ghosts it is better not to disbelieve in them.

He was called earlier than usual, and with his tea came a note. The Deputy Director sent his compliments and must ask Mr. Studdock to call on him *instantly* about a most urgent and distressing matter. Mark dressed and obeyed.

In Wither's room he found Wither and Miss Hardcastle. To Mark's surprise and, momentarily, to his relief Wither showed no recollection of their last meeting. Indeed, his manner was genial, even deferential, though extremely grave.

"Good morning, good morning, Mr. Studdock," he said. "It is with the greatest regret that I — er — in short, I would not have kept you from your breakfast unless I had felt that in your own interests you should be placed in full possession of the facts at the earliest possible moment. You will of course regard all that I am about to say as strictly confidential. The matter is a distressing or at least an embarrassing one. I feel sure that as the conversation proceeds (pray be seated, Mr. Studdock) you will realise in your present situation how very wise we have been in securing from the outset a police force — to give it that rather unfortunate name — of our own."

Mark licked his lips and sat down.

"My reluctance to raise the question," continued Wither, "would, however, be very much more serious if I did not feel able to assure you — in *advance* you understand — of the complete confidence which we all feel in you and which I very much hoped" (here for the first time he looked Mark in the eyes) "you were beginning to reciprocate. We regard ourselves here as being so many brothers and — er — sisters: so that whatever passes between us in this room can be regarded as confidential in the fullest possible sense of the word, and I take it we shall all feel entitled to discuss the subject I am about to mention in the most human and informal manner possible."

Miss Hardcastle's voice, suddenly breaking in, had an effect not wholly unlike that of a pistol shot.

"You have lost your wallet, Studdock," she said.

"My — my wallet?" said Mark.

"Yes. Wallet. Pocket-book. Thing you keep notes and letters in."

"Yes. I have. Have you found it?"

"Does it contain three pounds ten, counterfoil of postal order for five shillings, letters from a woman signing herself Myrtle, from the Bursar of Bracton, from G. Hernshaw, F. A. Browne, M. Belcher, and a bill for a dress-suit from Simonds and Son, 32A Market Street, Edgestow?"

"Well, more or less so."

"There it is," said Miss Hardcastle pointing to the table. "No you don't!" she added as Mark made a step towards it.

"What on earth is all this about?" said Mark. His tone was that which I think almost any man would have used in the circumstances but which policemen are apt to describe as "blustering."

"None of that," said Miss Hardcastle. "This wallet was found in the grass beside the road about five yards away from Hingest's body."

"My God!" said Studdock. "You don't mean . . . the thing's absurd."

"There's no use appealing to *me*," said Miss Hardcastle. "I'm not a solicitor, nor a jury, nor a judge. I'm only a policewoman. I'm telling you the facts."

"Do I understand that I'm suspected of murdering Hingest?"

"I don't really think," said the Deputy Director, "that you need have the slightest apprehension that there is, at this stage, any radical difference between your colleagues and yourself as to the light in which this very

painful matter should be regarded. The question is really a constitutional one — —”

“Constitutional?” said Mark angrily. “If I understand her, Miss Hardcastle is accusing me of murder.”

Wither’s eyes looked at him as if from an infinite distance.

“Oh,” said he, “I don’t really think that does justice to Miss Hardcastle’s position. That element in the Institute which she represents would be strictly *ultra vires* in doing anything of the kind within the N.I.C.E. — supposing, but purely of course for purposes of argument, that they wished, or should wish at a later stage, to do so — while in relation to the outside authorities their function, however we define it, would be quite inconsistent with any action of the sort; at least in the sense in which I understand you to be using the words.”

“But it’s the outside authorities with whom I’m concerned, I suppose,” said Mark. His mouth had become dry and he had difficulty in making himself audible. “As far as I can understand, Miss Hardcastle means I’m going to be arrested.”

“On the contrary,” said Wither. “This is precisely one of those cases in which you see the enormous value of possessing our own executive. Here is a matter which might, I fear, cause you very considerable inconvenience if the ordinary police had discovered the wallet or if we were in the position of an ordinary citizen who felt it his duty — as we should ourselves feel it our duty if we ever came to be in that very different situation — to hand over the wallet to them. I do not know if Miss Hardcastle has made it perfectly clear to you that it was her officers, and they only, who have made this — er — embarrassing discovery.”

“What on earth do you mean?” said Mark. “If Miss Hardcastle does not think there’s a prima facie case against me, why am I being arraigned in this way at all? And if she does, how can she avoid informing the authorities?”

“My dear friend,” said Wither in an antediluvian tone, “there is not the slightest desire on the part of the Committee to insist on defining, in cases of this sort, the powers of action of our own police, much less, what is here in question, their powers of inaction. I do not think anyone had suggested that Miss Hardcastle should be *obliged* — in any sense that limited her own initiative — to communicate to outside authorities, who by their very organisation must be supposed to be less adapted for dealing with such imponderable and quasi-technical inquiries as will often arise, any facts

acquired by her and her staff in the course of their internal functioning within the N.I.C.E.”

“Do I understand,” said Mark, “that Miss Hardcastle thinks she has facts justifying my arrest for the murder of Mr. Hingest, but is kindly offering to suppress them?”

“You got it now, Studdock,” said the Fairy. A moment later, for the first time in Mark’s experience, she actually lit her cheroot, blew a cloud of smoke, and smiled, or at least drew back her lips so that the teeth became visible.

“But that’s not what I want,” said Mark. This was not quite true. The idea of having the thing hushed up in any way and on almost any terms when it first presented itself a few seconds ago had come like air to one suffocating. But something like citizenship was still alive in him and he proceeded, almost without noticing this emotion, to follow a different line. “I don’t want that,” he said, speaking rather too loud, “I’m an innocent man. I think I’d better go to the police — the *real* police, I mean — at once.”

“If you *want* to be tried for your life,” said the Fairy, “that’s another matter.”

“I want to be vindicated,” said Mark. “The charge would fall to pieces at once. There was no conceivable motive. And I have an alibi. Everyone knows I slept here that night.”

“Really?” said the Fairy.

“What do you mean?” said Mark.

“There’s always a *motive*, you know,” said she, “for anyone murdering anyone. The police are only human. When the machinery’s started they naturally want a conviction.”

Mark assured himself he was not frightened. If only Wither didn’t keep all his windows shut and then have a roaring fire!

“There’s a letter you wrote,” said the Fairy.

“What letter?”

“A letter to a Mr. Pelham, of your own College, dated six weeks ago, in which you say, ‘I wish Bill the Blizzard could be moved to a better world.’”

Like a sharp physical pain the memory of that scribbled note came back to Mark. It was the sort of silly jocularity one used in the Progressive Element — the kind of thing that might be said a dozen times a day in Bracton about an opponent or even about a bore.

“How does that letter come to be in your hands?” said Mark.

“I think, Mr. Studdock,” said the Deputy Director, “it would be very improper to suggest that Miss Hardcastle should give any kind of exposition — in detail, I mean — of the actual working of the Institutional Police. In saying this I do not mean for one moment to deny that the fullest possible confidence between all the members of the N.I.C.E. is one of the most valuable characteristics it can have, and, indeed, a *sine qua non* of that really concrete and organic life which we expect it to develop. But there are necessarily certain spheres — not sharply defined, of course, but inevitably revealing themselves in response to the environment and obedience to the indwelling *ethos* or dialectic of the whole — in which a confidence that involved the verbal interchange of *facts* would — er — would defeat its own end.”

“You don’t suppose,” said Mark, “that anyone could take that letter to be meant seriously?”

“Ever tried to make a policeman understand anything?” said the Fairy. “I mean what you call a *real* policeman.”

Mark said nothing.

“And I don’t think the alibi is specially good,” said the Fairy. “You were seen talking to Bill at dinner. You were seen going out of the front door with him when he left. You were not seen coming back. Nothing is known of your movements till breakfast-time next morning. If you had gone with him by car to the scene of the murder you would have had ample time to walk back and go to bed by about 2.15. Frosty night, you know. No reason why your shoes should have been specially muddy or anything of that sort.”

“If I might pick up a point made by Miss Hardcastle,” said Wither, “this is a very good illustration of the immense importance of the Institutional Police. There are so many fine shades involved which it would be unreasonable to expect the ordinary authorities to understand but which, so long as they remain, so to speak, in our own family circle (I look upon the N.I.C.E., Mr. Studdock, as one great family) need develop no tendency to lead to any miscarriage of justice.”

Owing to some mental confusion which had before now assailed him in dentists’ operating-rooms and in the studies of headmasters, Mark began almost to identify the situation which seemed to be imprisoning him with his literal imprisonment by the four walls of that hot room. If only he could once get out of it, on any terms, out into the free air and sunlight, away over the countryside, away from the recurrent creak of the Deputy Director’s

collar and the red stains on the end of Miss Hardcastle's cheroot and the picture of the King which hung above the fireplace!

"You really advise me, sir," he said, "not to go to the police?"

"To the police?" said Wither as if this idea were completely new. "I don't think, Mr. Studdock, that anyone had quite contemplated your taking any irrevocable action of that sort. It might even be argued that by such an action you would be guilty — unintentionally guilty, I hasten to add — of some degree of disloyalty to your colleagues and specially to Miss Hardcastle. You would, of course, be placing yourself outside our protection. . . ."

"That's the point, Studdock," said the Fairy. "Once you are in the hands of the police you are in the hands of the police."

The moment of Mark's decision had passed by him without his noticing it.

"Well," he said, "what do you propose to do?"

"Me?" said the Fairy. "Sit tight. It's lucky for you that it was we and not some outsider who found the wallet."

"Not only fortunate for — er — Mr. Studdock," added Wither gently, "but for the whole N.I.C.E. We could not have been indifferent. . ."

"There's only one snag," said the Fairy, "and that is that we haven't got your letter to Pelham. Only a copy. But with any luck, nothing will come of that."

"Then there's nothing to be done at present?" said Mark.

"No," said Wither. "No. No immediate action of any official character. It is, of course, very advisable that you should act, as I am sure you will, with the greatest prudence and — er — er — caution for the next few months. As long as you are with us, Scotland Yard would, I feel, see the inconvenience of trying to act unless they had a very clear case indeed. It is no doubt probable that some — er — some trial of strength between the ordinary executive and our own organisation will take place within the next six months: but I think it very unlikely they would choose to make this a test case."

"But do you mean they suspect me already?" said Mark.

"We'll hope not," said the Fairy. "Of course they want a prisoner — that's only natural. But they'd a damn sight rather have one who doesn't involve them in searching the premises of the N.I.C.E."

“But, look here, damn it!” said Mark. “Aren’t you hoping to catch the thief in a day or two? Aren’t you going to do *anything*?”

“The thief?” said Wither. “There has been no suggestion so far that the body was rifled.”

“I mean the thief who stole my wallet.”

“Oh — ah — your wallet,” said the other, very gently stroking his refined, handsome face. “I see. I understand, do I, that you are advancing a charge of theft against some person or persons unknown — —”

“But, good God!” shouted Mark, “were you not assuming that someone stole it? Do you think I was there myself? Do *you* both think I am a murderer?”

“Please!” said the Deputy Director, “please, Mr. Studdock, you really must not shout. Quite apart from the indiscretion of it, I must remind you that you are in the presence of a lady. As far as I can remember, nothing has been said on our side about murder, and no charge of any sort had been made. My only anxiety is to make perfectly clear what we are all doing. There are, of course, certain lines of conduct and a certain mode of procedure which it would be theoretically possible for you to adopt and which would make it very difficult for us to continue the discussion. I am sure Miss Hardcastle agrees with me.”

“It’s all one to me,” said the Fairy. “Why Studdock should start bellowing at us because we are trying to keep him out of the dock, I don’t know. But that’s for him to decide. I’ve got a busy day and don’t want to hang about here all morning.”

“Really,” said Mark, “I should have thought it was excusable to — —”

“Pray compose yourself, Mr. Studdock,” said Wither. “As I said before, we look upon ourselves as one family and nothing like a formal apology is required. We all understand one another and all dislike — er — scenes. I might perhaps be allowed to mention, in the friendliest possible manner, that any instability of temperament would be viewed by the Committee as — well, as not very favourable to the confirmation of your appointment. We are all speaking, of course, in the strictest confidence.”

Mark was far past bothering about the job for its own sake: but he realised that the threat of dismissal was now a threat of hanging.

“I’m sorry if I was rude,” he said at last. “What do you advise me to do?”

“Don’t put your nose outside Belbury, Studdock,” said the Fairy.

“I do not think Miss Hardcastle could have given you better advice,” said Wither. “And now that Mrs. Studdock is going to join you here this temporary captivity — I am using that word, you will understand, in a metaphorical sense — will not be a serious hardship. You must look upon this as your *home*, Mr. Studdock.”

“Oh . . . that reminds me, sir,” said Mark. “I’m not really quite sure about having my wife here. As a matter of fact she’s not in very good health — —”

“But surely, in that case, you must be all the more anxious to have her here?”

“I don’t believe it would suit her, sir.”

The D.D.’s eyes wandered and his voice became lower.

“I had almost forgotten, Mr. Studdock,” he said, “to congratulate you on your introduction to our Head. It marks an important transition in your career. We all now feel that you are really one of us in a deeper sense. I am sure nothing is further from your intention than to repell the friendly — the almost fatherly — concern he feels about you. He is very anxious to welcome Mrs. Studdock among us at the earliest opportunity.”

“Why?” said Mark suddenly.

Wither looked at Mark with an indescribable smile.

“My dear boy,” he said. “Unity, you know. The family circle. She’d — she’d be company for Miss Hardcastle!” Before Mark had recovered from this staggeringly new conception, Wither rose and shuffled towards the door. He paused with one hand on the handle and laid the other on Mark’s shoulder.

“You must be hungry for your breakfast,” he said. “Don’t let me delay you. Behave with the greatest caution. And — and” — here his face suddenly changed. The widely opened mouth looked all at once like the mouth of some enraged animal: what had been the senile vagueness of the eyes became an absence of all specifically human expression. “And bring the girl. Do you understand? Get your wife,” he added. “The Head . . . he’s not patient.”

II

As Mark closed the door behind him he immediately thought “Now! They’re both in there together. Safe for a minute at least.” Without even

waiting to get his hat he walked briskly to the front door and down the drive. Nothing but physical impossibility would stop him from going to Edgestow and warning Jane. After that he had no plans. Even the vague idea of escaping to America which, in a simpler age, comforted so many a fugitive, was denied him. He had already read in the papers the warm approval of the N.I.C.E. and all its works which came from the United States and from Russia. Some poor tool just like himself had written them. Its claws were embedded in every country: on the liner, if he should ever succeed in sailing, on the tender, if he should ever make some foreign port, its ministers would be waiting for him.

Now he was past the road; he was in the belt of trees. Scarcely a minute had passed since he had left the D.D.'s office and no one had overtaken him. But yesterday's adventure was happening over again. A tall, stooped, shuffling, creaking figure, humming a tune, barred his way. Mark had never fought. Ancestral impulses lodged in his body — that body which was in so many ways wiser than his mind — directed the blow which he aimed at the head of this senile obstructor. But there was no impact. The shape had suddenly vanished.

Those who know best were never fully agreed as to the explanation of this episode. It may have been that Mark, both then and on the previous day, being over-wrought, saw a hallucination of Wither where Wither was not. It may be that the continual appearance of Wither which at almost all hours haunted so many rooms and corridors of Belbury was, in one well-verified sense of the word, a ghost — one of those sensory impressions which a strong personality in its last decay can imprint, most commonly after death but sometimes before it, on the very structure of a building, and which are removed not by exorcism but by architectural alterations. Or it may, after all, be that souls who have lost the intellectual good do indeed receive in return, and for a short period, the vain privilege of thus reproducing themselves in many places as wraiths. At any rate the thing, whatever it was, vanished.

The path ran diagonally across a field in grass, now powdered with frost, and the sky was hazy blue. Then came a stile: after that the path ran for three fields along the edge of a spinney. Then a little to the left, past the back parts of a farm, then along a ride through a wood. After that the spire of Courthampton was in sight; Mark's feet had now got warm and he was beginning to feel hungry. Then he went across a road, through a herd of

cattle that put down their heads and snorted at him, across a stream by a foot-bridge, and so into the frozen ruts of the lane that led him into Courthampton.

The first thing he saw as he came into the village street was a farm-cart. A woman and three children sat beside the man who was driving it, and in the cart were piled chests of drawers, bedsteads, mattresses, boxes, and a canary in a cage. Immediately after it came a man and woman and child on foot wheeling a perambulator: it also was piled with small household property. After that came a family pushing a hand-cart, and then a heavily loaded trap, and then an old car, blowing its horn incessantly but unable to get out of its place in the procession. A steady stream of such traffic was passing through the village. Mark had never seen war: if he had he would have recognised at once the signs of flight. In all those plodding horses and men and in all those loaded vehicles he would have read clearly the message “Enemy behind.”

The traffic was so continuous that it took him a long time to get to the cross-road by the pub where he could find a glazed and framed table of buses. There would not be one to Edgestow till 12.15. He hung about, understanding nothing of what he saw, but wondering; Courthampton was normally a very quiet village. By a happy, and not uncommon, illusion he felt less endangered now that Belbury was out of sight, and thought surprisingly little about his future. He thought sometimes about Jane, and sometimes about bacon and eggs, and fried fish, and dark, fragrant streams of coffee pouring into large cups. At 11.30 the pub opened. He went in and ordered a pint and some bread and cheese.

The bar was at first empty. During the next half-hour men dropped in one by one till about four were present. They did not at first talk about the unhappy procession which continued all this time to pass the windows. For some time indeed they did not talk at all. Then a very little man with a face like an old potato observed to no one in particular, “I seen old Rumbold the other night.” No one replied for five minutes and then a very young man in leggings said, “I reckon he’s sorry he ever tried it.” In this way conversation about Rumbold trickled on for some time. It was only when the subject of Rumbold was thoroughly exhausted that the talk, very indirectly and by gradual stages, began to throw some light on the stream of refugees.

“Still coming out,” said one man.

“Ah,” said another.

“Can’t be many left there by now.”

“Don’t know where they’ll all get in, I’m sure.”

Little by little the whole thing came out. These were the refugees from Edgestow. Some had been turned out of their houses, some scared by the riots and still more by the restoration of order. Something like a terror appeared to have been established in the town. “They tell me there were two hundred arrests yesterday,” said the landlord. “Ah,” said the young man. “They’re hard cases those N.I.C.E. police, every one of them. They put the wind up my old Dad proper, I tell ‘ee.” He ended with a laugh. “‘Taint the police so much as the workmen by what I hear,” said another. “They never ought to have brought those Welsh and Irish.” But that was about as far as criticism went. What struck Mark deeply was the almost complete absence of indignation among the speakers, or even of any distinct sympathy with the refugees. Everyone present knew of at least one outrage in Edgestow: but all agreed that these refugees must be greatly exaggerating. “It says in this morning’s paper that things are pretty well settling down,” said the landlord. “That’s right,” agreed the others. “There’ll always be some who get awkward,” said the potato-faced man. “What’s the good of getting awkward?” asked another, “it’s got to go on. You can’t stop it.” “That’s what I say,” said the landlord. Fragments of articles which Mark himself had written drifted to and fro. Apparently he and his kind had done their work well; Miss Hardcastle had rated too high the resistance of the working classes to propaganda.

When the time came he had no difficulty in getting on to the bus: it was indeed empty, for all the traffic was going in the opposite direction. It put him down at the top of Market Street and he set out at once to walk up to the flat. The whole town wore a new expression. One house out of three was empty. About half the shops had their windows boarded up. As he gained height and came into the region of large villas with gardens he noticed that many of these had been requisitioned and bore white placards with the N.I.C.E. symbol — a muscular male nude grasping a thunderbolt. At every corner, and often in between, lounged or sauntered the N.I.C.E. police, helmeted, swinging their clubs, with revolvers in holsters on their black shiny belts. Their round white faces with open mouths slowly revolving as they chewed gum remained long in his memory. There were also notices everywhere which he did not stop to read: they were headed *Emergency Regulations* and bore the signature “Feverstone.”

Would Jane be in? He felt he could not bear it if Jane should not be in. He was fingering his latchkey in his pocket long before he reached the house. The front door was locked. This meant that the Hutchinsons who occupied the ground floor were away. He opened it and went in. It seemed cold and damp on the staircase: cold and damp and dark on the landing. “Ja-ane,” he shouted as he unlocked the door of the flat: but he had already lost hope. As soon as he was inside the door he knew the place was uninhabited. A pile of unopened letters lay on the inside door-mat. There was no sound, not a tick of a clock. Everything was in order: Jane must have left some morning immediately after “doing” all the rooms. The tea-cloths hanging in the kitchen were bone dry: they clearly had not been used for at least twenty-four hours. The bread in the cupboard was stale. There was a jug half full of milk, but the milk had thickened and would not pour. He continued stumping from room to room long after he was quite certain of the truth, staring at the staleness and pathos which pervades deserted homes. But obviously it was no good hanging about here. A splutter of unreasonable anger arose. Why the hell hadn’t Jane told him she was going away? Or had someone taken her away? Perhaps there was a note for him. He took a pile of letters off the mantelpiece, but they were only letters he had put there himself to be answered. Then on the table he noticed an envelope addressed to Mrs. Dimble at her own house over beyond the Wynd. So that damned woman had been here! Those Dimbles had always, he felt, disliked him. They’d probably asked Jane to stay with them. Been interfering somehow, no doubt. He must go down to Northumberland and see Dimble.

The idea of being annoyed with the Dimbles occurred to Mark almost as an inspiration. To bluster a little as an injured husband in search of his wife would be a pleasant change from the attitudes he had recently been compelled to adopt. On the way down town he stopped to have a drink. As he came to the Bristol and saw the N.I.C.E. placard on it, he had almost said “Oh damn,” and turned away, before he suddenly remembered that he was himself a high official in the N.I.C.E. and by no means a member of that general Public whom the Bristol now excluded. They asked him who he was at the door and became obsequious when he told them. There was a pleasant fire burning. After the gruelling day he had had he felt justified in ordering a large whisky, and after it he had a second. It completed the change in his mental weather which had begun at the moment when he first

conceived the idea of having a grievance against the Dimbles. The whole state of Edgestow had something to do with it. There was an element in him to which all these exhibitions of power suggested chiefly how much nicer and how much more appropriate it was, all said and done, to be part of the N.I.C.E. than to be an outsider. Even now . . . had he been taking all this *démarche* about a murder trial too seriously? Of course that was the way Wither managed things: he liked to have something hanging over everyone. It was only a way to keep him at Belbury and to make him send for Jane. And when one came to think of it, why not? She couldn't go on indefinitely living alone. And the wife of a man who meant to have a career and live at the centre of things would have to learn to be a woman of the world. Anyway, the first thing was to see that fellow Dimble.

He left the Bristol feeling, as he would have said, a different man. Indeed he was a different man. From now onwards till the moment of final decision should meet him, the different men in him appeared with startling rapidity and each seemed very complete while it lasted. Thus, skidding violently from one side to the other, his youth approached the moment at which he would begin to be a person.

III

"Come in," said Dimble in his rooms at Northumberland. He had just finished with his last pupil for the day and was intending to start out for St. Anne's in a few minutes. "Oh, it's you, Studdock," he added as the door opened. "Come in." He tried to speak naturally but he was surprised at the visit and shocked by what he saw. Studdock's face appeared to him to have changed since they last met; it had grown fatter and paler and there was a new vulgarity in the expression.

"I've come to ask about Jane," said Mark. "Do you know where she is?"

"I can't give you her address, I'm afraid," said Dimble.

"Do you mean you don't know it?"

"I can't give it," said Dimble.

According to Mark's programme this was the point at which he should have begun to take a strong line. But he did not feel the same now that he was in the room. Dimble had always treated him with scrupulous politeness and Mark had always felt that Dimble disliked him. This had not made him dislike Dimble. It had only made him uneasily talkative in Dimble's

presence and anxious to please. Vindictiveness was by no means one of Mark's vices. For Mark liked to be liked. A snub sent him away dreaming not of revenge but of brilliant jokes or achievements which would one day conquer the good will of the man who had snubbed him. If he were ever cruel it would be downwards, to inferiors and outsiders who solicited his regard, not upwards to those who rejected it. There was a good deal of the spaniel in him.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "I don't understand."

"If you have any regard for your wife's safety you will not ask me to tell you where she has gone," said Dimble.

"Safety?"

"Safety," repeated Dimble with great sternness.

"Safety from what?"

"Don't you know what has happened?"

"What's happened?"

"On the night of the big riot the Institutional Police attempted to arrest her. She escaped, but not before they had tortured her."

"Tortured her? What do you mean?"

"Burned her with cigars."

"That's what I've come about," said Mark. "Jane — I'm afraid she is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. That didn't really happen, you know."

"The doctor who dressed the burns thinks otherwise."

"Great Scot!" said Mark. "So they really did? But, look here . . ."

Under the quiet stare of Dimble he found it difficult to speak.

"Why have I not been told about this outrage?" he shouted.

"By your colleagues?" asked Dimble drily. "It is an odd question to ask me. You ought to understand the workings of the N.I.C.E better than I do."

"Why didn't *you* tell me? Why has nothing been done about it? Have you been to the police?"

"The Institutional Police?"

"No, the ordinary police."

"Do you really not know that there are no ordinary police left in Edgestow?"

"I suppose there are some magistrates."

"There is the Emergency Commissioner, Lord Feverstone. You seem to misunderstand. This is a conquered and occupied city."

"Then why, in Heaven's name, didn't you get on to me?"

"*You?*" said Dimble.

For one moment, the first for many years, Mark saw himself exactly as a man like Dimble saw him. It almost took his breath away.

"Look here," he said. "You don't . . . it's too fantastic! You don't imagine I knew about it! You don't really believe I send policemen about to man-handle my own wife!" He had begun on the note of indignation, but ended by trying to insinuate a little jocularity. If only Dimble would give even the ghost of a smile: anything to move the conversation on to a different level.

But Dimble said nothing and his face did not relax. He had not, in fact, been perfectly sure that Mark might not have sunk even to this, but out of charity he did not wish to say so.

"I know you've always disliked me," said Mark. "But I didn't know it was quite as bad as that." And again Dimble was silent, but for a reason Mark could not guess. The truth was that his shaft had gone home. Dimble's conscience had for years accused him of a lack of charity towards Studdock and he had struggled to amend it: he was struggling now.

"Well," said Studdock in a dry voice, after the silence had lasted for several seconds, "there doesn't seem to be much more to say. I insist on being told where Jane is."

"Do you *want* her to be taken to Belbury?"

Mark winced. It was as if the other had read the very thought he had had in the Bristol half an hour ago.

"I don't see, Dimble," he said, "why I should be cross-questioned in this way. Where is my wife?"

"I have no permission to tell you. She is not in my house nor under my care. She is well and happy and safe. If you still have the slightest regard for her happiness you will make no attempt to get into touch with her."

"Am I some sort of leper or criminal that I can't even be trusted to know her address?"

"Excuse me. You are a member of the N.I.C.E. who have already insulted, tortured, and arrested her. Since her escape she has been left alone only because your colleagues do not know where she is."

"And if it really was the N.I.C.E. police, do you suppose I'm not going to have a very full explanation out of them? Damn it, what do you take me for?"

"I can only hope that you have no power in the N.I.C.E. at all. If you have no power, then you cannot protect her. If you have, then you are

identified with its policy. In neither case will I help you to discover where Jane is."

"This is fantastic," said Mark. "Even if I do happen to hold a job in the N.I.C.E. for the moment, you know *me*."

"I do *not* know you," said Dimble. "I have no conception of your aims or motives."

He seemed to Mark to be looking at him not with anger or contempt but with that degree of loathing which produces in those who feel it a kind of embarrassment — as if he were an obscenity which decent people are forced, for very shame, to pretend that they have not noticed. In this Mark was quite mistaken. In reality his presence was acting on Dimble as a summons to rigid self-control. Dimble was simply trying very hard not to hate, not to despise, above all not to enjoy hating and despising, and he had no idea of the fixed severity which this effort gave to his face. The whole of the rest of the conversation went on under this misunderstanding.

"There has been some ridiculous mistake," said Mark. "I tell you I'll look into it thoroughly. I'll make a row. I suppose some newly enrolled policeman got drunk or something. Well, he'll be broken. I — —"

"It was the chief of your police, Miss Hardcastle herself, who did it."

"Very well. I'll break *her* then. Did you suppose I was going to take it lying down? But there must be some mistake. It can't . . ."

"Do you know Miss Hardcastle well?" asked Dimble. Mark was silenced. And he thought (quite wrongly) that Dimble was reading his mind to the bottom and seeing there his certainty that Miss Hardcastle had done this very thing and that he had no more power of calling her to account than of stopping the revolution of the Earth.

Suddenly the immobility of Dimble's face changed, and he spoke in a new voice. "Have *you* the means to bring her to book?" he said. "Are you already as near the centre of Belbury as that? If so, then you have consented to the murder of Hingest, the murder of Compton. If so, it was by your orders that Mary Prescott was raped and battered to death in the sheds behind the station. It is with your approval that criminals — honest criminals whose hands you are unfit to touch — are being taken from the jails to which British judges sent them on the conviction of British juries and packed off to Belbury to undergo for an indefinite period, out of reach of the law, whatever tortures and assaults on personal identity you call Remedial Treatment. It is you who have driven two thousand families from

their homes to die of exposure in every ditch from here to Birmingham or Worcester. It is you who can tell us why Place and Rowley and Cummingham (at eighty years of age) have been arrested, and where they are. And if you are as deeply in it as that, not only will I not deliver Jane into your hands, but I would not deliver my dog."

"Really — really," said Mark. "This is absurd. I know one or two high-handed things have been done. You always get some of the wrong sort in a police force — specially at first. But — I mean to say — what have I ever done that you should make me responsible for every action that any N.I.C.E. official has taken — or is said to have taken in the gutter press?"

"Gutter press!" thundered Dimble, who seemed to Mark to be even physically larger than he was a few minutes before. "What nonsense is this? Do you suppose I don't know that you have control of every paper in the country except one? And that one has not appeared this morning. Its printers have gone on strike. The poor dupes say they will not print articles attacking the people's Institute. Where the lies in all the other papers come from you know better than I."

It may seem strange to say that Mark, having long lived in a world without charity, had nevertheless very seldom met real anger. Malice in plenty he had encountered, but it all operated by snubs and sneers and stabbing in the back. The forehead and eyes and voice of this elderly man had an effect on him which was stifling and unnerving. At Belbury one used the words "whining" and "yapping" to describe any opposition which the actions of Belbury aroused in the outer world. And Mark had never had enough imagination to realise what the "whining" would really be like if you met it face to face.

"I tell you I knew nothing about it," he shouted. "Damn it, I'm the injured party. The way you talk, anyone would think it was *your* wife who'd been ill treated."

"So it might have been. So it may be. It may be any man or woman in England. It was a woman and a citizen. What does it matter whose wife it was?"

"But I tell you I'll raise hell about it. I'll break the infernal bitch who did it, if it means breaking the whole N.I.C.E."

Dimble said nothing. Mark knew that Dimble knew that he was now talking nonsense. Yet Mark could not stop. If he did not bluster, he would not know what to say.

“Sooner than put up with this,” he shouted, “I’ll leave the N.I.C.E.”

“Do you mean that?” asked Dimble with a sharp glance. And to Mark, whose ideas were now all one fluid confusion of wounded vanity and jostling fears and shames, this glance once more appeared accusing and intolerable. In reality it had been a glance of awakened hope: for charity hopes all things. But there was caution in it: and between hope and caution Dimble found himself once more reduced to silence.

“I see you don’t trust me,” said Mark, instinctively summoning to his face the manly and injured expression which had often served him well in headmasters’ studies.

Dimble was a truthful man. “No,” he said after a longish pause. “I don’t quite.”

Mark shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

“Studdock,” said Dimble, “this is not a time for foolery, or compliments. It may be that both of us are within a few minutes of death. You have probably been shadowed into the college. And I, at any rate, don’t propose to die with polite insincerities in my mouth. I don’t trust you. Why should I? You are (at least in some degree) the accomplice of the worst men in the world. Your very coming to me this afternoon may be only a trap.”

“Don’t you know me better than *that*?” said Mark.

“Stop talking nonsense!” said Dimble. “Stop posturing and acting, if only for a minute. Who are you to talk like that? They have corrupted better men than you or me before now. Straik was a good man once. Filostrato was at least a great genius. Even Alcasan — yes, yes, I know who your Head is — was at least a plain murderer: something better than they have now made of him. Who are you to be exempt?”

Mark gaped. The discovery of how much Dimble knew had suddenly inverted his whole picture of the situation.

“Nevertheless,” continued Dimble, “knowing all this — knowing that you may be only the bait in the trap — I will take a risk. I will risk things compared with which both our lives are a triviality. If you seriously wish to leave the N.I.C.E., I will help you.”

One moment it was like the gates of Paradise opening — then, at once, caution and the incurable wish to temporise rushed back. The chink had closed again.

“I — I’d need to think that over,” he mumbled.

“There is no time,” said Dimble. “And there is really nothing to think about. I am offering you a way back into the human family. But you must come at once.”

“It’s a question affecting my whole future career.”

“Your career!” said Dimble. “It’s a question of damnation or — a last chance. But you must come at once.”

“I don’t think I understand,” said Mark. “You keep on suggesting some kind of danger. What is it? And what powers have you to protect me — or Jane — if I do bolt?”

“You must risk that,” said Dimble. “I can offer you no security. Don’t you understand? There is no security for anyone now. The battle has started. I’m offering you a place on the right side. I don’t know which will win.”

“As a matter of fact,” said Mark, “I *had* been thinking of leaving. But I must think it over. You put things in rather an odd way.”

“There is no time,” said Dimble.

“Supposing I look you up again to-morrow?”

“Do you know that you’ll be able?”

“Or in an hour? Come, that’s only sensible. Will you be here in an hour’s time?”

“What can an hour do for you? You are only waiting in the hope that your mind will be less clear.”

“But will you be here?”

“If you insist. But no good can come of it.”

“I want to think. I want to think,” said Mark, and left the room without waiting for a reply.

Mark had said he wanted to think: in reality he wanted alcohol and tobacco. He had thoughts in plenty — more than he desired. One thought prompted him to cling to Dimble as a lost child clings to a grown-up. Another whispered to him “Madness. Don’t *break* with the N.I.C.E. They’ll be after you. How can Dimble save you? You’ll be killed.” A third implored him not, even now, to write off as a total loss his hard-won position in the Inner Ring at Belbury: there must, must be some middle course. A fourth recoiled from the idea of ever seeing Dimble again: the memory of every tone Dimble had used caused horrible discomfort. And he wanted Jane, and he wanted to punish Jane for being a friend of Dimble, and he wanted never to see Wither again, and he wanted to creep back and patch things up with Wither somehow. He wanted to be perfectly safe and yet also very

nonchalant and daring — to be admired for manly honesty among the Dimbles and yet also for realism and knowingness at Belbury — to have two more large whiskies and also to think everything out very clearly and collectedly. And it was beginning to rain and his head had begun to ache again. Damn the whole thing! Damn, damn! Why had he such a rotten heredity? Why had his education been so ineffective? Why was the system of society so irrational? Why was his luck so bad?

It was raining quite hard as he reached the College lodge. Some sort of van seemed to be standing in the street outside, and there were three or four uniformed men in capes. He remembered afterwards how the wet oilskin shone in the lamplight. A torch was flashed in his face.

"Excuse me, sir," said one of the men. "I must ask for your name."

"Studdock," said Mark.

"Mark Gainsby Studdock," said the man, "it is my duty to arrest you for the murder of William Hingest."

IV

Dr. Dimble drove out to St. Anne's dissatisfied with himself, haunted with the suspicion that if he had been wiser, or more perfectly in charity with this very miserable young man, he might have done something for him. "Did I give way to my temper? Was I self-righteous? Did I tell him as much as I dared?" he thought. Then came the deeper self-distrust that was habitual with him. "Did you fail to make things clear because you really wanted not to? Just wanted to hurt and humiliate? To enjoy your own self-righteousness? Is there a whole Belbury inside you, too?" The sadness that came over him had no novelty in it. "And thus," he quoted from Brother Lawrence, "Thus I shall always do, whenever You leave me to myself."

Once clear of the town, he drove slowly — almost sauntering on wheels. The sky was red to westward and the first stars were out. Far down below him in a valley he saw the lights already lit in Cure Hardy. "Thank Heaven it at any rate is far enough from Edgestow to be safe," he thought. The sudden whiteness of a white owl flying low fluttered across the woody twilight on his left. It gave him a delicious feeling of approaching night. He was very pleasantly tired; he looked forward to an agreeable evening and an early bed.

“Here he is! Here’s Dr. Dimble,” shouted Ivy Maggs as he drove up to the front door of the Manor.

“Don’t put the car away, Dimble,” said Denniston.

“Oh Cecil!” said his wife; and he saw fear in her face. The whole household seemed to have been waiting for him.

A few moments later, blinking in the lighted kitchen, he saw that this was not to be a normal evening. The Director himself was there, seated by the fire, with the jackdaw on his shoulder and Mr. Bultitude at his feet. There were signs that everyone else had had an early supper and Dimble found himself almost at once seated at the end of the table and being rather excitedly urged to eat and drink by his wife and Mrs. Maggs.

“Don’t stop to ask questions, dear,” said Mrs. Dimble. “Go on eating while they tell you. Make a good meal.”

“You have to go out again,” said Ivy Maggs.

“Yes,” said the Director. “We’re going into action at last. I’m sorry to send you out the moment you come in: but the battle has started.”

“I have already repeatedly urged,” said MacPhee, “the absurdity of sending out an older man like yourself, that’s done a day’s work forbye, when here am I, a great strapping fellow sitting doing nothing.”

“It’s no good, MacPhee,” said the Director, “you can’t go. For one thing you don’t know the language. And for another — it’s a time for frankness — you have never put yourself under the protection of Maleldil.”

“I am perfectly ready,” said MacPhee, “in and for this emergency, to allow the existence of these eldils of yours and of a being called Maleldil whom they regard as their king. And I — —”

“You can’t go,” said the Director. “I will not send you. It would be like sending a three-year-old child to fight a tank. Put the other map on the table where Dimble can see it while he goes on with his meal. And now, silence. This is the situation, Dimble. What was under Bragdon was a living Merlin. Yes, asleep, if you like to call it sleep. And nothing has yet happened to show that the enemy have found him. Got that? No, don’t talk, go on eating. Last night Jane Studdock had the most important dream she’s had yet. You remember that in an earlier dream she saw (or so I thought) the very place where he lay under Bragdon. But — and this is the important thing — it’s not reached by a shaft and a stair. She dreamed of going through a long tunnel with a very gradual descent. Ah, you begin to see the point. You’re

right. Jane thinks she can recognise the entrance to that tunnel: under a heap of stones at the end of a copse with — what was it, Jane?"

"A white gate, sir. An ordinary five-barred gate with a cross-piece. But the cross-piece was broken off about a foot from the top. I'd know it again."

"You see, Dimble? There's a very good chance that this tunnel comes up *outside* the area held by the N.I.C.E."

"You mean," said Dimble, "that we can now get *under* Bragdon without going into Bragdon."

"Exactly. But that's not all."

Dimble, steadily munching, looked at him.

"Apparently," said the Director, "we are almost too late. He has waked already."

Dimble stopped eating.

"Jane found the place empty," said Ransom.

"You mean the enemy have already found him?"

"No. Not quite as bad as that. The place had not been broken into. He seems to have waked of his own accord."

"My God!" said Dimble.

"Try to eat, darling," said his wife.

"But what does it mean?" he asked, covering her hand with his.

"I think it means that the whole thing has been planned and timed long, long ago," said the Director. "That he went out of Time, into the parachronic state, for the very purpose of returning at this moment."

"A sort of human time-bomb," observed MacPhee, "which is why — —"

"You can't go, MacPhee," said the Director.

"Is he *out*?" asked Dimble.

"He probably is by now," said the Director. "Tell him what it was like, Jane."

"It was the same place," said Jane. "A dark place, all stone, like a cellar. I recognised it at once. And the slab of stone was there, but no one lying on it; and this time it wasn't quite cold. Then I dreamed about this tunnel . . . gradually sloping up from the *souterrain*. And there was a man in the tunnel. Of course I couldn't see him: it was pitch dark. But a great big man. Breathing heavily. At first I thought it was an animal. It got colder as we went up the tunnel. There was air — a little air — from outside. It seemed to end in a pile of loose stones. He was pulling them about just before the

dream changed. Then I was outside, in the rain. That was when I saw the white gate."

"It looks, you see," said Ransom, "as if they had not yet — or not then — established contact with him. That is our only chance now. To meet this creature before they do."

"You will all have observed that Bragdon is very nearly water-logged," put in MacPhee. "Where exactly you'll find a dry cavity in which a body could be preserved all these centuries is a question worth asking. That is, if any of you are still concerned with evidence."

"That's the point," said the Director. "The chamber must be under the high ground — the gravelly ridge on the south of the wood where it slopes up to the Eaton Road. Near where Storey used to live. That's where you'll have to look first for Jane's white gate. I suspect it opens on the Eaton Road. Or else that other road — look at the map — the yellow one that runs up into the Y of Cure Hardy."

"We can be there in half an hour," said Dimble, his hand still on his wife's hand. To everyone in that room the sickening excitement of the last minutes before battle had come nearer.

"I suppose it must be to-night?" said Mrs. Dimble, rather shamefacedly.

"I am afraid it must, Margaret," said the Director. "Every minute counts. We have practically lost the war if the enemy once make contact with him. Their whole plan probably turns on it."

"Of course. I see. I'm sorry," said Mrs. Dimble.

"And what is our procedure, sir?" said Dimble, pushing his plate away from him and beginning to fill his pipe.

"The first question is whether he's *out*," said the Director. "It doesn't seem likely that the entrance to the tunnel has been hidden all these centuries by nothing but a heap of loose stones. And if it has, they wouldn't be very loose by now. He may take hours getting out."

"You'll need at least two strong men with picks — —" began MacPhee.

"It's no good, MacPhee," said the Director. "I'm not letting you go. If the mouth of the tunnel is still sealed, you must just wait there. But he may have powers we don't know. If he's out, you must look for tracks. Thank God it's a muddy night. You must just hunt him."

"If Jane is going, sir," said Camilla, "couldn't I go too? I've had more experience of this sort of thing than — —"

“Jane has to go because she is the guide,” said Ransom. “I am afraid you must stay at home. We in this house are all that is left of Logres. You carry its future in your body. As I was saying, Dimble, you must hunt. I do not think he can get far. The country will, of course, be quite unrecognisable to him, even by daylight.”

“And . . . if we do find him, sir?”

“That is why it must be you, Dimble. Only you know the Great Tongue. If there was eldilic power behind the tradition he represented he may understand it. Even if he does not understand it he will, I think, recognise it. That will teach him he is dealing with Masters. There is a chance that he will think *you* are the Belbury people — his friends. In that case you will bring him here at once.”

“And if not?”

“Then you must show your hand. That is the moment when the danger comes. We do not know what the powers of the old Atlantean circle were: some kind of hypnotism probably covered most of it. Don’t be afraid: but don’t let him try any tricks. Keep your hand on your revolver. You too, Denniston.”

“I’m a good hand with a revolver myself,” said MacPhee. “And why, in the name of all common sense — —”

“You can’t go, MacPhee,” said the Director. “He’d put *you* to sleep in ten seconds. The others are heavily protected as you are not. You understand, Dimble? Your revolver in your hand, a prayer on your lips, your mind fixed on Maleldil. Then, if he stands, conjure him.”

“What shall I say in the Great Tongue?”

“Say that you come in the name of God and all angels and in the power of the planets from one who sits to-day in the seat of the Pendragon, and command him to come with you. Say it now.”

And Dimble, who had been sitting with his face drawn and rather white, between the white faces of the two women, and his eyes on the table, raised his head, and great syllables of words that sounded like castles came out of his mouth. Jane felt her heart leap and quiver at them. Everything else in the room seemed to have become intensely quiet: even the bird, and the bear, and the cat, were still, staring at the speaker. The voice did not sound like Dimble’s own: it was as if the words spoke themselves through him from some strong place at a distance — or as if they were not words at all but present operations of God, the planets, and the Pendragon. For this was the

language spoken before the Fall and beyond the Moon, and the meanings were not given to the syllables by chance, or skill, or long tradition, but truly inherent in them as the shape of the great Sun is inherent in the little waterdrop. This was Language herself, as she first sprang at Maleldil's bidding out of the molten quicksilver of the star called Mercury on Earth, but Viritrilbia in Deep Heaven.

"Thank you," said the Director in English; and once again the warm domesticity of the kitchen flowed back upon them. "And if he comes with you, all is well. If he does not — why then, Dimble, you must rely on your Christianity. Do not try any tricks. Say your prayers and keep your will fixed in the will of Maleldil. I don't know what he will do. But stand firm. You can't lose your soul, whatever happens; at least, not by any action of his."

"Yes," said Dimble. "I understand."

There was a longish pause. Then the Director spoke again.

"Don't be cast down, Margaret," he said. "If they kill Cecil we shall none of us be let live many hours after him. It will be a shorter separation than you could have hoped for in the course of Nature. And now, gentlemen," he said, "you would like a little time to say your prayers, and to say good-bye to your wives. It is eight now, as near as makes no matter. Suppose you all reassemble here at ten past eight, ready to start?"

"Very good," answered several voices. Jane found herself left alone in the kitchen with Mrs. Maggs and the animals and MacPhee and the Director.

"*You* are all right, child?" said Ransom.

"I think so, sir," said Jane. Her actual state of mind was one she could not analyse. Her expectation was strung up to the height; something that would have been terror but for the joy, and joy but for the terror, possessed her — an all-absorbing tension of excitement and obedience. Everything else in her life seemed small and commonplace compared with this moment.

"Do you place yourself in the obedience," said the Director, "in obedience to Maleldil?"

"Sir," said Jane, "I know nothing of Maleldil. But I place myself in obedience to you."

"It is enough for the present," said the Director. "This is the courtesy of Deep Heaven: that when you mean well, He always takes you to have

meant better than you knew. It will not be enough for always. He is very jealous. He will have you for no one but Himself in the end. But for tonight, it is enough."

"This is the craziest business that ever I heard of," said MacPhee.

ELEVEN

Battle Begun

I

“I can’t see a thing,” said Jane.

“This rain is spoiling the whole plan,” said Dimble from the back seat. “Is this still Eaton Road, Arthur?”

“I think . . . yes, there’s the toll-house,” said Denniston who was driving.

“But what’s the use?” said Jane. “I can’t see, even with the window down. We might have passed it any number of times. The only thing is to get out and walk.”

“I think she’s right, sir,” said Denniston.

“I say!” said Jane suddenly. “Look! Look! What’s that? Stop.”

“I can’t see a white gate,” said Denniston.

“Oh, it’s not that,” said Jane. “Look over there.”

“I can’t see anything,” said Dimble.

“Do you mean that light?” said Denniston.

“Yes, of course, that’s the fire.”

“What fire?”

“It’s the light,” she said, “the fire in the hollow in the little wood. I’d forgotten all about it. Yes, I know: I never told Grace, or the Director. I’d forgotten that part of the dream till this moment. That was how it ended. It was the most important part really. That was where I found *him* — Merlin, you know. Sitting by a fire in a little wood. After I came out of the place underground. Oh, come quickly!”

“What do you think, Arthur?” said Dimble.

“I think we must go wherever Jane leads,” answered Denniston.

“Oh, do hurry,” said Jane. “There’s a gate here. Quick! It’s only one field away.”

All three of them crossed the road and opened the gate and went into the field. Dimble said nothing. He was inwardly reeling under the shock and shame of the immense and sickening fear which had surged up inside him. He had, perhaps, a clearer idea than the others of what sort of things might happen when they reached the place.

Jane, as guide, went first, and Denniston beside her, giving her his arm and showing an occasional gleam of his torch on the rough ground. Dimble brought up the rear. No one was inclined to speak.

The change from the road to the field was as if one had passed from a waking into a phantasmal world. Everything became darker, wetter, more incalculable. Each small descent felt as if you might be coming to the edge of a precipice. They were following a track beside a hedge; wet and prickly tentacles seemed to snatch at them as they went. Whenever Denniston used his torch, the things that appeared within the circle of its light — tufts of grass, ruts filled with water, draggled yellow leaves clinging to the wet blackness of many-angled twigs, and once the two greenish-yellow fires in the eyes of some small animal — had the air of being more commonplace than they ought to have been; as if, for that moment's exposure, they had assumed a disguise which they would shuffle off again the moment they were left alone. They looked curiously small, too; when the light vanished, the cold, noisy darkness seemed a huge thing.

The fear which Dimble had felt from the first began to trickle into the minds of the others as they proceeded — like water coming into a ship from a slow leak. They realised that they had not really believed in Merlin till now. They had thought they were believing the Director in the kitchen; but they had been mistaken. The shock was still to take. Out here, with only the changing red light ahead and the black all round, one really began to accept as fact this tryst with something dead and yet not dead, something dug up, exhumed, from that dark pit of history which lies between the ancient Romans and the beginning of the English. "The Dark Ages," thought Dimble; how lightly one had read and written those words. But now they were going to step right into that Darkness. It was an age, not a man, that awaited them in the horrible little dingle.

And suddenly all that Britain which had been so long familiar to him as a scholar rose up like a solid thing. He could see it all. Little dwindling cities where the light of Rome still rested — little Christian sites, Camalodunum, Kaerleon, Glastonbury — a church, a villa or two, a huddle of houses, an earthwork. And then, beginning scarcely a stone's-throw beyond the gates, the wet, tangled, endless woods, silted with the accumulated decay of autumns that had been dropping leaves since before Britain was an island; wolves slinking, beavers building, wide shallow marshes, dim horns and drummings, eyes in the thickets, eyes of men not only Pre-Roman but Pre-

British, ancient creatures, unhappy and dispossessed, who became the elves and ogres and wood-wooses of the later tradition. But worse than the forests, the clearings. Little strongholds with unheard-of kings. Little colleges and covines of Druids. Houses whose mortar had been ritually mixed with babies' blood. They had tried to do that to Merlin. And now all that age, horribly dislocated, wrenched out of its place in the time series and forced to come back and go through all its motions yet again with doubled monstrosity, was flowing towards them and would, in a few minutes, receive them into itself.

Then came a check. They had walked right into a hedge. They wasted a minute, with the aid of the torch, disentangling Jane's hair. They had come to the end of a field. The light of the fire, which kept on growing stronger and weaker in fitful alternations, was hardly visible from here. There was nothing for it but to set to work and find a gap or a gate. They went a long way out of their course before they found one. It was a gate that would not open: and as they came down on the far side, after climbing it, they went ankle-deep into water. For a few minutes, plodding slightly uphill, they were out of sight of the fire, and when it reappeared it was well away on their left and much farther off than anyone had supposed.

Hitherto Jane had scarcely attempted to think of what might lie before them. As they went on, the real meaning of that scene in the kitchen began to dawn on her. He had sent the men to bid good-bye to their wives. He had blessed them all. It was likely, then, that this — this stumbling walk on a wet night across a ploughed field — meant death. Death — the thing one had always heard of (like love), the thing the poets had written about. So this was how it was going to be. But that was not the main point. Jane was trying to see death in the new light of all she had heard since she left Edgestow. She had long ceased to feel any resentment at the Director's tendency, as it were, to dispose of her — to give her, at one time or in one sense, to Mark, and in another to Maleldil; never, in any sense, to keep her for himself. She accepted that. And of Mark she did not think much, because to think of him increasingly aroused feelings of pity and guilt. But Maleldil. Up till now she had not thought of Maleldil either. She did not doubt that the eldils existed; nor did she doubt the existence of this stronger and more obscure being whom they obeyed . . . whom the Director obeyed, and through him the whole household, even MacPhee. If it had ever occurred to her to question whether all these things might be the reality

behind what she had been taught at school as “religion,” she had put the thought aside. The distance between these alarming and operative realities and the memory, say, of fat Mrs. Dimble saying her prayers, was too wide. The things belonged, for her, to different worlds. On the one hand, terror of dreams, rapture of obedience, the tingling light and sound from under the Director’s door, and the great struggle against an imminent danger; on the other, the smell of pews, horrible lithographs of the Saviour (apparently seven feet high, with the face of a consumptive girl), the embarrassment of confirmation classes, the nervous affability of clergymen. But this time, if it was really to be death, the thought would not be put aside. Because, really, it now appeared that almost anything might be true. The world had already turned out to be so very unlike what she had expected. The old ring-fence had been smashed completely. One might be in for anything. Maleldil might be, quite simply and crudely, God. There might be a life after death: a Heaven: a Hell. The thought glowed in her mind for a second like a spark that has fallen on shavings, and then a second later, like those shavings, her whole mind was in a blaze — or with just enough left outside the blaze to utter some kind of protest. “But . . . this is unbearable. I ought to have been told.” It did not, at that moment, occur to her even to doubt that if such things existed they would be totally and unchangeably adverse to her.

“Look out, Jane,” said Denniston. “That’s a tree.”

“I — I think it’s a cow,” said Jane.

“No. It’s a tree. Look. There’s another.”

“Hush,” said Dimble. “This is Jane’s little wood. We are very close now.”

The ground rose in front of them for about twenty yards and there made an edge against the firelight. They could see the wood quite clearly now, and also each other’s faces, white and blinking.

“I will go first,” said Dimble.

“I envy you your nerve,” said Jane.

“Hush,” said Dimble again.

They walked slowly and quietly up to the edge and stopped. Below them a big fire of wood was burning at the bottom of a little dingle. There were bushes all about, whose changing shadows, as the flames rose and fell, made it difficult to see clearly. Beyond the fire there seemed to be some rude kind of tent made out of sacking, and Denniston thought he saw an

upturned cart. In the foreground, between them and the fire, there was certainly a kettle.

“Is there anyone here?” whispered Dimble to Denniston.

“I don’t know. Wait a few seconds.”

“Look!” said Jane suddenly. “There! When the flame blew aside.”

“What?” said Dimble.

“Didn’t you see him?”

“I saw nothing.”

“I thought I saw a man,” said Denniston.

“I saw an ordinary tramp,” said Dimble. “I mean a man in modern clothes.”

“What did he look like?”

“I don’t know.”

“We must go down,” said Dimble.

“*Can* one get down?” said Denniston.

“Not this side,” said Dimble. “It looks as if a sort of path came into it over there to the right. We must go along the edge till we find the way down.”

They had all been talking in low voices and the crackling of the fire was now the loudest sound, for the rain seemed to be stopping. Cautiously, like troops who fear the eye of the enemy, they began to skirt the lip of the hollow, stealing from tree to tree.

“Stop!” whispered Jane suddenly.

“What is it?”

“There’s something moving.”

“Where?”

“In there. Quite close.”

“I heard nothing.”

“There’s nothing now.”

“Let’s go on.”

“Do you still think there’s something, Jane?”

“It’s quiet now. There *was* something.”

They made a few paces more.

“‘St!” said Denniston. “Jane’s right. There is something.”

“Shall I speak?” said Dimble.

“Wait a moment,” said Denniston. “It’s just there. Look! — damn it, it’s only an old donkey!”

“That’s what I said,” said Dimble. “The man’s a gypsy; a tinker or something. This is his donkey. Still, we must go down.”

They proceeded. In a few moments they found themselves descending a rutted grassy path which wound about till the whole hollow opened before them; and now the fire was no longer between them and the tent. “There he is,” said Jane.

“Can you see him?” said Dimble. “I haven’t got your eyes.”

“I can see him all right,” said Denniston. “It *is* a tramp. Can’t you see him Dimble? An old man with a ragged beard in what looks like the remains of a British warm and a pair of black trousers. Don’t you see his left foot, stuck out, and the toe a bit up in the air?”

“That?” said Dimble. “I thought that was a log. But you’ve better eyes than I have. Did you really see a man, Arthur?”

“Well, I thought I did, sir. But I’m not certain now. I think my eyes are getting tired. He’s sitting very still. If it *is* a man, he’s asleep.”

“Or dead,” said Jane with a sudden shudder.

“Well,” said Dimble, “we must go down.”

And in less than a minute all three walked down into the dingle and past the fire. And there was the tent, and a few miserable attempts at bedding inside it, and a tin plate, and some matches on the ground, and the dottle of a pipe, but they could see no man.

II

“What I can’t understand, Wither,” said Fairy Hardcastle, “is why you don’t let me try my hand on the young pup. All these ideas of yours are so half-hearted — keeping him on his toes about the murder, arresting him, leaving him all night in the cells to think it over. Why do you keep messing about with things that may work or may not? — when twenty minutes of my treatment would turn his mind inside out. I know the type.”

Miss Hardcastle was talking, at about ten o’clock that same wet night, to the Deputy Director in his study. There was a third person present — Professor Frost.

“I assure you, Miss Hardcastle,” said Wither, fixing his eyes not on her but on Frost’s forehead, “you need not doubt that your views on this, or any other matter, will always receive the fullest consideration. But if I may say

so, this is one of those cases where — ah — any grave degree of coercive examination might defeat its own end."

"Why?" said the Fairy sulkily.

"You must excuse me," said Wither, "for reminding you — not, of course, that I assume you are neglecting the point, but simply on methodological grounds — it is so important to make everything *clear* — that we need the woman — I mean, that it would be of the greatest value to welcome Mrs. Studdock among us — chiefly on account of the remarkable psychical faculty she is said to possess. In using the word *Psychical*, I am not, you understand, committing myself to any particular theory."

"You mean these dreams?"

"It is very doubtful," said Wither, "what effect it might have on her if she were brought here under compulsion and then found her husband — ah — in the markedly, though no doubt temporarily, abnormal condition which we should have to anticipate as a result of your scientific methods of examination. One would run the risk of a profound emotional disturbance on her part. The faculty itself might disappear; at least for a long time."

"We have not yet had Major Hardcastle's report," said Professor Frost quietly.

"No good," said the Fairy. "He was shadowed into Northumberland. Only three possible people left the College after him — Lancaster, Lyly, and Dimble. I put them in that order of probability. Lancaster is a Christian, and a very influential man. He's in the Lower House of Convocation. He had a lot to do with the Repton Conference. He's mixed up with several big clerical families. And he's written a lot of books. He has a real stake in their side. Lyly is rather the same type, but less of an organiser. As you will remember, he did a great deal of harm on that reactionary commission about Education last year. Both these are dangerous men. They are the sort of people who get things done — natural leaders of the other party. Dimble is quite a different type. Except that he's a Christian, there isn't really much against him. He's purely academic. I shouldn't think his name is much known, except to other scholars in his own subject. Not the kind that would make a public man. Impractical . . . he'd be too full of scruples to be much use to them. The others know a thing or two. Lancaster particularly. In fact, he's a man we could find room for on our own side if he held the right views."

“You should tell Major Hardcastle that we have access to most of these facts already,” said Professor Frost.

“Perhaps,” said Wither, “in view of the late hour — we don’t wish to overtax your energies, Miss Hardcastle — we might go on to the more strictly narrative parts of your report.”

“Well,” said the Fairy, “I had to follow all three. With the resources I had at the moment. You’ll realise young Studdock was seen setting off for Edgestow only by good luck. It was a bomb-shell. Half my people were already busy on the hospital affair. I just had to lay my hands on anyone I could get. I posted a sentry and had six others out of sight of the College, in plain clothes of course. As soon as Lancaster came out I told off the three best to keep him in sight. I’ve had a wire from them half an hour ago from London where Lancaster went off by train. We may be on to something there. Lyly gave the devil of a lot of trouble. He appeared to be calling on about fifteen different people in Edgestow. We’ve got them all noted — I sent the next two of my lads to deal with him. Dimble came out last. I would have sent my last man off to follow him, but a call came through at that moment from Captain O’Hara, who wanted another car. So I decided to let Dimble go for to-night and sent my man up with the one he had. Dimble can be got any time. He comes into college pretty regularly every day; and he’s really a nonentity.”

“I do not quite understand,” said Frost, “why you had no one inside the College to see what staircase Studdock went to.”

“Because of your damned Emergency Commissioner,” said the Fairy. “We’re not *allowed* into colleges now, if you please. I said at the time that Feverstone was the wrong man. He’s trying to play on both sides. He’s for us against the town, but when it comes to us against the University he’s unreliable. Mark my words, Wither, you’ll have trouble with him yet.”

Frost looked at the Deputy Director.

“I am far from denying,” said Wither, “though without at all closing my mind to other possible explanations, that some of Lord Feverstone’s measures may have been injudicious. It would be inexpressibly painful to me to suppose that — —”

“Need we keep Major Hardcastle?” said Frost.

“Bless my soul!” said Wither. “How very right of you! I had almost forgotten, my dear lady, how tired you must be, and how very valuable your time is. We must try to save you for that particular kind of work in which

you have shown yourself indispensable. You must not allow us to impose on your good nature. There is a lot of duller and more routine work which it is only reasonable that you should be spared." He got up and held the door open for her.

"You don't think," said she, "that I ought to let the boys have just a *little* go at Studdock? I mean, it seems so absurd to have all this trouble about getting an address."

And suddenly, as Wither stood with his hand on the door-handle, courtly, patient, and smiling, the whole expression faded out of his face. The pale lips, open wide enough to show his gums, the white curly head, the pouchy eyes, ceased to make up any single expression. Miss Hardcastle had the feeling that a mere mask of skin and flesh was staring at her. A moment later and she was gone.

"I wonder," said Wither as he came back to his chair, "whether we are attaching too much importance to this Studdock woman."

"We are acting on an order dated the 14th of October," said Frost.

"Oh . . . I wasn't questioning it," said Wither with a gesture of deprecation.

"Allow me to remind you of the facts," said Frost. "The authorities had access to the woman's mind for only a very short time. They inspected only one important dream — a dream, which revealed, though with some irrelevancies, an essential element in our programme. That warned us that if the woman fell into the hands of any ill-affected persons who knew how to exploit her faculty, she would constitute a grave danger."

"Oh, to be sure, to be sure. I never intended to deny — —"

"That was the first point," said Frost, interrupting him. "The second is that her mind became opaque to our authorities almost immediately afterwards. In the present state of our science we know only one cause for such occultations. They occur when the mind in question has placed itself, by some voluntary choice of its own, however vague, under the control of some hostile organism. The occultation, therefore, while cutting off our access to the dreams, also tells us that she has, in some mode or other, come under enemy influence. This is in itself a grave danger. But it also means that to find her would probably mean discovering the enemy's headquarters. Miss Hardcastle is probably right in maintaining that torture would soon induce Studdock to give up his wife's address. But as you pointed out, a round-up at their headquarters, an arrest, and the discovery of her husband

here in the condition in which the torture would leave him, would produce psychological conditions in the woman which might destroy her faculty. We should thus frustrate one of the purposes for which we want to get her. That is the first objection. The second is, that an attack on enemy headquarters is very risky. They almost certainly have protection of a kind we are not prepared to cope with. And, finally, the man may not *know* his wife's address. In that case . . ."

"Oh," said Wither, "there is nothing I should more deeply deplore. Scientific examination (I cannot allow the word *Torture* in this context) in cases where the patient doesn't *know* the answer is always a fatal mistake. As men of humanity we should neither of us . . . and then, if you go on, the patient naturally does not recover . . . and if you stop, even an experienced operator is haunted by the fear that perhaps he *did* know after all. It is in every way unsatisfactory."

"There is, in fact, no way of implementing our instructions except by inducing Studdock to bring his wife here himself."

"Or else," said Wither, a little more dreamily than usual, "if it were possible, by inducing in him a much more radical allegiance to our side than he has yet shown. I am speaking, my dear friend, of a real change of heart."

Frost slightly opened and extended his mouth, which was a very long one, so as to show his white teeth.

"That," he said, "is a subdivision of the plan I was mentioning. I was saying that he must be induced to send for the woman himself. That, of course, can be done in two ways. Either by supplying him with some motive on the instinctive level, such as fear of us or desire for her; or else by conditioning him to identify himself so completely with the Cause that he will understand the real motive for securing her person and act on it."

"Exactly . . . exactly," said Wither. "Your expressions, as always, are a little different from those I would choose myself, but . . ."

"Where is Studdock at present?" said Frost.

"In one of the cells here — on the other side."

"Under the impression he has been arrested by the ordinary police?"

"That I cannot answer for. I presume he would be. It does not, perhaps, make much difference."

"And how are you proposing to act?"

"We had proposed to leave him to himself for several hours — to allow the psychological results of the arrest to mature. I have ventured . . . of

course, with every regard for humanity . . . to reckon on the value of some slight physical discomforts — he will not have dined, you understand. They have instructions to empty his pockets. One would not wish the young man to relieve any nervous tension that may have arisen by smoking. One wishes the mind to be thrown entirely on its own resources."

"Of course. And what next?"

"Well, I suppose some sort of examination. That is a point on which I should welcome your advice. I mean, as to whether I, personally, should appear in the first instance. I am inclined to think that the appearance of examination by the ordinary police should be maintained a little longer. Then at a later stage will come the discovery that he is still in our hands. He will probably misunderstand this discovery at first — for several minutes. It would be well to let him realise only gradually that this by no means frees him from the — er — embarrassments arising out of Hingest's death. I take it that some fuller realisation of his inevitable solidarity with the Institute would then follow. . . ."

"And then you mean to ask him again for his wife?"

"I shouldn't do it at all like that," said Wither. "If I might venture to say so, it is one of the disadvantages of that extreme simplicity and accuracy with which you habitually speak (much as we all admire it) that it leaves no room for fine shades. One had rather hoped for a spontaneous outburst of confidence on the part of the young man himself. Anything like a direct demand — —"

"The weakness of the plan," said Frost, "is that you are relying wholly on fear."

"Fear," repeated Wither as if he had not heard the word before. "I do not quite follow the connection of thought. I can hardly suppose you are following the opposite suggestion, once made, if I remember rightly, by Miss Hardcastle."

"What was that?"

"Why," said Wither, "if I understand her aright she thought of taking scientific measures to render the society of his wife more desirable in the young man's eyes. Some of the chemical resources . . ."

"You mean an aphrodisiac?"

Wither sighed gently and said nothing.

"That is nonsense," said Frost. "It isn't to his wife that a man turns under the influence of aphrodisiacs. But as I was saying, I think it is a mistake to

rely wholly on fear. I have observed, over a number of years, that its results are incalculable: especially when the fear is complicated. The patient may get too frightened to move, even in the desired direction. If we have to despair of getting the woman here with her husband's goodwill, we must use torture and take the consequences. But there are other alternatives. There is desire."

"I am not sure that I am following you. You have rejected the idea of any medical or chemical approach."

"I was thinking of stronger desires."

Neither at this stage of the conversation nor at any other did the Deputy Director look much at the face of Frost; his eyes, as usual, wandered over the whole room or fixed themselves on distant objects. Sometimes they were shut. But either Frost or Wither — it was difficult to say which — had been gradually moving his chair, so that by this time the two men sat with their knees almost touching.

"I had my conversation with Filostrato," said Frost in his low, clear voice. "I used expressions which must have made my meaning clear if he had any notion of the truth. His senior assistant, Wilkins, was present too. The truth is that neither is really interested. What interests them is the fact that they have succeeded — as they think — in keeping the Head alive and getting it to talk. What it says does not really interest them. As to any question about what is really speaking, they have no curiosity. I went very far. I raised questions about its mode of consciousness — its sources of information. There was no response."

"You are suggesting, if I understand you," said Wither, "a movement towards this Mr. Studdock along *those* lines. If I remember rightly, you rejected fear on the ground that its effects could not really be predicted with the accuracy one might wish. But — ah — would the method now envisaged be any *more* reliable? I need hardly say that I fully realise a certain disappointment which serious-minded people must feel with such colleagues as Filostrato and his subordinate, Mr. Wilkins."

"That is the point," said Frost. "One must guard against the error of supposing that the political and economic dominance of England by the N.I.C.E. is more than a subordinate object: it is individuals that we are really concerned with. A hard unchangeable core of individuals really devoted to the same cause as ourselves — that is what we need and what,

indeed, we are under orders to supply. We have not succeeded so far in bringing many people in — really *in*."

"There is still no news from Bragdon Wood?"

"No."

"And you believe that Studdock might really be a suitable person?"

"You must not forget," said Frost, "that his value does not rest solely on his wife's clairvoyance. The couple are eugenically interesting. And secondly, I think he can offer no resistance. The hours of fear in the cell, and then an appeal to desires that undercut the fear, will have an almost certain effect on a character of that sort."

"Of course," said Wither, "nothing is so much to be desired as the greatest possible unity. You will not suspect me of underrating that aspect of our orders. Any fresh individual brought into that unity would be a source of the most intense satisfaction — to — ah — all concerned. I desire the closest possible bond. I would welcome an interpenetration of personalities so close, so irrevocable, that it almost transcends individuality. You need not doubt that I would open my arms to receive — to absorb — to assimilate this young man."

They were now sitting so close together that their faces almost touched, as if they had been lovers about to kiss. Frost's pince-nez caught the light so that they made his eyes invisible: only his mouth, smiling but not relaxed in the smile, revealed his expression. Wither's mouth was open, the lower lip hanging down, his eyes wet, his whole body hunched and collapsed in his chair as if the strength had gone out of it. A stranger would have thought he had been drinking. Then his shoulders twitched and gradually he began to laugh. And Frost did not laugh, but his smile grew moment by moment brighter and also colder, and he stretched out his hand and patted his colleague on the shoulder. Suddenly in that silent room there was a crash. *Who's Who* had fallen off the table, swept onto the floor as, with sudden, swift convulsive movement, the two old men lurched forward towards each other and sat swaying to and fro, locked in an embrace from which each seemed to be struggling to escape. And as they swayed and scrabbled with hand and nail, there arose, shrill and faint at first, but then louder and louder, a cackling noise that seemed in the end rather an animal than a senile parody of laughter.

III

When Mark was bundled out of the police waggon into the dark and rain and hurried indoors between two constables and left at length alone in a little lighted room, he had no idea that he was at Belbury. Nor would he have cared greatly if he had known, for the moment he was arrested he had despaired of his life. He was going to be hanged.

He had never till now been at close quarters with death. Now, glancing down at his hand (because his hands were cold and he had been automatically rubbing them) it came to him as a totally new idea that this very hand, with its five nails and the yellow tobacco-stain on the inside of the second finger, would soon be the hand of a corpse, and later the hand of a skeleton. He did not exactly feel horror, though on the physical level he was aware of a choking sensation; what made his brain reel was the preposterousness of the idea. This was something incredible, yet at the same time quite certain.

There came a sudden uprush of grisly details about execution, supplied long since by Miss Hardcastle. But that was a dose too strong for the consciousness to accept. It hovered before his imagination for a fraction of a second, agonising him to a kind of mental scream, and then sank away in a blur. Mere death returned as the object of attention. The question of immortality came before him. He was not in the least interested. What had an after-life to do with it? Happiness in some other and disembodied world (he never thought of unhappiness) was totally irrelevant to a man who was going to be killed. The killing was the important thing. On any view, this body — this limp, shaking, desperately vivid thing, so intimately his own — was going to be turned into a *dead* body. If there were such things as souls, this cared nothing about them. The choking, smothering sensation gave the body's view of the matter with an intensity which excluded all else.

Because he felt that he was choking, he looked round the cell for any sign of ventilation. There was, in fact, some sort of grating above the door. That ventilator and the door itself were the only objects to detain the eye. All else was white floor, white ceiling, white wall, without a chair or table or book or peg, and with one hard white light in the centre of the ceiling.

Something in the look of the place now suggested to him for the first time the idea that he might be at Belbury and not in an ordinary police station. But the flash of hope aroused by this idea was so brief as to be instantaneous. What difference did it make whether Wither and Miss

Hardcastle and the rest had decided to get rid of him by handing him over to the ordinary police or by making away with him in private — as they had doubtless done with Hingest? The meaning of all the ups and downs he had experienced at Belbury now appeared to him perfectly plain. They were all his enemies, playing upon his hopes and fears to reduce him to complete servility, certain to kill him if he broke away, and certain to kill him in the long run when he had served the purpose for which they wanted him. It appeared to him astonishing that he could ever have thought otherwise. How could he have supposed that any real conciliation of these people could be achieved by anything he did?

What a fool — a blasted, babyish, gullible fool — he had been! He sat down on the floor, for his legs felt weak, as if he had walked twenty-five miles. Why had he come to Belbury in the first instance? Ought not his very first interview with the Deputy Director to have warned him, as clearly as if the truth were shouted through a megaphone or printed on a poster in letters six foot high, that here was the world of plot within plot, crossing and double crossing, of lies and graft and stabbing in the back, of murder and a contemptuous guffaw for the fool who lost the game? Feverstone's guffaw, that day he had called him an "incurable romantic," came back to his mind. Feverstone . . . that was how he had come to believe in Wither: on Feverstone's recommendation. Apparently his folly went further back. How on earth had he come to trust Feverstone — a man with a mouth like a shark, with his flash manners, a man who never looked you in the face? Jane, or Dimble, would have seen through him at once. He had "crook" written all over him. He was fit only to deceive puppets like Curry and Busby. But then, at the time when he first met Feverstone, he had not thought Curry and Busby puppets. With extraordinary clarity, but with renewed astonishment, he remembered how he had felt about the Progressive Element at Bracton when he was first admitted to its confidence: he remembered, even more incredulously, how he had felt as a very junior fellow while he was outside it — how he had looked almost with awe at the heads of Curry and Busby bent close together in Common Room, hearing occasional fragments of their whispered conversation, pretending himself the while to be absorbed in a periodical but longing — oh, so intensely longing — for one of them to cross the room and speak to him. And then, after months and months, it had happened. He had a picture of himself, the odious little outsider who wanted to be an insider, the

infantile gull, drinking in the husky and unimportant confidences, as if he were being admitted to the government of the planet. Was there *no* beginning to his folly? Had he been an utter fool all through from the very day of his birth? Even as a schoolboy, when he had ruined his work and half broken his heart trying to get into the society called Grip, and lost his only real friend in doing so? Even as a child, fighting Myrtle because she *would* go and talk secrets with Pamela next door?

He himself did not understand why all this, which was now so clear, had never previously crossed his mind. He was unaware that such thoughts had often knocked for entrance, but had always been excluded for the very good reason that if they were once entertained it involved ripping up the whole web of his life, cancelling almost every decision his will had ever made, and really beginning over again as though he were an infant. The indistinct mass of problems which would have to be faced if he admitted such thoughts, the innumerable “somethings” about which “something” would have to be done, had deterred him from ever raising these questions. What had now taken the blinkers off was the fact that nothing *could* be done. They were going to hang him. His story was at an end. There was no harm in ripping up the web now for he was not going to use it any more; there was no bill to be paid (in the shape of arduous decision and reconstruction) for truth. It was a result of the approach of death which the Deputy Director and Professor Frost had possibly not foreseen.

There were no moral considerations at this moment in Mark’s mind. He looked back on his life, not with shame but with a kind of disgust at its dreariness. He saw himself as a little boy in short trousers, hidden in the shrubbery beside the paling to overhear Myrtle’s conversation with Pamela, and trying to ignore the fact that it was not at all interesting when overheard. He saw himself making believe that he enjoyed those Sunday afternoons with the athletic heroes of Grip, while all the time (as he now saw) he was almost homesick for one of the old walks with Pearson — Pearson whom he had taken such pains to leave behind. He saw himself in his teens laboriously reading rubbishy grown-up novels and drinking beer when he really enjoyed John Buchan and stone ginger. The hours that he had spent learning the very slang of each new circle that attracted him, the perpetual assumption of interest in things he found dull and of knowledge he did not possess, the almost heroic sacrifice of nearly every person and thing he actually enjoyed, the miserable attempt to pretend that one *could*

enjoy Grip, or the Progressive Element, or the N.I.C.E. — all this came over him with a kind of heartbreak. When had he ever done what he wanted? Mixed with the people whom he liked? Or even eaten and drunk what took his fancy? The concentrated insipidity of it all filled him with self-pity.

In his normal condition, explanations that laid on impersonal forces outside himself the responsibility for all this life of dust and broken bottles would have occurred at once to his mind and been at once accepted. It would have been “the system” or “an inferiority complex” due to his parents, or the peculiarities of the age. None of these things occurred to him now. His “scientific” outlook had never been a real philosophy believed with blood and heart. It had lived only in his brain, and was a part of that public self which was now falling off him. He was aware, without even having to think of it, that it was he himself — nothing else in the whole universe — that had chosen the dust and broken bottles, the heap of old tin cans, the dry and choking places.

An unexpected idea came into his head. This — this death of his — would be lucky for Jane. Myrtle long ago, Pearson at school, Denniston while they were undergraduates, and lastly Jane had been the four biggest invasions of his life by something from beyond the dry and choking places. Myrtle he had conquered by becoming the clever brother who won scholarships and mixed with important people. They were really twins, but after a short period in childhood during which she had appeared as an elder sister, she had become more like a younger sister and had remained so ever since. He had wholly drawn her into his orbit: it was her large wondering eyes and naïf answers to his accounts of the circle he was now moving in which had provided at each stage most of the real pleasure of his career. But for the same reason she had ceased to mediate life from beyond the dry places. The flower, once safely planted among the tin cans, had turned into a tin can itself. Pearson and Denniston he had thrown away. And he now knew, for the first time, what he had secretly meant to do with Jane. If all had succeeded, if he had become the sort of man he hoped to be, she was to have been the great hostess — the secret hostess in the sense that only the very esoteric few would know who that striking-looking woman was and why it mattered so enormously to secure her good will. Well . . . it was lucky for Jane. She seemed to him, as he now thought of her, to have in herself deep wells and knee-deep meadows of happiness, rivers of

freshness, enchanted gardens of leisure, which he could not enter but could have spoiled. She was one of those other people — like Pearson, like Denniston, like the Dimbles — who could enjoy things for their own sake. She was not like him. It was well that she should be rid of him. Of course she would get over it. She had tried to do her best, but she didn't really care for him. Nobody ever had, much.

At that moment came the sound of a key turning in the lock of the cell-door. Instantly all these thoughts vanished; mere physical terror of death, drying the throat, rushed back upon him. He scrambled to his feet and stood with his back against the farthest wall, staring as hard as if he could escape hanging by keeping whoever entered steadily in sight.

It was not a policeman who came in. It was a man in a grey suit whose pince-nez, as he glanced towards Mark and towards the light, became opaque windows concealing his eyes. Mark knew him at once and knew that he was at Belbury. It was not this that made him open his own eyes even wider and almost forget his terror in his astonishment. It was the change in the man's appearance — or rather the change in the eyes with which Mark saw him. In one sense everything about Professor Frost was as it had always been — the pointed beard, the extreme whiteness of forehead, the regularity of features, and the bright Arctic smile. But what Mark could not understand was how he had ever managed to overlook something about the man so obvious that any child would have shrunk away from him and any dog would have backed into the corner with raised hackles and bared teeth. Death itself did not seem more frightening than the fact that only six hours ago he would in some measure have trusted this man, welcomed his confidence, and even made believe that his society was not disagreeable.

TWELVE

Wet and Windy Night

I

"Well," said Dimble, "there's no one here."

"He was here a moment ago," said Denniston.

"You're sure you *did* see someone?" said Dimble.

"I thought I saw someone," said Denniston. "I'm not positive."

"If there was anyone he must still be quite close," said Dimble.

"What about giving him a call?" suggested Denniston.

"Hush! Listen!" said Jane. They were all silent for a few moments.

"That's only the old donkey," said Dimble presently, "moving about at the top."

There was another silence.

"He seems to have been pretty extravagant with his matches," said Denniston presently, glancing at the trodden earth in the firelight. "One would expect a tramp — —"

"On the other hand," said Dimble, "one would not expect Merlin to have brought a box of matches with him from the Fifth Century."

"But what are we to *do*?" said Jane.

"One hardly likes to think what MacPhee will say if we return with no more success than this. He will at once point out a plan we ought to have followed," said Denniston with a smile.

"Now that the rain's over," said Dimble, "we'd better get back to the car and start hunting for your white gate. What are you looking at, Denniston?"

"I'm looking at this mud," said Denniston, who had moved a few paces away from the fire and in the direction of the path by which they had descended into the dingle. He had been stooping and using his torch. Now he suddenly straightened himself. "Look," he said, "there have been several people here. No, don't walk onto it and mess up all the tracks. Look. Can't you see, sir?"

"Aren't they our own footprints?" said Dimble.

"Some of them are pointing the wrong way. Look at that — and that."

"Might they be the tramp himself?" said Dimble. "If it was a tramp."

“He couldn’t have walked up that path without our seeing him,” said Jane.

“Unless he did it before we arrived,” said Denniston.

“But we all saw him,” said Jane.

“Come,” said Dimble. “Let’s follow them up to the top. I don’t suppose we shall be able to follow them far. If not, we must get back to the road and go on looking for the gate.”

As they reached the lip of the hollow, mud changed into grass under foot and the footprints disappeared. They walked twice round the dingle and found nothing: then they set out to return to the road. It had turned into a fine night: Orion dominated the whole sky.

II

The Deputy Director hardly ever slept. When it became absolutely necessary for him to do so, he took a drug, but the necessity was rare, for the mode of consciousness he experienced at most hours of day or night had long ceased to be exactly like what other men call waking. He had learned to withdraw most of his consciousness from the task of living, to conduct business, even, with only a quarter of his mind. Colours, tastes, smells, and tactual sensations no doubt bombarded his physical senses in the normal manner: they did not now reach his ego. The manner and outward attitude to men which he had adopted half a century ago were now an organisation which functioned almost independently, like a gramophone, and to which he could hand over his whole routine of interviews and committees. While the brain and lips carried on this work, and built up day by day for those around him the vague and formidable personality which they knew so well, his inmost self was free to pursue its own life. That detachment of the spirit not only from the senses but even from the reason which has been the goal of some mystics was now his.

Hence he was still, in a sense, awake — that is, he was certainly not sleeping — an hour after Frost had left him to visit Mark in his cell. Anyone who had looked into the study during that hour would have seen him sitting motionless at his table, with bowed head and folded hands. But his eyes were not shut. The face had no expression; the real man was far away, suffering, enjoying, or inflicting whatever such souls do suffer, enjoy, or inflict when the cord that binds them to the natural order is stretched out to

its utmost but not yet snapped. When the telephone rang at his elbow he took up the receiver without a start.

“Speaking,” he said.

“This is Stone, sir,” came a voice. “We have found the chamber.”

“Yes.”

“It was empty, sir.”

“Empty?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Are you sure, my dear Mr. Stone, that you have found the right place? It is possible . . .”

“Oh yes, sir. It is a little kind of crypt. Stonework and some Roman brick. And a kind of slab in the middle, like an altar or a bed.”

“And am I to understand there was no one there? No sign of occupation?”

“Well, sir, it seemed to us to have been recently disturbed.”

“Pray be as explicit as possible, Mr. Stone.”

“Well, sir, there was an exit — I mean a tunnel, leading out of it to the south. We went up this tunnel at once. It comes out about eight hundred yards away, outside the area of the wood.”

“Comes out? Do you mean there is an arch — a gate — a tunnel mouth?”

“Well, that’s just the point. We got out to the open air all right. But obviously something had been smashed-up there quite recently. It looked as if it had been done by explosives. As if the end of the tunnel had been walled up and had some depth of earth on top of it, and as if someone had recently blasted his way out. There was no end of a mess.”

“Continue, Mr. Stone. What did you do next?”

“I used the order you had given me, sir, to collect all the police available and have sent off search-parties for the man you described.”

“I see. And how did *you* describe him to them?”

“Just as you did, sir: an old man with either a very long beard or a beard very roughly trimmed, probably in a mantle, but certainly in some kind of unusual clothes. It occurred to me at the last moment to add that he might have no clothes at all.”

“Why did you add that, Mr. Stone?”

“Well, sir, I didn’t know how long he’d been there, and it isn’t my business. I’d heard things about clothes preserved in a place like that and all

falling to pieces as soon as the air was admitted. I hope you won't imagine for a moment that I'm trying to find out anything you don't choose to tell me. But I just thought it would be as well to . . ."

"You were quite right, Mr. Stone," said Wither, "in thinking that anything remotely resembling inquisitiveness on your part might have the most disastrous consequences. I mean, for yourself; for, of course, it is your interests I have chiefly had in view in my choice of methods. I assure you that you can rely on my support in the very — er — delicate position you have — no doubt unintentionally — chosen to occupy."

"Thank you very much, sir. I am so glad you think I was right in saying he might be naked."

"Oh, as to *that*," said the Director, "there are a great many considerations which cannot be raised at the moment. And what did you instruct your search-parties to do on finding any such — er — person?"

"Well, that was another difficulty, sir. I sent my own assistant, Father Doyle, with one party, because he knows Latin. And I gave Inspector Wrench the ring you gave me and put him in charge of the second. The best I could do for the third party was to see that it contained someone who knew Welsh."

"You did not think of accompanying a party yourself?"

"No, sir. You'd told me to ring up without fail the moment we found anything. And I didn't want to delay the search-parties until I'd got you."

"I see. Well, no doubt your action (speaking quite without prejudice) could be interpreted along those lines. You made it quite clear that this — ah — Personage — when found, was to be treated with the greatest deference and — if you won't misunderstand me — caution?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Well, Mr. Stone, I am, on the whole, and with certain inevitable reservations, moderately satisfied with your conduct of this affair. I believe that I may be able to present it in a favourable light to those of my colleagues whose good will you have, unfortunately, not been able to retain. If you can bring it to a successful conclusion you would very much strengthen your position. If not . . . it is inexpressibly painful to me that there should be these tensions and mutual recriminations among us. But you quite understand me, my dear boy. If only I could persuade — say Miss Hardcastle and Mr. Studdock — to share my appreciation of your very real

qualities, you would need to have no apprehensions about your career or — ah — your security."

"But what do you want me to *do*, sir?"

"My dear young friend, the golden rule is very simple. There are only two errors which would be fatal to one placed in the peculiar situation which certain parts of your previous conduct have unfortunately created for you. On the one hand, anything like a lack of initiative or enterprise would be disastrous. On the other, the slightest approach to unauthorised action — anything which suggested that you were assuming a liberty of decision which, in all the circumstances, is not really yours — might have consequences from which even I could not protect you. But as long as you keep quite clear of these two extremes, there is no reason (speaking unofficially) why you should not be perfectly safe."

Then, without waiting for Mr. Stone to reply, he hung up the receiver and rang his bell.

III

"Oughtn't we to be nearly at the gate we climbed over?" said Dimble.

It was a good deal lighter now that the rain had stopped, but the wind had risen and was roaring about them so that only shouted remarks could be heard. The branches of the hedge beside which they were tramping swayed and dipped and rose again so that they looked as if they were lashing the bright stars.

"It's a good deal longer than I remembered," said Denniston.

"But not so muddy," said Jane.

"You're right," said Denniston, suddenly stopping. "It's all stony. It wasn't like this at all on the way up. We're in the wrong field."

"I *think*," said Dimble mildly, "we must be right. We turned half left along this hedge as soon as we came out of the trees, and I'm sure I remember — —"

"But did we come out of the copse on the right side?" said Denniston.

"If we once start changing course," said Dimble, "we shall go round and round in circles all night. Let's keep straight on. We're bound to come to the road in the end."

"Hullo!" said Jane sharply. "What's this?"

All listened. Because of the wind, the unidentified rhythmic noise which they were straining to hear seemed quite distant at one moment, and then, next moment, with shouts of “Look out!”— “Go away you great brute!”— “Get back” — and the like, all were shrinking back into the hedge as the *plosh-plosh* of a horse cantering on soft ground passed close beside them. A cold gobbet of mud flung up from its hoofs struck Denniston in the face.

“Oh, look! Look!” cried Jane. “Stop him. Quick!”

“Stop him?” said Denniston who was trying to clean his face. “What on earth for? The less I see of that great clod-hopping quadruped, the better — —”

“Oh, shout out to him, Dr. Dimble,” said Jane, in an agony of impatience. “Come on. Run! Didn’t you see?”

“See what?” panted Dimble, as the whole party, under the influence of Jane’s urgency, began running in the direction of the retreating horse.

“There’s a man on his back,” gasped Jane. She was tired and out of breath and had lost a shoe.

“A man?” said Denniston: and then, “By God, sir, Jane’s right. Look, look there! Against the sky . . . to your left.”

“We can’t overtake him,” said Dimble.

“Hi! Stop! Come back! Friends — *amis* — *amici*,” bawled Denniston.

Dimble was not able to shout for the moment. He was an old man, who had been tired before they set out, and now his heart and lungs were doing things to him of which his doctor had told him the meaning some years ago. He was not frightened, but he could not shout with a great voice (least of all in the Old Solar language) until he had breathed. And while he stood trying to fill his lungs all the others suddenly cried “Look” yet again: for high among the stars, looking unnaturally large and many legged, the shape of the horse appeared as it leaped a hedge some twenty yards away, and on its back, with some streaming garment blown far out behind him in the wind, the great figure of a man. It seemed to Jane that he was looking back over his shoulder as though he mocked. Then came a splash and thud as the horse alighted on the far side; and then nothing but wind and starlight again.

IV

“You are in danger,” said Frost, when he had finished locking the door of Mark’s cell, “but you are also within reach of a great opportunity.”

“I gather,” said Mark, “I am at the Institute after all and not in a police station.”

“Yes. That makes no difference to the danger. The Institute will soon have official powers of liquidation. It has anticipated them. Hingest and Carstairs have both been liquidated. Such actions are demanded of us.”

“If you are going to kill me,” said Mark, “why all this farce of a murder charge?”

“Before going on,” said Frost, “I must ask you to be strictly objective. Resentment and fear are both chemical phenomena. Our reactions to one another are chemical phenomena. Social relations are chemical relations. You must observe these feelings in yourself in an objective manner. Do not let them distract your attention from the facts.”

“I see,” said Mark. He was acting while he said it — trying to sound at once faintly hopeful and slightly sullen, ready to be worked upon. But within, his new insight into Belbury kept him resolved not to believe one word the other said, not to accept (though he might feign acceptance) any offer he made. He felt that he must at all costs hold on to the knowledge that these men were unalterable enemies: for already he felt the old tug towards yielding, towards semi-credulity, inside him.

“The murder charge against you and the alternations in your treatment have been part of a planned programme with a well-defined end in view,” said Frost. “It is a discipline through which everyone is passed before admission to the Circle.”

Again Mark felt a spasm of retrospective terror. Only a few days ago he would have swallowed any hook with that bait on it; and nothing but the imminence of death could have made the hook so obvious and the bait so insipid as it now was. At least, so comparatively insipid. For even now . . .

“I don’t quite see the purpose of it,” he said aloud.

“It is, again, to promote objectivity. A circle bound together by subjective feelings of mutual confidence and liking would be useless. Those, as I have said, are chemical phenomena. They could all, in principle, be produced by injections. You have been made to pass through a number of conflicting feelings about the Deputy Director and others in order that your future association with us may not be based on feelings at all. In so far as there must be social relations between members of the circle it is, perhaps, better that they should be feelings of dislike. There is less risk of their being confused with the real *nexus*.”

“My future association?” said Studdock, acting a tremulous eagerness. But it was perilously easy for him to act it. The reality might reawake at any moment.

“Yes,” said Frost. “You have been selected as a possible candidate for admission. If you do not gain admission, or if you reject it, it will be necessary to destroy you. I am not, of course, attempting to work on your fears. They only confuse the issue. The process would be quite painless, and your present reactions to it are inevitable physical events.”

“It — it seems rather a formidable decision,” said Mark.

“That is merely a proposition about the state of your own body at the moment. If you please, I will go on to give you the necessary information. I must begin by telling you that neither the Deputy Director, nor I, are responsible for shaping the policy of the Institute.”

“The Head?” said Mark.

“No. Filostrato and Wilkins are quite deceived about the Head. They have, indeed, carried out a remarkable experiment by preserving it from decay. But Alcasan’s mind is not the mind we are in contact with when the Head speaks.”

“Do you mean Alcasan is really . . . *dead*?” asked Mark. His surprise at Frost’s last statement needed no acting.

“In the present state of our knowledge,” said Frost, “there is no answer to that question. Probably it has no meaning. But the cortex and vocal organs in Alcasan’s head are used by a different mind. And now, please, attend very carefully. You have probably not heard of macrobes.”

“Microbes?” said Mark in bewilderment. “But of course — —”

“I did not say *microbes*, I said *macrobes*. The formation of the word explains itself. Below the level of animal life we have long known that there are microscopic organisms. Their actual results on human life, in respect of health and disease, have, of course, made up a large part of history: the secret cause was not known till we invented the microscope.”

“Go on,” said Mark. Ravenous curiosity was moving like a sort of ground-swell beneath his conscious determination to stand on guard.

“I have now to inform you that there are similar organisms *above* the level of animal life. When I say “above” I am not speaking biologically. The structure of the macrobe, so far as we know it, is of extreme simplicity. When I say that it is above the animal level, I mean that it is more permanent, disposes of more energy, and has greater intelligence.”

“More intelligent than the highest anthropoids?” said Mark. “It must be pretty nearly human, then.”

“You have misunderstood me. When I said it transcended the animals, I was, of course, including the most efficient animal, Man. The *macrobe* is more intelligent than Man.”

“But how is it in that case that we have had no communication with them?”

“It is not certain that we have not. But in primitive times it was spasmodic, and was opposed by numerous prejudices. Moreover the intellectual development of man had not reached the level at which intercourse with our species could offer any attractions to a *macrobe*. But though there has been little intercourse, there has been profound influence. Their effect on human history has been far greater than that of the microbes, though, of course, equally unrecognised. In the light of what we now know all history will have to be rewritten. The real causes of all the principal events are quite unknown to the historians; that, indeed, is why history has not yet succeeded in becoming a science.”

“I think I’ll sit down, if you don’t mind,” said Mark, resuming his seat on the floor. Frost remained, throughout the whole conversation, standing perfectly still with his arms hanging down straight at his sides. But for the periodic upward tilt of his head and flash of his teeth at the end of a sentence, he used no gestures.

“The vocal organs and brain taken from Alcasan,” he continued, “have become the conductors of a regular intercourse between the macrobes and our own species. I do not say that we have discovered this technique; the discovery was theirs, not ours. The circle to which you may be admitted is the organ of that co-operation between the two species which has already created a new situation for humanity. The change, you will see, is far greater than that which turned the sub-man into the man. It is more comparable to the first appearance of organic life.”

“These organisms, then,” said Mark, “are friendly to humanity?”

“If you reflect for a moment,” said Frost, “you will see that your question has no meaning except on the level of the crudest popular thought. Friendship is a chemical phenomenon; so is hatred. Both of them presupposes organisms of our own type. The first step towards intercourse with the macrobes is the realisation that one must go outside the whole world of our subjective emotions. It is only as you begin to do so that you

discover how much of what you mistook for your thought was merely a by-product of your blood and nervous tissues."

"Oh, of course. I didn't quite mean 'friendly' in that sense. I really meant, were their aims compatible with our own?"

"What do you mean by our own aims?"

"Well — I suppose — the scientific reconstruction of the human race in the direction of increased efficiency — the elimination of war and poverty and other forms of waste — a fuller exploitation of nature — the preservation and extension of our species, in fact."

"I do not think this pseudo-scientific language really modifies the essentially subjective and instinctive basis of the ethics you are describing. I will return to the matter at a later stage. For the moment, I would merely remark that your view of war and your reference to the preservation of the species suggest a profound misconception. They are mere generalisations from affectional feelings."

"Surely," said Mark, "one requires a pretty large population for the full exploitation of nature, if for nothing else? And surely war is disgenic and reduces efficiency? Even if population needs thinning, is not war the worst possible method of thinning it?"

"That idea is a survival from conditions which are rapidly being altered. A few centuries ago, war did operate in the way you describe. A large agricultural population was essential; and war destroyed types which were then still useful. But every advance in industry and agriculture reduces the number of work-people who are required. A large, unintelligent population is now becoming a dead-weight. The real importance of scientific war is that scientists have to be reserved. It was not the great technocrats of Koenigsberg or Moscow who supplied the casualties in the siege of Stalingrad: it was superstitious Bavarian peasants and low-grade Russian agricultural workers. The effect of modern war is to eliminate retrogressive types, while sparing the technocracy and increasing its hold upon public affairs. In the new age, what has hitherto been merely the intellectual nucleus of the race is to become, by gradual stages, the race itself. You are to conceive the species as an animal which has discovered how to simplify nutrition and locomotion to such a point that the old complex organs and the large body which contained them are no longer necessary. That large body is therefore to disappear. Only a tenth part of it will now be needed to

support the brain. The individual is to become all head. The human race is to become all Technocracy."

"I see," said Mark. "I had thought — rather vaguely — that the intelligent nucleus would be extended by education."

"That is a pure chimera. The great majority of the human race can be educated only in the sense of being given knowledge: they cannot be trained into the total objectivity of mind which is now necessary. They will always remain animals, looking at the world through the haze of their subjective reactions. Even if they could, the day for a large population has passed. It has served its function by acting as a kind of cocoon for Technocratic and Objective Man. Now, the macrobes, and the selected humans who can co-operate with them, have no further use for it."

"The last two wars, then, were not disasters in your view?"

"On the contrary, they were simply the beginning of the programme — the first two of the sixteen major wars which are scheduled to take place in this century. I am aware of the emotional (that is, the chemical) reactions which a statement like this produces in you, and you are wasting your time in trying to conceal them from me. I do not expect you to control them. That is not the path to objectivity. I deliberately raise them in order that you may become accustomed to regard them in a purely scientific light and distinguish them as sharply as possible from the *facts*."

Mark sat with his eyes fixed on the floor. He had felt, in fact, very little emotion at Frost's programme for the human race; indeed he almost discovered at that moment how little he had ever really cared for those remote futures and universal benefits whereon his co-operation with the Institute had at first been theoretically based. Certainly at the present moment there was no room in his mind for such considerations. He was fully occupied with the conflict between his resolution not to trust these men, never again to be lured by any bait into real co-operation, and the terrible strength — like a tide sucking at the shingle as it goes out — of an opposite emotion. For here, here surely at last (so his desire whispered him) was the true inner circle of all, the circle whose centre was outside the human race — the ultimate secret, the supreme power, the last initiation. The fact that it was almost completely horrible did not in the least diminish its attraction. Nothing that lacked the tang of horror would have been quite strong enough to satisfy the delirious excitement which now set his temples hammering. It came into his mind that Frost knew all about this excitement,

and also about the opposite determination, and reckoned securely on the excitement as something which was certain to carry the day in his victim's mind.

A rattling and knocking which had been obscurely audible for some time now became so loud that Frost turned to the door. "Go away," he said, raising his voice. "What is the meaning of this impertinence?" The indistinct noise of someone shouting on the other side of the door was heard, and the knocking went on. Frost's smile widened as he turned and opened it. Instantly a piece of paper was put into his hand. As he read it, he started violently. Without glancing at Mark, he left the cell. Mark heard the door locked again behind him.

V

"What friends those two are!" said Ivy Maggs. She was referring to Pinch the cat and Mr. Bultitude the bear. The latter was sitting up with his back against the warm wall by the kitchen fire. His cheeks were so fat and his eyes so small that he looked as if he were smiling. The cat after walking to and fro with erected tail and rubbing herself against his belly had finally curled up and gone to sleep between his legs. The jackdaw, still on the Director's shoulder, had long since put its head beneath its wing.

Mrs. Dimble, who sat farther back in the kitchen, darning as if for dear life, pursed her lips a little as Ivy Maggs spoke. She could not go to bed. She wished they would all keep quiet. Her anxiety had reached that pitch at which almost every event, however small, threatens to become an irritation. But then, if anyone had been watching her expression, they would have seen the little grimace rapidly smoothed out again. Her will had many years of practice behind it.

"When we use the word Friends of those two creatures," said MacPhee, "I doubt we are being merely anthropomorphic. It is difficult to avoid the illusion that they have personalities in the human sense. But there's no evidence for it."

"What's she go making up to him for, then?" asked Ivy.

"Well," said MacPhee, "maybe there'd be a desire for warmth — she's away in out of the draught there. And there'd be a sense of security from being near something familiar. And likely enough some obscure transferred sexual impulses."

“Really, Mr. MacPhee,” said Ivy with great indignation, “it’s a shame for you to say those things about two dumb animals. I’m sure I never did see Pinch — or Mr. Bultitude either, the poor thing — —”

“I said *transferred*,” interrupted MacPhee drily. “And anyway, they like the mutual friction of their fur as a means of rectifying irritations set up by parasites. Now, you’ll observe — —”

“If you mean they have fleas,” said Ivy, “you know as well as anyone that they have no such thing.” She had reason on her side, for it was MacPhee himself who put on overalls once a month and solemnly lathered Mr. Bultitude from rump to snout in the wash-house and poured buckets of tepid water over him, and finally dried him — a day’s work in which he allowed no one to assist him.

“What do you think, sir?” said Ivy, looking at the Director.

“Me?” said Ransom. “I think MacPhee is introducing into animal life a distinction that doesn’t exist there, and then trying to determine on which side of that distinction the feelings of Pinch and Bultitude fall. You’ve got to become human before the physical cravings are distinguishable from affections — just as you have to become spiritual before affections are distinguishable from charity. What is going on in the cat and the bear isn’t one or other of these two things: it is a single undifferentiated thing in which you can find the germ of what we call friendship and of what we call physical need. But it isn’t either at that level. It is one of Barfield’s ‘ancient unities.’”

“I never denied they liked being together,” said MacPhee.

“Well, that’s what I said,” shouted Mrs. Maggs.

“The question is worth raising, Mr. Director,” said MacPhee, “because I submit that it points to an essential falsity in the whole system of this place.”

Grace Ironwood who had been sitting with her eyes half closed suddenly opened them wide and fixed them on the Ulsterman, and Mrs. Dimble leaned her head towards Camilla and said in a whisper, “I do wish Mr. MacPhee could be persuaded to go to bed. It’s perfectly unbearable at a time like this.”

“How do you mean, MacPhee?” asked the Director.

“I mean that there is a half-hearted attempt to adopt an attitude towards irrational creatures which cannot be consistently maintained. And I’ll do the

justice to say that you've never tried. The bear is kept in the house and given apples and golden syrup till it's near bursting — —"

"Well, I like that!" said Mrs. Maggs. "Who is it that's always giving him apples? That's what I'd like to know."

"The bear, as I was observing," said MacPhee, "is kept in the house and pampered. The pigs are kept in a stye and killed for bacon. I would be interested to know the philosophical *rationale* of the distinction."

Ivy Maggs looked in bewilderment from the smiling face of the Director to the unsmiling face of MacPhee.

"I think it's just silly," she said. "Who ever heard of trying to make bacon out of a bear?"

MacPhee made a little stamp of impatience and said something which was drowned first by Ransom's laughter and then by a great clap of wind which shook the window as if it would blow it in.

"What a dreadful night for them!" said Mrs. Dimble.

"I love it," said Camilla. "I'd love to be out in it. Out on a high hill. Oh, I do wish you'd let me go with them, sir."

"You *like* it!" said Ivy. "Oh, I don't! Listen to it round the corner of the house. It'd make me feel kind of creepy if I were alone. Or even if you was upstairs, sir. I always think it's on nights like this that they — you know — come to you."

"They don't take any notice of weather one way or the other, Ivy," said Ransom.

"Do you know," said Ivy in a low voice, "that's a thing I don't quite understand. They're so eerie, these ones that come to visit you. I wouldn't go near that part of the house if I thought there was anything there, not if you paid me a hundred pounds. But I don't feel like that about God. But He ought to be worse, if you see what I mean."

"He was, once," said the Director. "You are quite right about the Powers. Angels in general are not good company for men in general — even when they are good angels and good men. It's all in St. Paul. But as for Maleldil himself, all that has changed: it was changed by what happened at Bethlehem."

"It's getting ever so near Christmas now," said Ivy, addressing the company in general.

"We shall have Mr. Maggs with us before then," said Ransom.

"In a day or two, sir," said Ivy.

“Was that only the wind?” said Grace Ironwood.

“It sounded to me like a horse,” said Mrs. Dimble.

“Here,” said MacPhee jumping up. “Get out of the way, Mr. Bultitude, till I get my gum boots. It’ll be those two horses of Broad’s again, tramping all over my celery trenches. If only you’d let me go to the police in the first instance. Why the man can’t keep them shut up . . .” — he was bundling himself into his mackintosh as he spoke the rest of the speech was inaudible.

“My crutch, please, Camilla,” said Ransom. “Come back, MacPhee. We will go to the door together, you and I. Ladies, stay where you are.”

There was a look on his face which some of those present had not seen before. The four women sat as if they had been turned to stone, with their eyes wide and staring. A moment later Ransom and MacPhee stood alone in the scullery. The back door was so shaking on its hinges with the wind that they did not know whether someone were knocking at it or not.

“Now,” said Ransom, “open it. And stand back behind it yourself.”

For a second MacPhee worked with the bolts. Then, whether he meant to disobey or not (a point which must remain doubtful) the storm flung the door against the wall and he was momentarily pinned behind it. Ransom, standing motionless, leaning forward on his crutch, saw in the light from the scullery, outlined against the blackness, a huge horse, all in a lather of sweat and foam, its yellow teeth laid bare, its nostrils wide and red, its ears flattened against its skull, and its eyes flaming. It had been ridden so close up to the door that its front hoofs rested on the doorstep. It had neither saddle, stirrup nor bridle; but at that very moment a man leapt off its back. He seemed both very tall and very fat, almost a giant. His reddish-grey hair and beard were blown all about his face so that it was hardly visible; and it was only after he had taken a step forward that Ransom noticed his clothes — the ragged, ill-fitting khaki coat, baggy trousers, and boots that had lost the toes.

VI

In a great room at Belbury, where the fire blazed and wine and silver sparkled on side-tables, and a great bed occupied the centre of the floor, the Deputy Director watched in profound silence while four young men with reverential or medical heedfulness carried in a burden on a stretcher. As

they removed the blankets and transferred the occupant of the stretcher to the bed, Wither's mouth opened wider. His interest became so intense that for the moment the chaos of his face appeared ordered and he looked like an ordinary man. What he saw was a naked human body, alive, but apparently unconscious. He ordered the attendants to place hot-water bottles at its feet and raise the head with pillows; when they had done so and withdrawn he drew a chair to the foot of the bed and sat down to study the face of the sleeper. The head was very large, though perhaps it looked larger than it was because of the unkempt grey beard and the long and tangled grey hair. The face was weather-beaten in the extreme and the neck, where visible, already lean and scraggy with age. The eyes were shut and the lips wore a very slight smile. The total effect was ambiguous. Wither gazed at it for a long time and sometimes moved his head to see how it looked from a different angle — almost as if he searched for some trait he could not find and were disappointed. For nearly a quarter of an hour he sat thus: then the door opened and Professor Frost came softly into the room.

He walked to the bedside, bent down and looked closely into the stranger's face. Then he walked round to the far side of the bed and did the same.

"Is he asleep?" whispered Wither.

"I think not. It is more like some kind of trance. What kind I don't know."

"You have no doubts, I trust?"

"Where did they find him?"

"In a dingle about quarter of a mile from the entrance to the *souterrain*. They had the track of bare feet almost all the way."

"The *souterrain* itself was empty?"

"Yes. I had a report on that from Stone shortly after you left me."

"You will make provision about Stone?"

"Yes. But what do you think?" — he pointed with his eyes to the bed.

"I think it is he," said Frost. "The place is right. The nudity is hard to account for on any other hypothesis. The skull is the kind I expected."

"But the face?"

"Yes. There are certain traits which are a little disquieting."

"I could have sworn," said Wither, "that I knew the look of a Master — even the look of one who could be made into a Master. You understand me .

. . one sees at once that Straik or Studdock might do; that Miss Hardcastle, with all her excellent qualities, would not."

"Yes. Perhaps we must be prepared for great crudities in . . . *him*. Who knows what the technique of the Atlantean Circle was really like?"

"Certainly, one must not be — ah — narrow-minded. One can suppose that the Masters of that age were not quite so sharply divided from the common people as we are. All sorts of emotional and even instinctive, elements were perhaps still tolerated in the Great Atlantean which we have had to discard."

"One not only *may* suppose it, one *must*. We should not forget that the whole plan consists in the reunion of different kinds of the art."

"Exactly. Perhaps one's association with the Powers — their different time scale and all that — tends to make one forget how enormous the gap in time is by our human standards."

"What we have here," said Frost, pointing to the sleeper, "is not, you see, something from the fifth Century. It is the last vestige, surviving into the fifth Century, of something much more remote. Something that comes down from long before the Great Disaster, even from before primitive Druidism; something that takes us back to Numinor, to pre-glacial periods."

"The whole experiment is perhaps more hazardous than we realised."

"I have had occasion before," said Frost, "to express the wish that you would not keep on introducing these emotional pseudo-statements into our scientific discussions."

"My dear friend," said Wither, without looking at him, "I am quite aware that the subject you mention has been discussed between you and the Powers themselves. Quite aware. And I don't doubt that you are equally well aware of certain discussions they have held with me about aspects of your own methods which are open to criticism. Nothing would be more futile — I might say more dangerous — than any attempt to introduce between ourselves those modes of oblique discipline which we properly apply to our inferiors. It is in your own interest that I venture to touch on this point."

Instead of replying, Frost signalled to his companion. Both men became silent, their gaze fixed on the bed: for the Sleeper had opened his eyes.

The opening of the eyes flooded the whole face with meaning, but it was a meaning they could not interpret. The Sleeper seemed to be looking at them, but they were not quite sure that he saw them. As the seconds passed

Wither's main impression of the face was its caution. But there was nothing intense or uneasy about it. It was a habitual, unemphatic defensiveness which seemed to have behind it years of hard experience, quietly — perhaps even humorously — endured.

Wither rose to his feet, and cleared his throat.

"*Magister Merline*," he said, "*Sapientissime Britonum, secreti secretorum possessor, incredibili quodam gaudio afficimur quod te domum nostram accipere nobis — ah — contingit. Scito nos etiam haud imperitos esse magnae artis — et — ut ita dicam . . .*"

[Footnote 1] "Master Merlin, wisest of the Britons, possessor of the secret of secrets; it is with inexpressible pleasure that we embrace the opportunity of — ah — welcoming you in our house. You will understand that we also are not unskilled in the Great Art, and, if I may say so . . ."

But his voice died away. It was too obvious that the Sleeper was taking no notice of what he said. It was impossible that a learned man of the sixth century should not know Latin. Was there, then, some error in his own pronunciation? But he felt by no means sure that this man could not understand him. The total lack of curiosity, or even interest, in his face, suggested rather that he was not listening.

Frost took a decanter from the table and poured out a glass of red wine. He then returned to the bedside, bowed deeply, and handed it to the stranger. The latter looked at it with an expression that might (or might not) be interpreted as one of cunning; then he suddenly sat up in bed, revealing a huge hairy chest and lean, muscular arms. His eyes turned to the table and he pointed. Frost went back to it and touched a different decanter. The stranger shook his head and pointed again.

"I think," said Wither, "that our very distinguished guest is trying to indicate the jug. I don't quite know what was provided. Perhaps — —"

"It contains beer," said Frost.

"Well, it is hardly appropriate — still, perhaps, we know so little of the customs of that age . . ."

While he was still speaking Frost had filled a pewter mug with beer and offered it to their guest. For the first time a gleam of interest came into that cryptic face. The man snatched the mug eagerly, pushed back his disorderly moustache from his lips, and began to drink. Back and back went the grey head: up and up went the bottom of the tankard: the moving muscles of the lean throat made the act of drinking visible. At last the man, having

completely inverted the tankard, set it down, wiped his wet lips with the back of his hand, and heaved a long sigh — the first sound he had uttered since his arrival. Then he turned his attention once more to the table.

For about twenty minutes the two old men fed him — Wither with tremulous and courtly deference, Frost with the deft, noiseless movements of a trained servant. All sorts of delicacies had been provided, but the stranger devoted his attention entirely to cold beef, chicken, pickles, bread, cheese, and butter. The butter he ate neat, off the end of a knife. He was apparently unacquainted with forks, and took the chicken bones in both hands to gnaw them, placing them under the pillow when he had done. His eating was noisy and animal. When he had eaten, he signalled for a second pint of beer, drank it at two long draughts, wiped his mouth on the sheet and his nose on his hand, and seemed to be composing himself for further slumber.

"*Ah — er — domine*," said Wither with deprecating urgency, "*nihil magis mihi displiceret quam tibi ullo modo — ah — molestum esse. Attamen, venia tua . . .*"

[Footnote 2] "Ah — er — sir — nothing would be further from my wish than to be in any way troublesome to you. At the same time, with your pardon . . ."

But the man was taking no notice at all. They could not tell whether his eyes were shut or whether he was still looking at them under half-closed lids; but clearly he was not intending to converse. Frost and Wither exchanged enquiring glances.

"There is no approach to this room, is there," said Frost, "except through the next one?"

"No," said Wither.

"Let us go out there and discuss the situation. We can leave the door ajar. We shall be able to hear if he stirs."

VII

When Mark found himself left suddenly alone by Frost, his first sensation was an unexpected lightness of heart. It was not that he had any release from fears about the future. Rather, in the very midst of those fears, a strange sense of liberation had sprung up. The relief of no longer trying to win these men's confidence, the shuffling off of miserable hopes, was

almost exhilarating. The straight fight, after the long series of diplomatic failures, was tonic. He might lose the straight fight. But at least it was now his side against theirs. And he could talk of “his side” now. Already he was with Jane and with all she symbolised. Indeed, it was he who was in the front line: Jane was almost a non-combatant. . . .

The approval of one’s own conscience is a very heady draught; and specially for those who are not accustomed to it. Within two minutes Mark had passed from that first involuntary sense of liberation to a conscious attitude of courage, and thence into unrestrained heroics. The picture of himself as hero and martyr, as Jack the Giant-Killer still coolly playing his hand even in the giant’s kitchen, rose up before him, promising that it could blot out forever those other, and unendurable pictures of himself which had haunted him for the last few hours. It wasn’t everyone, after all, who could have resisted an invitation like Frost’s. An invitation that beckoned you right across the frontiers of human life . . . into the something that people had been trying to find since the beginning of the world . . . a touch on that infinitely secret cord which was the real nerve of all history. How it would have attracted him once!

Would have attracted him once. . . . Suddenly, like a thing that leaped to him across infinite distances with the speed of light, desire (salt, black, ravenous, unanswerable desire) took him by the throat. The merest hint will convey to those who have felt it the quality of the emotion which now shook him, like a dog shaking a rat: for others, no description perhaps will avail. Many writers speak of it in terms of lust: a description admirably illuminating from within, totally misleading from without. It has nothing to do with the body. But it is in two respects like lust as lust shows itself to be in the deepest and darkest vault of its labyrinthine house. For like lust, it disenchants the whole universe. Everything else that Mark had ever felt — love, ambition, hunger, lust itself — appeared to have been mere milk and water, toys for children, not worth one throb of the nerves. The infinite attraction of this dark thing sucked all other passions into itself: the rest of the world appeared blanched, etiolated, insipid, a world of white marriages and white masses, dishes without salt, gambling for counters. He could not now think of Jane except in terms of appetite: and appetite here made no appeal. That serpent, faced with the true dragon, became a fangless worm. But it was like lust in another respect also. It is idle to point out to the perverted man the horror of his perversion: while the fierce fit is on, that

horror is the very spice of his craving. It is ugliness itself that becomes, in the end, the goal of his lechery; beauty has long since grown too weak a stimulant. And so it was here. These creatures of which Frost had spoken — and he did not doubt now that they were locally present with him in the cell — breathed death on the human race and on all joy. Not despite this but because of this, the terrible gravitation sucked and tugged and fascinated him towards them. Never before had he known the frightful strength of the movement opposite to nature which now had him in its grip; the impulse to reverse all reluctances and to draw every circle anti-clockwise. The meaning of certain pictures, of Frost's talk about "objectivity," of the things done by witches in old times, became clear to him. The image of Wither's face rose to his memory; and this time he did not merely loathe it. He noted, with shuddering satisfaction, the signs it bore of a shared experience between them. Wither also knew. Wither understood . . .

At the same moment it came back to him that he would probably be killed. As soon as he thought of that, he became once more aware of the cell — the little hard white empty place with the glaring light, in which he found himself sitting on the floor. He blinked his eyes. He could not remember that it had been visible for the last few minutes. Where had he been? His mind was clear now at any rate. This idea of something in common between him and Wither was all nonsense. Of course they meant to kill him in the end unless he could rescue himself by his own wits. What had he been thinking and feeling while he forgot that?

Gradually he realised that he had sustained some sort of attack, and that he had put up no resistance at all; and with that realisation a quite new kind of dread entered his mind. Though he was theoretically a materialist, he had all his life believed quite inconsistently, and even carelessly, in the freedom of his own will. He had seldom made a moral resolution: and when he had resolved some hours ago to trust the Belbury crew no further, he had taken it for granted that he would be able to do what he resolved. He knew, to be sure, that he might "change his mind": but till he did so, of course he would carry out his plan. It had never occurred to him that his mind could thus be changed for him, all in an instant of time, changed beyond recognition. If that sort of thing could happen . . . It was unfair. Here was a man trying (for the first time in his life) to do what was obviously the right thing — the thing that Jane and the Dimbles and Aunt Gilly would have approved of. You might have expected that when a man behaved in that way the universe

would back him up. For the relics of such semi-savage versions of Theism as Mark had picked up in the course of his life were stronger in him than he knew, and he felt, though he would not have put it into words, that it was “up to” the universe to reward his good resolutions. Yet the very first moment you tried to be good, the universe let you down. It revealed gaps you had never dreamed of. It invented new laws for the express purpose of letting you down. That was what you got for your pains.

The cynics, then, were right. But at this thought, he stopped sharply. Some flavour that came with it had given him pause. Was this the other mood beginning again? Oh, not that, at any price! He clenched his hands. No, no, no! He could not stand this much longer. He wanted Jane: he wanted Mrs. Dimble: he wanted Denniston. He wanted somebody or something. “Oh, don’t, don’t let me go back into it!” he said; and then louder, “Don’t, don’t!” All that could in any sense be called himself went into that cry; and the dreadful consciousness of having played his last card began to turn slowly into a sort of peace. There was nothing more to be done. Unconsciously he allowed his muscles to relax. His young body was very tired by this time and even the hard floor was grateful to it. The cell also seemed to be somehow emptied and purged, as if it, too, were tired after the conflicts it had witnessed — emptied like a sky after rain, tired like a child after weeping. A dim consciousness that the night must be nearly ended stole over him, and he fell asleep.

THIRTEEN

They have pulled down Deep Heaven on their Heads

I

"Stand! Stand where you are and tell me your name and business," said Ransom.

The ragged figure on the threshold tilted its head a little sideways like one who cannot quite hear. At the same moment the wind from the opened door had its way with the house. The inner door, between the scullery and the kitchen, clapped to with a loud bang, isolating the three men from the women, and a large tin basin fell clattering into the sink. The stranger took a pace farther into the room.

"*Sta*," said Ransom in a great voice. "*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, dic mihi qui sis et quam ob causam veneris.*"

[Footnote 3] "Stand. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, tell me who you are and why you come."

The Stranger raised his hand and flung back the dripping hair from his forehead. The light fell full on his face, from which Ransom had the impression of an immense quietness. Every muscle of this man's body seemed as relaxed as if he were asleep, and he stood absolutely still. Each drop of rain from the khaki coat struck the tiled floor exactly where the drop before it had fallen.

His eyes rested on Ransom for a second or two with no particular interest. Then he turned his head to his left, to where the door was flung back almost against the wall. MacPhee was concealed behind it.

"Come out," said the Stranger, in Latin. The words were spoken almost in a whisper, but so deep that even in that wind-shaken room they made a kind of vibration. But what surprised Ransom much more was the fact that MacPhee immediately obeyed. He did not look at Ransom but at the Stranger. Then, unexpectedly, he gave an enormous yawn. The Stranger looked him up and down and then turned to the Director.

"Fellow," he said in Latin, "tell the Lord of this House that I am come." As he spoke, the wind from behind him was whipping the coat about his legs and blowing his hair over his forehead: but his great mass stood as if it

had been planted like a tree, and he seemed in no hurry. And the voice, too, was such as one might imagine to be the voice of a tree, large and slow and patient, drawn up through roots and clay and gravel from the depths of the Earth.

"I am the Master here," said Ransom, in the same language.

"To be sure!" answered the Stranger. "And yonder whipper-snapper (*mastigia*) is without doubt your Bishop." He did not exactly smile, but a look of disquieting amusement came into his keen eyes. Suddenly he poked his head forward so as to bring his face much nearer to the Director's.

"Tell your master that I am come," he repeated in the same voice as before.

Ransom looked at him without the flicker of an eyelid.

"Do you really wish," he said at last, "that I call upon my Masters?"

"A daw that lives in a hermit's cell has learned before now to chatter book-Latin," said the other. "Let us hear your calling, mannikin (*homuncio*)."

"I must use another language for it," said Ransom.

"A daw could have Greek also in its bill."

"It is not Greek."

"Let us hear your Hebrew, then."

"It is not Hebrew."

"Nay," answered the other with something like a chuckle, a chuckle deep hidden in his enormous chest and betrayed only by a slight movement of his shoulders, "if you come to the gabble of barbarians, it will go hard but I shall out-chatter you. Here is excellent sport."

"It may happen to seem to you the speech of barbarians," said Ransom, "for it is long since it has been heard. Not even in Numinor was it heard in the streets."

The Stranger gave no start and his face remained as quiet as before, if it did not become quieter; but he spoke with a new interest.

"Your Masters let you play with dangerous toys," he said. "Tell me, slave, what is Numinor?"

"The true West," said Ransom.

"Well . . ." said the other. Then, after a pause, he added, "You have little courtesy to guests in this house. It is a cold wind on my back, and I have been long in bed. You see, I have already crossed the threshold."

“I value that at a straw,” said Ransom. “Shut the door, MacPhee,” he added in English. But there was no response; and looking round for the first time, he saw that MacPhee had sat down in the one chair which the scullery contained and was fast asleep.

“What is the meaning of this foolery?” said Ransom, looking sharply at the Stranger.

“If you are indeed the Master of this house, you have no need to be told. If not, why should I give account of myself to such as you? Do not fear; your horse-boy will be none the worse.”

“This shall be seen to shortly,” said Ransom. “In the meantime, I do not fear your entering the house. I have more cause to fear your escaping. Shut the door if you will, for you see my foot is hurt.”

The Stranger, without ever taking his eyes off Ransom, swept back his left hand behind him, found the door handle, and slammed the door to. MacPhee never stirred. “Now,” he said, “what of these Masters of yours?”

“My Masters are the Oyéresu.”

“Where did you hear that name?” asked the Stranger. “Or, if you are truly of the College, why do they dress you like a slave?”

“Your own garments,” said Ransom, “are not those of a druid.”

“That stroke was well put by,” answered the other. “Since you have knowledge, answer me three questions, if you dare.”

“I will answer them if I can. But as for daring, we shall see.”

The Stranger mused for a few seconds; then, speaking in a slightly sing-song voice, as though he repeated an old lesson, he asked, in two Latin hexameters, the following question:

“Who is called Sulva? What road does she walk? Why is the womb barren on one side? Where are the cold marriages?”

Ransom replied, “Sulva is she whom mortals call the Moon. She walks in the lowest sphere. The rim of the world that was wasted goes through her. Half of her orb is turned towards us and shares our curse. Her other half looks to Deep Heaven; happy would he be who could cross that frontier and see the fields on her farther side. On this side the womb is barren and the marriages cold. There dwell an accursed people, full of pride and lust. There when a young man takes a maiden in marriage they do not lie together, but each lies with a cunningly fashioned image of the other, made to move and to be warm by devilish arts, for real flesh will not please them,

they are so dainty (*delicati*) in their dreams of lust. Their real children they fabricate by vile arts in a secret place."

"You have answered well," said the Stranger. "I thought there were but three men in the world that knew this question. But my second may be harder. Where is the ring of Arthur the King? What Lord has such a treasure in his house?"

"The ring of the King," said Ransom, "is on Arthur's finger where he sits in the House of Kings in the cup-shaped land of Abhalljin, beyond the seas of Lur in Perelandra. For Arthur did not die; but Our Lord took him to be in the body till the end of time and the shattering of Sulva, with Enoch and Elias and Moses and Melchisedec the King. Melchisedec is he in whose hall the steep-stoned ring sparkles on the forefinger of the Pendragon."

"Well answered," said the Stranger. "In my college it was thought that only two men in the world knew this. But as for my third question, no man knew the answer but myself. Who shall be Pendragon in the time when Saturn descends from his sphere? In what world did he learn war?"

"In the sphere of Venus I learned war," said Ransom. "In this age Lurga shall descend. I am the Pendragon."

When he had said this he took a step backwards, for the big man had begun to move and there was a new look in his eyes. Any who had seen them as they stood thus face to face would have thought that it might come to fighting at any moment. But the Stranger had not moved with hostile purpose. Slowly, ponderously, yet not awkwardly, as though a mountain sank like a wave, he sank on one knee; and still his face was almost on a level with the Director's.

II

"This throws a quite unexpected burden on our resources," said Wither to Frost, where they both sat in the outer room with the door ajar. "I must confess I had not anticipated any serious difficulty about language."

"We must get a Celtic scholar at once," said Frost. "We are regrettably weak on the philological side. I do not at the moment know who has discovered most about ancient British. Ransom would be the man to advise us if he were available. I suppose nothing has been heard of him by your department?"

“I need hardly point out,” said Wither, “that Dr. Ransom’s philological attainments are by no means the only ground on which we are anxious to find him. If the least trace had been discovered, you may rest assured that you would have long since had the — ah — gratification of seeing him here in person.”

“Of course. He may not be in the Earth at all.”

“I met him once,” said Wither, half closing his eyes. “He was a most brilliant man in his way. A man whose penetrations and intuitions might have been of infinite value, if he had not embraced the cause of reaction. It is a saddening reflection — —”

“Of course,” said Frost, interrupting him. “Straik knows modern Welsh. His mother was a Welsh woman.”

“It would certainly be much more satisfactory,” said Wither, “if we could, so to speak, keep the whole matter in the family. There would be something very disagreeable to me — and I am sure you would feel the same way yourself — about introducing a Celtic expert from outside.”

“The expert would, of course, be provided for as soon as we could dispense with his services,” replied Frost. “It is the waste of time that is the trouble. What progress have you made with Straik?”

“Oh, really excellent,” said the Deputy Director. “Indeed I am almost a little disappointed. I mean, my pupil is advancing so rapidly that it may be necessary to abandon an idea which, I confess, rather attracts me. I had been thinking while you were out of the room that it would be specially fitting and — ah — proper and gratifying if your pupil and mine could be initiated together. We should both, I am sure, have felt . . . But, of course, if Straik is ready some time before Studdock, I should not feel myself entitled to stand in his way. You will understand, my dear fellow, that I am not trying to make this anything like a test case as to the comparative efficiency of our very different methods.”

“It would be impossible for you to do so,” said Frost, “since I have interviewed Studdock only once, and that one interview has had all the success that could be expected. I mentioned Straik only to find out whether he were already so far committed that he might properly be introduced to our guest.”

“Oh . . . as to being *committed*,” said Wither, “in some sense . . . ignoring certain fine shades for the moment, while fully recognising their ultimate importance . . . I should not hesitate . . . we should be perfectly justified.”

“I was thinking,” said Frost, “that there must be someone on duty here. He may wake at any moment. Our pupils — Straik and Studdock — could take it in turns. There is no reason why they should not be useful even before their full initiation. They would, of course, be under orders to ring us up the moment anything happened.”

“You think Mr. — ah — Studdock is far enough on?”

“It doesn’t matter,” said Frost. “What harm can he do? He can’t get *out*. And in the meantime we only want someone to watch. It would be a useful test.”

III

MacPhee, who had just been refuting both Ransom and Alcasan’s head by a two-edged argument which seemed unanswerable in the dream but which he never afterwards remembered, found himself violently waked by someone shaking his shoulder. He suddenly perceived that he was cold and his left foot was numb. Then he saw Denniston’s face looking into his own. The scullery seemed full of people — Denniston and Dimble and Jane. They appeared extremely bedraggled, torn and muddy and wet.

“Are you all right?” Denniston was saying. “I’ve been trying to wake you for several minutes.”

“All right?” said MacPhee, swallowing once or twice and licking his lips. “Aye, I’m all right.” Then he sat upright. “There’s been a — a man here,” he said.

“What sort of a man?” asked Dimble.

“Well,” said MacPhee, “as to that . . . it’s not just so easy . . . I fell asleep talking to him, to tell you the truth. I can’t just bring to mind what we were saying.”

The others exchanged glances. Though MacPhee was fond of a little hot toddy on winter nights, he was a sober man: they had never seen him like this before. Next moment he jumped to his feet.

“Lord save us!” he exclaimed. “He had the Director here. Quick! We must search the house and the garden. It was some kind of impostor or spy. I know now what’s wrong with me. I’ve been hypnotised. There was a horse, too. I mind the horse.”

This last detail had an immediate effect on his hearers. Denniston flung open the kitchen door and the whole party surged in after him. For a second

they saw indistinct forms in the deep, red light of a large fire which had not been attended to for some hours: then, as Denniston found the switch and turned on the light, all drew a deep breath. The four women sat fast asleep. The jackdaw slept, perched on the back of an empty chair. Mr. Bultitude, stretched out on his side across the hearth, slept also: his tiny, child-like snore, so disproportionate to his bulk, was audible in the momentary silence. Mrs. Dimble, bunched in what seemed a comfortless position, was sleeping with her head on the table, a half-darned sock still clasped on her knees. Dimble looked at her with that uncurable pity which men feel for any sleeper, but specially for a wife. Camilla, who had been in the rocking-chair, was curled up in an attitude which was full of grace, like that of an animal accustomed to sleep anywhere. Mrs. Maggs slept with her kind, commonplace mouth wide open; and Grace Ironwood, bolt upright as if she were awake, but with the head sagging a little to one side, seemed to submit with austere patience to the humiliation of unconsciousness.

“They’re all right,” said MacPhee from behind. “It’s just the same as he did to me. We’ve no time to wake them. Get on.”

They passed from the kitchen into the flagged passage. To all of them except MacPhee the silence of the house seemed intense after their buffeting in the wind and rain. The lights as they switched them on successively revealed empty rooms and empty passages which wore the abandoned look of indoor midnight — fires dead in the grates, an evening paper on a sofa, a clock that had stopped. But no one had really expected to find much else on the ground floor.

“Now for upstairs,” said Dimble.

“The lights are on upstairs,” said Jane, as they all came to the foot of the staircase.

“We turned them on ourselves from the passage,” said Dimble.

“I don’t think we did,” said Denniston.

“Excuse me,” said Dimble to MacPhee, “I think perhaps I’d better go first.”

Up to the first landing they were in darkness; on the second and last the light from the first floor fell. At each landing the stair made a right-angled turn, so that till you reached the second you could not see the lobby on the floor above. Jane and Denniston, who were last, saw MacPhee and Dimble stopped dead on the second landing: their faces in profile lit up, the backs of their heads in darkness. The Ulsterman’s mouth was shut like a trap, his

expression hostile and afraid. Dimble was open-mouthed. Then, forcing her tired limbs to run, Jane got up beside them and saw what they saw.

Looking down on them from the balustrade were two men, one clothed in sweepy garments of red and the other in blue. It was the Director who wore blue, and for one instant a thought that was pure nightmare crossed Jane's mind. The two robed figures looked to be two of the same sort . . . and what, after all, did she know of this Director who had conjured her into his house and made her dream dreams and taught her the fear of Hell that very night? And there they were, the pair of them, talking their secrets and doing whatever such people would do, when they had emptied the house or laid its inhabitants to sleep. The man who had been dug up out of the earth and the man who had been in outer space . . . and the one had told them that the other was an enemy, and now, the moment they met, here were the two of them, run together like two drops of quicksilver. All this time she had hardly looked at the Stranger. The Director seemed to have laid aside his crutch, and Jane had hardly seen him standing so straight and still before. The light so fell on his beard that it became a kind of halo; and on top of his head also she caught the glint of gold. Suddenly, while she thought of these things, she found that her eyes were looking straight into the eyes of the Stranger. Next moment she had noticed his size. The man was monstrous. And the two men were allies. And the Stranger was speaking and pointing at her as he spoke.

She did not understand the words: but Dimble did, and heard Merlin saying in what seemed to him a rather strange kind of Latin:

"Sir, you have in your house the falsest lady of any at this time alive."

And Dimble heard the Director answer in the same language.

"Sir, you are mistaken. She is doubtless like all of us a sinner: but the woman is chaste."

"Sir," said Merlin, "know well that she has done in Logres a thing of which no less sorrow shall come than came of the stroke that Balinus struck. For, sir, it was the purpose of God that she and her lord should between them have begotten a child by whom the enemies should have been put out of Logres for a thousand years."

"She is but lately married," said Ransom. "The child may yet be born."

"Sir," said Merlin, "be assured that the child will never be born, for the hour of its begetting is passed. Of their own will they are barren: I did not know till now that the usages of Sulva were so common among you. For a

hundred generations in two lines the begetting of this child was prepared; and unless God should rip up the work of time, such seed, and such an hour, in such a land, shall never be again."

"Enough said," answered Ransom. "The woman perceives that we are speaking of her."

"It would be great charity," said Merlin, "if you gave order that her head should be cut from her shoulders; for it is a weariness to look at her."

Jane, though she had a smattering of Latin, had not understood their conversation. The accent was unfamiliar, and the old Druid used a vocabulary that was far beyond her reading — the Latin of a man to whom Apuleius and Martianus Capella were the primary classics and whose elegances resembled those of the *Hisperica Famina*. But Dimble had followed it. He thrust Jane behind him and called out:

"Ransom! What in heaven's name is the meaning of this?"

Merlin spoke again in Latin, and Ransom was just turning to answer him when Dimble interrupted:

"Answer *us*," he said. "What has happened? Why are you dressed up like that? What are you doing with that bloodthirsty old man?"

MacPhee, who had followed the Latin even less than Jane, but who had been staring at Merlin as an angry terrier stares at a Newfoundland dog which has invaded its own garden, broke into the conversation.

"Dr. Ransom," he said. "I don't know who the big man is and I'm no Latinist. But I know well that you've kept me under your eye all this night against my own expressed will, and allowed me to be drugged and hypnotised. It gives me little pleasure, I assure you, to see yourself dressed up like something out of a pantomime and standing there hand-in-glove with that yogi, or shaman, or priest, or whatever he is. And you can tell him he need not look at me the way he's doing. I'm not afraid of him. And as for my own life and limb — if you, Dr. Ransom, have changed sides after all that's come and gone, I don't know that I've much more use for either. But though I may be killed, I'm not going to be made a fool of. We're waiting for an explanation."

The Director looked down on them in silence for a few seconds.

"Has it really come to this?" he said. "Does not one of you trust me?"

"I do, sir," said Jane suddenly.

"These appeals to the passions and emotions," said MacPhee, "are nothing to the purpose. I could cry as well as anyone this moment if I gave

my mind to it."

"Well," said the Director, after a pause, "there is some excuse for you all, for we have all been mistaken. So has the enemy. This man is Merlinus Ambrosius. They thought that if he came back he would be on their side. I find he is on ours. You, Dimble, ought to realise that this was always a possibility."

"That is true," said Dimble. "I suppose it was — well, the look of the thing — you and he standing there together: like *that*. And his appalling bloodthirstiness."

"I have been startled by it myself," said Ransom. "But after all we had no right to expect that his penal code would be that of the nineteenth century. I find it difficult, too, to make him understand that I am not an absolute monarch."

"Is — is he a Christian?" asked Dimble.

"Yes," said Ransom. "As for my clothes, I have for once put on the dress of my office to do him honour, and because I was ashamed. He mistook MacPhee and me for scullions or stable-boys. In his days, you see, men did not, except for necessity, go about in shapeless sacks of cloth, and drab was not a favourite colour."

At this point Merlin spoke again. Dimble and the Director, who alone could follow his speech, heard him say, "Who are these people? If they are your slaves, why do they do you no reverence? If they are enemies, why do we not destroy them?"

"They are my friends," began Ransom in Latin, but MacPhee interrupted.

"Do I understand, Dr. Ransom," he said, "that you are asking us to accept this person as a member of our organisation?"

"I am afraid," said the Director, "I cannot put it that way. He *is* a member of the organisation. And I must command you all to accept him."

"And secondly," continued MacPhee, "I must ask what enquiries have been made into his credentials."

"I am fully satisfied," answered the Director. "I am as sure of his good faith as of yours."

"But the grounds of your confidence?" persisted MacPhee. "Are we not to hear them?"

"It would be hard," said the Director, "to explain to you my reasons for trusting Merlinus Ambrosius: but no harder than to explain to him why,

despite many appearances which might be misunderstood, I trust you." There was just the ghost of a smile about his mouth as he said this. Then Merlin spoke to him again in Latin and he replied. After that Merlin addressed Dimble.

"The Pendragon tells me," he said in his unmoved voice, "that you accuse me for a fierce and cruel man. It is a charge I never heard before. A third part of my substance I gave to widows and poor men. I never sought the death of any but felons and heathen Saxons. As for the woman, she may live for me. I am not master in this house. But would it be such a great matter if her head were struck off? Do not queens and ladies who would disdain her as their tire-woman go to the fire for less? Even that gallows bird (*cruciarius*) beside you — I mean you, fellow, though you speak nothing but your own barbarous tongue; you with the face like sour milk and the voice like a saw in a hard log and the legs like a crane's — even that cutpurse (*sector zonarius*), though I would have him to the gatehouse, yet the rope should be used on his back, not his throat."

MacPhee who realised, though without understanding the words, that he was the subject of some unfavourable comment, stood listening with that expression of entirely suspended judgement which is commoner in Northern Ireland and the Scotch lowlands than in England.

"Mr. Director," he said, when Merlin had finished, "I would be very greatly obliged if — —"

"Come," said the Director suddenly, "we have none of us slept to-night. Arthur, will you come and light a fire for our guest in the big room at the north end of this passage? And would someone wake the women? Ask them to bring him up refreshments. A bottle of Burgundy and whatever you have cold. And then, all to bed. We need not stir early in the morning. All is going to be very well."

IV

"We're going to have difficulties with that new colleague of ours," said Dimble. He was alone with his wife in their room at St. Anne's late on the following day.

"Yes," he repeated after a pause. "What you'd call a strong colleague."

"You look very tired, Cecil," said Mrs. Dimble.

“Well, it’s been rather a gruelling conference,” said he. “He’s — he’s a tiring man. Oh, I know we’ve all been fools. I mean, we’ve all been imagining that because he came back in the twentieth century he’d be a twentieth-century man. Time is more important than we thought, that’s all.”

“I felt that at lunch, you know,” said his wife, “it was so silly not to have realised that he wouldn’t know about forks. But what surprised me even more (after the first shock) was how — well, how *elegant* he was without them. I mean you could see it wasn’t a case of having no manners but of having different ones.”

“Oh, the old boy’s a gentleman in his own way — anyone can see that. But . . . well, I don’t know. I suppose it’s all right.”

“What happened at the meeting?”

“Well, you see, everything had to be explained on both sides. We’d the dickens of a job to make him understand that Ransom isn’t the king of this country or trying to become king. And then we had to break it to him that we weren’t the British at all, but the English — what he’d call Saxons. It took him some time to get over that.”

“I see.”

“And then MacPhee had to choose that moment for embarking on an interminable explanation of the relations between Scotland and Ireland and England. All of which, of course, had to be translated. It was all nonsense, too. Like a good many people MacPhee imagines he’s a Celt when, apart from his name, there’s nothing Celtic about him any more than about Mr. Bultitude. By the way Merlinus Ambrosius made a prophecy about Mr. Bultitude.”

“Oh! What was that?”

“He said that before Christmas this bear would do the best deed that any bear had done in Britain except some other bear that none of us had ever heard of. He keeps on saying things like that. They just pop out when we’re talking about something else, and in a rather different voice. As if he couldn’t help it. He doesn’t seem to know any *more* than the bit he tells you at the moment, if you see what I mean. As if something like a camera shutter opened at the back of his mind and closed again immediately and just one little item came through. It has rather a disagreeable effect.”

“He and MacPhee didn’t quarrel again, I hope.”

“Not exactly. I’m afraid Merlinus Ambrosius wasn’t taking MacPhee very seriously. From the fact that MacPhee is always being obstructive and

rather rude and yet never gets sat on, I think Merlinus has concluded that he is the Director's fool. He seems to have got over his dislike for him. But I don't think MacPhee is going to like Merlinus."

"Did you get down to actual business?" asked Mrs. Dimble.

"Well, in a way," said Dimble, wrinkling his forehead. "We were all at cross purposes, you see. The business about Ivy's husband being in prison came up, and Merlinus wanted to know why we hadn't rescued him. He seemed to imagine us just riding off and taking the County Jail by storm. That's the sort of thing one was up against all the time."

"Cecil," said Mrs. Dimble suddenly. "Is he going to be any use?"

"He's going to be able to *do* things, if that's what you mean. In that sense there's more danger of his being too much use than too little."

"What sort of things?" asked his wife.

"The universe is so very complicated," said Dr. Dimble.

"So you have said rather often before, dear," replied Mrs. Dimble.

"Have I?" he said with a smile. "How often, I wonder? As often as you've told the story of the pony and trap at Dawlish?"

"Cecil! I haven't told it for years."

"My dear, I heard you telling it to Camilla the night before last."

"Oh, *Camilla*! That was quite different. She'd never heard it before."

"I don't know that we can be certain even about that . . . the universe being so complicated and all."

For a few minutes there was silence between them.

"But about Merlin?" asked Mrs. Dimble presently.

"Have you ever noticed," said Dimble, "that the universe, and every little bit of the universe, is always hardening and narrowing and coming to a point?"

His wife waited as those wait who know by long experience the mental processes of the person who is talking to them.

"I mean this," said Dimble, in answer to the question she had not asked. "If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family — anything you like — at a given point in its history, you always find that there was a time before that point when there was more elbow-room and contrasts weren't quite so sharp; and that there's going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision and choices are even more momentous. Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole

thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder. Like in the poem about Heaven and Hell eating into merry Middle Earth from opposite sides . . . how does it go? Something about ‘eat every day . . . till all is *somethinged* away.’ It can’t be *eaten*, that wouldn’t scan. My memory has failed dreadfully these last few years. Do you know the bit, Margery?”

“What you were saying reminded me more of the bit in the Bible about the winnowing fan. Separating the wheat and the chaff. Or like Browning’s line: ‘Life’s business being just the terrible choice.’”

“Exactly! Perhaps the whole time-process means just that and nothing else. But it’s not only in questions of moral choice. Everything is getting more itself and more different from everything else all the time. Evolution means species getting less and less like one another. Minds get more and more spiritual, matter more and more material. Even in literature, poetry and prose draw further and further apart.”

Mrs. Dimble with the ease born of long practice averted the danger, ever present in her house, of a merely literary turn being given to the conversation.

“Yes,” she said. “Spirit and matter, certainly. That explains why people like the Studdocks find it so difficult to be happily married.”

“The Studdocks?” said Dimble, looking at her rather vaguely. The domestic problems of that young couple had occupied his mind a good deal less than they had occupied his wife’s. “Oh, I see! Yes. I dare say that has something to do with it. But about Merlin: what it comes to, as far as I can make out, is this. There were still possibilities for a man of that age which there aren’t for a man of ours. The earth itself was more like an animal in those days. And mental processes were much more like physical actions. And there were — well, Neutrals, knocking about.”

“Neutrals?”

“I don’t mean, of course, that anything can be a *real* neutral. A conscious being is either obeying God or disobeying Him. But there might be things neutral in relation to us.”

“You mean eldils — angels?”

“Well, the word *angel* rather begs the question. Even the Oyéresu aren’t exactly angels in the same sense as our guardian angels are. Technically, they are Intelligences. The point is that while it may be true at the end of the world to describe every eldil either as an angel or a devil, and may even be

true now, it was much less true in Merlin's time. There used to be things on this earth pursuing their own business, so to speak. They weren't ministering spirits sent to help fallen humanity, but neither were they enemies preying upon us. Even in St. Paul one gets glimpses of a population that won't exactly fit into our two columns of angels and devils. And if you go back further . . . all the gods, elves, dwarfs, water-people, *fate, longaevi*. You and I know too much to think they are just illusions."

"You think there are things like that?"

"I think there were. I think there was room for them then, but the universe has come more to a point. Not all rational things perhaps. Some would be mere wills inherent in matter, hardly conscious. More like animals. Others — but I don't really know. At any rate, that is the sort of situation in which one got a man like Merlin."

"It all sounds rather horrible to me."

"It was *rather* horrible. I mean even in Merlin's time (he came at the extreme tail end of it), though you could still use that sort of life in the universe innocently, you couldn't do it safely. The things weren't bad in themselves, but they were already bad for us. They sort of withered the man who dealt with them. Not on purpose. They couldn't help doing it. Merlinus is withered. He's quite pious and humble and all that, but something has been taken out of him. That quietness of his is just a little deadly, like the quiet of a gutted building. It's the result of having laid his mind open to something that broadens the environment just a bit too much. Like polygamy. It wasn't wrong for Abraham, but one can't help feeling that even he lost something by it."

"Cecil," said Mrs. Dimble, "do you feel quite comfortable about the Director's using a man like this? I mean, doesn't it look a *little* bit like fighting Belbury with its own weapons?"

"No. I *had* thought of that. Merlin is the reverse of Belbury. He's at the opposite extreme. He is the last vestige of an old order in which matter and spirit were, from our modern point of view, confused. For him every operation on Nature is a kind of personal contact, like coaxing a child or stroking one's horse. After him came the modern man to whom Nature is something dead — a machine to be worked, and taken to bits if it won't work the way he pleases. Finally come the Belbury people, who take over that view from the modern man unaltered and simply want to increase their power by tacking on to it the aid of spirits — extra-natural, anti-natural

spirits. Of course they hoped to have it both ways. They thought the old *magia* of Merlin, which worked in with the spiritual qualities of Nature, loving and reverencing them and knowing them from within, could be combined with the new *goeteia* — the brutal surgery from without. No. In a sense, Merlin represents what we've got to get back to in some different way. Do you know that he is forbidden by the rules of his order ever to use any edged tool on any growing thing?"

"Good gracious!" said Mrs. Dimble, "there's six o'clock. I'd promised Ivy to be in the kitchen at quarter to. There's no need for *you* to move, Cecil."

"Do you know," said Dimble, "I think you are a wonderful woman."

"Why?"

"How many women who had had their own house for thirty years would be able to fit into this menagerie as you do?"

"That's nothing," said Mrs. Dimble. "Ivy had her own house too, you know. And it's much worse for her. After all, I haven't got my husband in jail."

"You jolly soon will have," said Dimble, "if half the plans of Merlinus Ambrosius are put into action."

V

Merlin and the Director were meanwhile talking in the Blue Room. The Director had put aside his robe and circlet and lay on his sofa. The Druid sat in a chair facing him, his legs uncrossed, his pale large hands motionless on his knees, looking to modern eyes like an old conventional carving of a king. He was still robed and beneath the robe, as Ransom knew, had surprisingly little clothing, for the warmth of the house was to him excessive and he found trousers uncomfortable. His loud demands for oil after his bath had involved some hurried shopping in the village which had finally produced, by Denniston's exertions, a tin of Brilliantine. Merlinus had used it freely so that his hair and beard glistened and the sweet sticky smell filled the room. That was why Mr. Bultitude had pawed so insistently at the door that he was finally admitted and now sat as near the magician as he could possibly get, his nostrils twitching. He had never smelled such an interesting man before.

“Sir,” said Merlin, in answer to the question which the Director had just asked him, “I give you great thanks. I cannot, indeed, understand the way you live, and your house is strange to me. You give me a bath such as the Emperor himself might envy, but no one attends me to it: a bed softer than sleep itself, but when I rise from it I find I must put on my own clothes with my own hands as if I were a peasant. I lie in a room with windows of pure crystal so that you can see the sky as clearly when they are shut as when they are open, and there is not wind enough within the room to blow out an unguarded taper; but I lie in it alone, with no more honour than a prisoner in a dungeon. Your people eat dry and tasteless flesh, but it is off plates as smooth as ivory and as round as the sun. In all the house there is warmth and softness and silence that might put a man in mind of paradise terrestrial; but no hangings, no beautified pavements, no musicians, no perfumes, no high seats, not a gleam of gold, not a hawk, not a hound. You seem to me to live neither like a rich man nor a poor one: neither like a lord nor a hermit. Sir, I tell you these things because you have asked me. They are of no importance. Now that none hears us save the last of the seven bears of Logres, it is time that we should open counsels to each other.”

He glanced at the Director’s face as he spoke and then, as if startled by what he saw there, leaned sharply forward.

“Does your wound pain you?” he asked.

Ransom shook his head. “No,” he said, “it is not the wound. We have terrible things to talk of.”

“Sir,” said Merlinus in a deeper and softer voice, “I could take all the anguish from your heel as though I were wiping it out with a sponge. Give me but seven days to go in and out and up and down and to and fro, to renew old acquaintance. These fields and I, this wood and I, have much to say to one another.”

As he said this he was leaning forward so that his face and the bear’s were almost side by side, and it almost looked as if those two might have been engaged in some kind of furry and grunted conversation. The druid’s face had a strangely animal appearance: not sensual nor fierce, but full of the patient, unarguing sagacity of a beast. Ransom’s, meanwhile, was full of torment.

“You might find the country much changed,” he said, forcing a smile.

“No,” said Merlin. “I do not reckon to find it much changed.” The distance between the two men was increasing every moment. Merlin was

like something that ought not to be indoors. Bathed and anointed though he was, a sense of mould, gravel, wet leaves, weedy water, hung about him.

"Not *changed*," he repeated in an almost inaudible voice. And in that deepening inner silence of which his face bore witness, one might have believed that he listened continually to a murmur of evasive sounds; rustling of mice and stoats, thumping progression of frogs, the small shock of falling hazel nuts, creaking of branches, runnels trickling, the very growing of grass. The bear had closed its eyes. The whole room was growing heavy with a sort of floating anaesthesia.

"Through me," said Merlin, "you can suck up from the Earth oblivion of all pains."

"Silence," said the Director sharply. He had been sinking down into the cushions of his sofa with his head drooping a little towards his chest. Now he suddenly sat bolt upright. The magician started and straightened himself likewise. The air of the room was cleared. Even the bear opened its eyes again.

"No," said the Director. "God's glory, do you think you were dug out of the earth to give me a plaster for my heel? We have drugs that could cheat the pain as well as your earth-magic or better, if it were not my business to bear it to the end. I will hear no more of that. Do you understand?"

"I hear and obey," said the magician. "But I meant no harm. If not to heal your own wound, yet for the healing of Logres, you will need my commerce with field and water. It must be that I should go in and out, and to and fro, renewing old acquaintance. It will not be changed, you know — not what you would call *changed*."

Again that sweet heaviness, like the smell of hawthorn, seemed to be flowing back over the Blue Room.

"No," said the Director in a still louder voice, "that cannot be done any longer. The soul has gone out of the wood and water. Oh, I dare say you could awake them — a little. But it would not be enough. A storm, or even a river-flood, would be of little avail against our present enemy. Your weapon would break in your hands. For the Hideous Strength confronts us, and it is as in the days when Nimrod built a tower to reach heaven."

"Hidden it may be," said Merlinus, "but not *changed*. Leave me to work, Lord. I will wake it. I will set a sword in every blade of grass to wound them and the very clods of earth shall be venom to their feet. I will — —"

“No,” said the Director, “I forbid you to speak of it. If it were possible, it would be unlawful. Whatever of spirit may still linger in the earth has withdrawn fifteen hundred years further away from us since your time. You shall not speak a word to it. You shall not lift your little finger to call it up. I command you. It is in this age utterly unlawful.” Hitherto he had been speaking sternly and coldly. Now he leaned forward and said in a different voice, “It never was *very* lawful, even in your day. Remember, when we first knew that you would be awaked, we thought you would be on the side of the enemy. And because Our Lord does all things for each, one of the purposes of your reawakening was that your own soul should be saved.”

Merlin sank back into his chair like a man unstrung. The bear licked his hand where it hung, pale and relaxed, over the arm of the chair.

“Sir,” said Merlin presently, “if I am not to work for you in that fashion, then you have taken into your house a silly bulk of flesh, for I am no longer much of a man of war. If it comes to point and edge, I avail little.”

“Not that way either,” said Ransom, hesitating like a man who is reluctant to come to the point. “No power that is merely earthly,” he continued at last, “will serve against the Hideous Strength.”

“Then let us all to prayers,” said Merlinus. “But there also . . . I was not reckoned of much account . . . they called me a devil’s son, some of them. It was a lie. But I do not know why I have been brought back.”

“Certainly, let us stick to our prayers,” said Ransom, “now and always. But that was not what I meant. There are celestial powers: created powers, not in this Earth, but in the Heavens.”

Merlinus looked at him in silence.

“You know well what I am speaking of,” said Ransom. “Did not I tell you when we first met that the Oyéresu were my masters?”

“Of course,” said Merlin. “And that was how I knew you were of the college. Is it not our password all over the Earth?”

“A password?” exclaimed Ransom, with a look of surprise. “I did not know that.”

“But . . . but,” said Merlinus, “if you knew not the password, how did you come to say it?”

“I said it because it was true.”

The magician licked his lips which had become very pale.

“True as the plainest things are true,” repeated Ransom; “true as it is true that you sit here with my bear beside you.”

Merlin spread out his hands. “You are my father and mother,” he said. His eyes, steadily fixed on Ransom, were large as those of an awe-struck child, but for the rest he looked a smaller man than Ransom had first taken him to be.

“Suffer me to speak,” he said at last, “or slay me if you will, for I am in the hollow of your hand. I had heard of it in my own days — that some had spoken with the gods. Blaise, my Master, knew a few words of that speech. Yet these were, after all, powers of Earth. For — I need not teach you, you know more than I — it is not the very Oyéresu, the true powers of heaven, whom the greatest of our craft meet, but only their earthly wraiths, their shadows. Only the earth-Venus, the earth-Mercurius: not Perelandra herself, not Viritrilbia himself. It is only — —”

“I am not speaking of the wraiths,” said Ransom. “I have stood before Mars himself in the sphere of Mars and before Venus herself in the sphere of Venus. It is their strength, and the strength of some greater than they, which will destroy our enemies.”

“But, Lord,” said Merlin, “how can this be? Is it not against the Seventh Law?”

“What law is that?” asked Ransom.

“Has not our Fair Lord made it a law for Himself that He will not send down the Powers to mend or mar in this earth until the end of all things? Or is this the end that is even now coming to pass?”

“It may be the beginning of the end,” said Ransom, “but I know nothing of that. Maleldil may have made it a law not to send down the Powers. But if men by enginry and natural philosophy learn to fly into the Heavens, and come, in the flesh, among the heavenly powers and trouble them, He has not forbidden the Powers to react. For all this is within the natural order. A wicked man did learn so to do. He came flying, by a subtle engine, to where Mars dwells in Heaven and to where Venus dwells, and took me with him as a captive. And there I spoke with the true Oyéresu face to face. You understand me?”

Merlin inclined his head.

“And so the wicked man had brought about, even as Judas brought about, the thing he least intended. For now there was one man in the world — even myself — who was known to the Oyéresu and spoke their tongue, neither by God’s miracle nor by magic from Numinor, but naturally, as when two men meet in a road. Our enemies had taken away from

themselves the protection of the Seventh Law. They had broken by natural philosophy the barrier which God of His own power would not break. Even so they sought you as a friend and raised up for themselves a scourge. And that is why Powers of Heaven have come down to this house, and in this chamber where we are now discoursing, Malacandra and Perelandra have spoken to me."

Merlin's face became a little paler. The bear nosed at his hand, unnoticed.

"I have become a bridge," said Ransom.

"Sir," said Merlin "what will come of this? If they put forth their power, they will unmake all middle earth."

"Their naked power, yes," said Ransom. "That is why they will work only through a man."

The magician drew one large hand across his forehead.

"Through a man whose mind is opened to be so invaded," said Ransom; "one who by his own will once opened it. I take Our Fair Lord to witness that if it were my task I would not refuse it. But he will not suffer a mind that still has its virginity to be so violated. And through a black magician's mind their purity neither can nor will operate. One who has dabbled . . . in the days when dabbling had not begun to be evil, or was only just beginning . . . and also a Christian man and a penitent. A tool (I must speak plainly) good enough to be so used and not too good. In all these western parts of the world there was only one man who had lived in those days and could still be recalled. You . . ."

He stopped, shocked at what was happening. The huge man had risen from his chair, and stood towering over him. From his horribly opened mouth there came a yell that seemed to Ransom utterly bestial, though it was in fact only the yell of primitive Celtic lamentation. It was horrifying to see that withered and bearded face all blubbered with undisguised tears like a child's. All the Roman surface in Merlinus had been scraped off. He had become a shameless, archaic monstrosity, babbling out entreaties in a mixture of what sounded like Welsh and what sounded like Spanish.

"Silence!" shouted Ransom. "Sit down. You put us both to shame."

As suddenly as it had begun the frenzy ended. Merlin resumed his chair. To a modern it seemed strange that, having recovered his self-control, he did not show the slightest embarrassment at his temporary loss of it. The

whole character of the two-sided society in which this man must have lived became clearer to Ransom than pages of history could have made it.

"Do not think," said Ransom, "that for me either it is child's play to meet those who will come down for your empowering."

"Sir," faltered Merlin, "you have been in Heaven. I am but a man. I am not the son of one of the Airish Men. That was a lying story. How can I? . . . You are not as I. You have looked upon their faces before."

"Not on all of them," said Ransom. "Greater spirits than Malacandra and Perelandra will descend this time. We are in God's hands. It may unmake us both. There is no promise that either you or I will save our lives or our reason. I do not know how we can dare to look upon their faces; but I know we cannot dare to look upon God's if we refuse this enterprise."

Suddenly the magician smote his hand upon his knee.

"*Mehercule!*" he cried. "Are we not going too fast? If you are the Pendragon, I am the High Council of Logres, and I will council you. If the Powers must tear me in pieces to break our enemies, God's will be done. But is it yet come to that? This Saxon king of yours who sits at Windsor, now — is there no help in him?"

"He has no power in this matter."

"Then is he not weak enough to be overthrown?"

"I have no wish to overthrow him. He is the king. He was crowned and anointed by the Archbishop. In the order of Logres I may be Pendragon, but in the order of Britain I am the King's man."

"Is it, then, his great men — the counts and legates and bishops — who do the evil and he does not know of it?"

"It is — though they are not exactly the sort of great men you have in mind."

"And are we not big enough to meet them in plain battle?"

"We are four men, some women, and a bear."

"I saw the time when Logres was only myself and one man and two boys, and one of those was a churl. Yet we conquered."

"It could not be done now. They have an engine called the Press whereby the people are deceived. We should die without even being heard of."

"But what of the true clerks? Is there no help in them? It cannot be that *all* your priests and bishops are corrupted."

"The Faith itself is torn in pieces since your day and speaks with a divided voice. Even if it were made whole, the Christians are but a tenth

part of the people. There is no help there."

"Then let us seek help from over sea. Is there no Christian prince in Neustria or Ireland or Benwick who would come in and cleanse Britain if he were called?"

"There is no Christian prince left. These other countries are even as Britain, or else sunk deeper still in the disease."

"Then we must go higher. We must go to him whose office it is to put down tyrants and give life to dying kingdoms. We must call on the Emperor."

"There is no Emperor."

"No Emperor . . ." began Merlin, and then his voice died away. He sat still for some minutes wrestling with a world which he had never envisaged. Presently he said, "A thought comes into my mind and I do not know whether it is good or evil. But because I am the High Council of Logres I will not hide it from you. This is a cold age in which I have awaked. If all this west part of the world is apostate, might it not be lawful, in our great need, to look further . . . beyond Christendom? Should we not find some even among the heathen who are not wholly corrupt? There were tales in my day of some such: men who knew not the articles of our most holy Faith but who worshipped God as they could and acknowledged the Law of Nature. Sir, I believe it would be lawful to seek help even there — beyond Byzantium. It was rumoured also that there was knowledge in those lands — an Eastern circle and wisdom that came West from Numinor. I know not where — Babylon, Arabia, or Cathay. You said your ships had sailed all round the earth, above and beneath."

Ransom shook his head. "You do not understand," he said. "The poison was brewed in these West lands but it has spat itself everywhere by now. However far you went you would find the machines, the crowded cities, the empty thrones, the false writings, the barren beds: men maddened with false promises and soured with true miseries, worshipping the iron works of their own hands, cut off from Earth their mother and from the Father in Heaven. You might go East so far that East became West and you returned to Britain across the great Ocean, but even so you would not have come out anywhere into the light. The shadow of one dark wing is over all Tellus."

"Is it, then, the end?" asked Merlin.

"And this," said Ransom, ignoring the question, "is why we have no way left at all save the one I have told you. The Hideous Strength holds all this

Earth in its fist to squeeze as it wishes. But for their one mistake, there would be no hope left. If of their own evil will they had not broken the frontier and let in the celestial Powers, this would be their moment of victory. Their own strength has betrayed them. They have gone to the gods who would not have come to them, and pulled down Deep Heaven on their heads. Therefore they will die. For though you search every cranny to escape, now that you see all crannies closed, you will not disobey me."

And then, very slowly, there crept back into Merlin's white face, first closing his dismayed mouth and finally gleaming in his eyes, that almost animal expression, earthy and healthy and with a glint of half-humorous cunning.

"Well," he said, "if the earths are stopped the fox faces the hounds. But had I known who you were at our first meeting I think I would have put the sleep on you as I did on your Fool."

"I am a very light sleeper since I have travelled in the Heavens," said Ransom.

FOURTEEN

“Real Life is Meeting”

I

Since the day and night of the outer world made no difference in Mark’s cell, he did not know whether it was minutes or hours later that he found himself once more awake, once more confronting Frost, and still fasting. The Professor came to ask if he had thought over their recent conversation. Mark, who judged that some decent show of reluctance would make his final surrender more convincing replied that only one thing was still troubling him. He did not quite understand what he in particular or humanity in general stood to gain by co-operation with the Macrobes. He saw clearly that the motives on which most men act, and which they dignify by the names of patriotism or duty to humanity, were mere products of the animal organism, varying according to the behaviour pattern of different communities. But he did not yet see what was to be substituted for these irrational motives. On what ground henceforward were actions to be justified or condemned?

“If one insists on putting the question in those terms,” said Frost, “I think Waddington has given the best answer. Existence is its own justification. The tendency to developmental change which we call Evolution is justified by the fact that it is a general characteristic of biological entities. The present establishment of contact between the highest biological entities and the Macrobes is justified by the fact that it is occurring, and it ought to be increased because an increase is taking place.”

“You think, then,” said Mark, “that there would be no sense in asking whether the general tendency of the universe might be in the direction we should call Bad?”

“There could be no sense at all,” said Frost. “The judgement you are trying to make turns out on inspection to be simply an expression of emotion. Huxley himself could only express it by using nakedly emotive terms such as ‘gladiatorial’ or ‘ruthless.’ I am referring to the famous *Romanes* lecture. When the so-called struggle for existence is seen simply as an actuarial theorem we have, in Waddington’s words, ‘a concept as

unemotional as a definite integral' and the emotion disappears. With it disappears that preposterous idea of an external standard of value which the emotion produced."

"And the actual tendency of events," said Mark, "would still be self-justified and in that sense 'good' when it was working for the extinction of all organic life, as it presently will?"

"Of course," replied Frost. "If you insist on formulating the problem in those terms. In reality the question is meaningless. It presupposes a means-and-end pattern of thought which descends from Aristotle who in his turn was merely hypostatising elements in the experience of an iron-age, agricultural community. Motives are not the causes of action but its by-products. You are merely wasting your time by considering them. When you have attained real objectivity you will recognise not *some* motives but *all* motives as merely animal, subjective epiphenomena. You will then have no motives and you will find that you do not need them. Their place will be supplied by something else which you will presently understand better than you do now. So far from being impoverished your action will become much more efficient."

"I see," said Mark. The philosophy which Frost was expounding was by no means unfamiliar to him. He recognised it at once as the logical conclusion of thoughts which he had always hitherto accepted and which at this moment he found himself irrevocably rejecting. The knowledge that his own assumptions led to Frost's position combined with what he saw in Frost's face and what he had experienced in this very cell, effected a complete conversion. All the philosophers and evangelists in the world might not have done the job so neatly.

"And that," continued Frost, "is why a systematic training in objectivity must be given to you. Its purpose is to eliminate from your mind one by one the things you have hitherto regarded as grounds for action. It is like killing a nerve. That whole system of instinctive preferences, whatever ethical, aesthetic, or logical disguise they wear, is to be simply destroyed."

"I get the idea," said Mark, though with an inward reservation that his present instinctive desire to batter the Professor's face into a jelly would take a good deal of destroying.

After that Frost took Mark from the cell and gave him a meal in some neighbouring room. It also was lit by artificial light and had no window. The Professor stood perfectly still and watched him while he ate. Mark did

not know what the food was and did not much like it, but he was far too hungry by now to refuse it if refusal had been possible. When the meal was over Frost led him to the ante-room of the Head and once more he was stripped and re-clothed in surgeon's overalls and a mask. Then he was brought in, into the presence of the gaping and dribbling Head. To his surprise Frost took not the slightest notice of it. He led him across the room to a narrower little door with a pointed arch, in the far wall. Here he paused and said, "Go in. You will speak to no one of what you find here. I will return presently." Then he opened the door and Mark went in.

The room, at first sight, was an anticlimax. It appeared to be an empty committee room with a long table, eight or nine chairs, some pictures, and (oddly enough) a large step-ladder in one corner. Here also there were no windows; it was lit by an electric light which produced, better than Mark had ever seen it produced before, the illusion of daylight — of a cold, grey place out of doors. This, combined with the absence of a fireplace, made it seem chilly though the temperature was not in fact very low.

A man of trained sensibility would have seen at once that the room was ill proportioned, not grotesquely so but sufficiently to produce dislike. It was too high and too narrow. Mark felt the effect without analysing the cause and the effect grew on him as time passed. Sitting staring about him he next noticed the door — and thought at first that he was the victim of some optical illusion. It took him quite a long time to prove to himself that he was not. The point of the arch was not in the centre; the whole thing was lop-sided. Once again, the error was not gross. The thing was near enough to the true to deceive you for a moment and to go on teasing the mind even after the deception had been unmasked. Involuntarily one kept on shifting the head to find positions from which it would look right after all. He turned round and sat with his back to it . . . one mustn't let it become an obsession.

Then he noticed the spots on the ceiling. They were not mere specks of dirt or discoloration. They were deliberately painted on: little round black spots placed at irregular intervals on the pale mustard-coloured surface. There were not a great many of them: perhaps thirty . . . or was it a hundred? He determined that he would not fall into the trap of trying to count them. They would be hard to count, they were so irregularly placed. Or weren't they? Now that his eyes were growing used to them (and one couldn't help noticing that there were five in that little group to the right), their arrangement seemed to hover on the verge of regularity. They

suggested some kind of pattern. Their peculiar ugliness consisted in the very fact that they kept on suggesting it and then frustrating the expectation thus aroused. Suddenly he realised that this was another trap. He fixed his eyes on the table.

There were spots on the table, too — white ones: shiny white spots, not quite round, and arranged, apparently, to correspond to the spots on the ceiling. Or were they? No, of course not . . . ah, now he had it! The pattern (if you could call it a pattern) on the table was an exact reversal of that on the ceiling. But with certain exceptions. He found he was glancing rapidly from the one to the other, trying to puzzle it out. For the third time he checked himself. He got up and began to walk about. He had a look at the pictures.

Some of them belonged to a school of art with which he was already familiar. There was a portrait of a young woman who held her mouth wide open to reveal the fact that the inside of it was thickly overgrown with hair. It was very skilfully painted in the photographic manner so that you could almost feel that hair; indeed you could not avoid feeling it however hard you tried. There was a giant mantis playing a fiddle while being eaten by another mantis, and a man with corkscrews instead of arms bathing in a flat, sadly coloured sea beneath a summer sunset. But most of the pictures were not of this kind. At first sight most of them seemed rather ordinary, though Mark was a little surprised at the predominance of scriptural themes. It was only at the second or third glance that one discovered certain unaccountable details — something odd about the positions of the figures' feet or the arrangement of their fingers or the grouping. And who was the person standing between the Christ and the Lazarus? And why were there so many beetles under the table in the Last Supper? What was the curious trick of lighting that made each picture look like something seen in delirium? When once these questions had been raised the apparent ordinariness of the pictures became their supreme menace — like the ominous surface innocence at the beginning of certain dreams. Every fold of drapery, every piece of architecture, had a meaning one could not grasp but which withered the mind. Compared with these the other, surrealistic, pictures were mere foolery. Long ago Mark had read somewhere of "things of that extreme evil which seems innocent to the uninitiate," and had wondered what sort of things they might be. Now he felt he knew.

He turned his back on the pictures and sat down. He understood the whole business now. Frost was not trying to make him insane; at least not in the sense Mark had hitherto given to the word “insanity.” Frost had meant what he said. To sit in the room was the first step towards what Frost called objectivity — the process whereby all specifically human reactions were killed in a man so that he might become fit for the fastidious society of the Macrobes. Higher degrees in the asceticism of anti-nature would doubtless follow: the eating of abominable food, the dabbling in dirt and blood, the ritual performances of calculated obscenities. They were, in a sense, playing quite fair with him — offering him the very same initiation through which they themselves had passed and which had divided them from humanity, distending and dissipating Wither into a shapeless ruin while it condensed and sharpened Frost into the hard, bright, little needle that he now was.

But after an hour or so this long, high coffin of a room began to produce on Mark an effect which his instructor had probably not anticipated. There was no return of the attack which he had suffered last night in the cell. Whether because he had already survived that attack, or because the imminence of death had drawn the tooth of his lifelong desire for the esoteric, or because he had (in a fashion) called very urgently for help, the built and painted perversity of this room had the effect of making him aware, as he had never been aware before, of this room’s opposite. As the desert first teaches men to love water, or as absence first reveals affection, there rose up against this background of the sour and the crooked some kind of vision of the sweet and the straight. Something else — something he vaguely called the “Normal” — apparently existed. He had never thought about it before. But there it was — solid, massive, with a shape of its own, almost like something you could touch, or eat, or fall in love with. It was all mixed up with Jane and fried eggs and soap and sunlight and the rooks cawing at Cure Hardy and the thought that, somewhere outside, daylight was going on at that moment. He was not thinking in moral terms at all; or else (what is much the same thing) he was having his first deeply moral experience. He was choosing a side: the Normal. “All that,” as he called it, was what he chose. If the scientific point of view led away from “all that,” then be damned to the scientific point of view! The vehemence of his choice almost took his breath away; he had not had such a sensation before. For the moment he hardly cared if Frost and Wither killed him.

I do not know how long this mood would have lasted: but while it was still at its height Frost returned. He led Mark to a bedroom where a fire blazed and an old man lay in bed. The light gleaming on glasses and silver and the soft luxury of the room so raised Mark's spirits that he found it difficult to listen while Frost told him that he must remain here on duty till relieved and must ring up the Deputy Director if the patient spoke or stirred. He himself was to say nothing; indeed it would be useless if he did, for the patient did not understand English.

Frost retired. Mark glanced round the room. He was reckless now. He saw no possibility of leaving Belbury alive unless he allowed himself to be made into a dehumanised servant of the Macrobes. Meanwhile, do or die for it, he was going to have a meal. There were all sorts of delights on that table. Perhaps a smoke first, with his feet on the fender.

"Damn!" he said as he put his hand into his pocket and found it empty. At the same moment he noticed that the man in the bed had opened his eyes and was looking at him. "I'm sorry," said Mark, "I didn't mean — —" and then stopped.

The man sat up in bed and jerked his head towards the door.

"Ah?" he said enquiringly.

"I beg your pardon," said Mark.

"Ah?" said the man again. And then, "Foreigners, eh?"

"You *do* speak English, then?" said Mark.

"Ah!" said the man. After a pause of several seconds he said, "Guv'ner!" Mark looked at him. "Guv'ner," repeated the patient with great energy, "you ha'nt got such a thing as a bit of baccy about you? Ah?"

II

"I think that's all we can do for the present," said Mother Dimble. "We'll do the flowers this afternoon." She was speaking to Jane and both were in what was called the Lodge — a little stone house beside the garden door at which Jane had been first admitted to the Manor. Mrs. Dimble and Jane had been preparing it for the Maggs family. For Mr. Maggs's sentence expired to-day and Ivy had gone off by train on the previous afternoon to spend the night with an aunt in the town where he was imprisoned and to meet him at the prison gates.

When Mrs. Dimble had told her husband how she would be engaged that morning, he had said, “Well, it can’t take you very long just lighting a fire and making a bed.” I share Dr. Dimble’s sex and his limitation. I have no idea what the two women found to do in the Lodge for all the hours they spent there. Even Jane had hardly anticipated it. In Mrs. Dimble’s hands the task of airing the little house and making the bed for Ivy Maggs and her jail-bird husband became something between a game and a ritual. It woke in Jane vague memories of helping at Christmas or Easter decorations in church when she had been a small child. But it also suggested to her literary memory all sorts of things out of sixteenth-century epithalamions — age-old superstitions, jokes, and sentimentalities about bridal beds and marriage bowers, with omens at the threshold and fairies upon the hearth. It was an atmosphere extraordinarily alien to that in which she had grown up. A few weeks ago she would have disliked it. Was there not something absurd about that stiff, twinkling archaic world — the mixture of prudery and sensuality, the stylised ardours of the groom and the conventional bashfulness of the bride, the religious sanction, the permitted salacities of fescennine song, and the suggestion that everyone except the principals might be expected to be rather tipsy? How had the human race ever come to imprison in such a ceremony the most unceremonious thing in the world? But she was no longer sure of her reaction. What she was sure of was the dividing line that included Mother Dimble in that world and left her outside. Mother Dimble, for all her nineteenth-century propriety, or perhaps because of it, struck her this afternoon as being herself an archaic person. At every moment she seemed to join hands with some solemn yet roguish company of busy old women who had been tucking young lovers into beds since the world began with an incongruous mixture of nods and winks and blessings and tears — quite impossible old women in ruffs or wimples who would be making Shakespearean jokes about codpieces and cuckoldry at one moment and kneeling devoutly at altars the next. It was very odd: for, of course, as far as their conversation was concerned the difference between them was reversed. Jane, in a literary argument, could have talked about codpieces with great sang-froid, while Mother Dimble was an Edwardian lady who would simply have ignored such a subject out of existence if any modernised booby had been so unfortunate as to raise it in her presence. Perhaps the weather had some bearing on Jane’s curious sensations. The

frost had ended and it was one of those days of almost piercingly sweet mildness which sometimes occur in the beginning of winter.

Ivy had discussed her own story with Jane only the day before. Mr. Maggs had stolen some money from the laundry that he worked for. He had done this before he met Ivy and at a time when he had got into bad company. Since he and Ivy had started going out together he had gone “as straight as straight”; but the little crime had been unearthed and come out of the past to catch him, and he had been arrested about six weeks after their marriage. Jane had said very little during the telling of this story. Ivy had not seemed conscious of the purely social stigma attaching to petty theft and a term of imprisonment, so that Jane would have had no opportunity to practise, even if she had wished, that almost technical “kindness” which some people reserve for the sorrows of the poor. On the other hand she was given no chance to be revolutionary or speculative — to suggest that theft was no more criminal than all wealth was criminal. Ivy seemed to take traditional morality for granted. She had been “ever so upset” about it. It seemed to matter a great deal in one way, and not to matter at all in another. It had never occurred to her that it should alter her relations with her husband — as though theft, like ill health, were one of the normal risks one took in getting married.

“I always say, you can’t expect to know everything about a boy till you’re married, not really,” she had said.

“I suppose not,” said Jane.

“Of course it’s the same for them,” added Ivy. “My old dad used often to say he’d never have married mum not if he’d known how she snored. And she said herself, ‘No, dad, that you wouldn’t.’”

“That’s rather different, I suppose,” said Jane.

“Well, what I say is, if it wasn’t that it’d be something else. That’s how I look at it. And it isn’t as if they hadn’t a lot to put up with, too. Because they’ve sort of got to get married if they’re the right sort, poor things, but, whatever we say, Jane, a woman takes a lot of living with. I don’t mean what you’d call a bad woman. I remember one day — it was before you came — Mother Dimble was saying something to the Doctor; and there he was sitting reading something — you know the way he does — with his fingers under some of the pages and a pencil in his hand — not the way you or I’d read — and he just said ‘Yes, dear,’ and we both of us knew he hadn’t been listening. And I said, ‘There you are, Mother Dimble,’ said I. ‘That’s

how they treat us once they're married. They don't even listen to what we say,' I said. And do you know what she said? 'Ivy Maggs,' said she, 'Did it ever come into your mind to ask whether anyone *could* listen to all we say?' Those were her very words. Of course I wasn't going to give in to it, not before him, so I said, 'Yes, they could.' But it was a fair knock-out. You know often I've been talking to my husband for a long time and he's looked up and asked me what I've been saying and, do you know, I haven't been able to remember myself!"

"Oh, that's different," said Jane. "It's when people drift apart — take up quite different opinions — join different sides. . . ."

"You must be ever so anxious about Mr. Studdock," replied Ivy. "I'd never be able to sleep a wink if I were in your shoes. But the Director'll bring it all right in the end. You see if he don't."

Mrs. Dimble went back to the house presently to fetch some little nicety which would put the finishing touch to the bedroom in the Lodge. Jane, feeling a little tired, knelt on the window-seat and put her elbows on the sill and her chin in her hands. The sun was almost hot. The thought of going back to Mark if Mark were ever rescued from Belbury was one which her mind had long accepted; it was not horrifying to her, but flat and insipid. It was not the less so because at this moment she fully forgave him for his conjugal crime of sometimes apparently preferring her person to her conversation and sometimes his own thoughts to both. Why should anyone be particularly interested in what she said? This new humility would even have been pleasant to her if it had been directed to anyone more exciting than Mark. She must, of course, be very different with him when they met again. But it was that "again" which so took the savour out of the good resolution — like going back to a sum one had already got wrong and working it out afresh on the same scrawled page of the exercise book. "If they met again . . ." she felt guilty at her lack of anxiety. Almost at the same moment she found that she was a little anxious. For hitherto she had always somehow assumed that Mark would come back. The possibility of his death now presented itself. She had no direct emotions about herself living afterwards; she just saw the image of Mark dead, that face dead, in the middle of a pillow, that whole body rigid, those hands and arms (for good and ill so different from all other hands and arms) stretched out straight and useless like a doll's. She felt very cold. Yet the sun was hotter than ever — almost impossibly hot for the time of year. It was very still, too, so still that

she could hear the movements of a small bird which was hopping along the path outside the window. This path led to the door in the garden wall by which she had first entered. The bird hopped on to the threshold of that door, and on to someone's foot. For now Jane saw that someone was sitting on a little seat just inside the door. This person was only a few yards away, and she must have been sitting very quiet for Jane not to have noticed her.

A flame-coloured robe, in which her hands were hidden, covered this person from the feet to where it rose behind her neck in a kind of high ruff-like collar, but in front it was so low or open that it exposed her large breasts. Her skin was darkish and Southern and glowing, almost the colour of honey. Some such dress Jane had seen worn by a Minoan priestess on a vase from old Cnossus. The head, poised motionless on the muscular pillar of her neck, stared straight at Jane. It was a red-cheeked, wet-lipped face, with black eyes — almost the eyes of a cow — and an enigmatic expression. It was not by ordinary standards at all like the face of Mother Dimble; but Jane recognised it at once. It was, to speak like the musicians, the full statement of that theme which had elusively haunted Mother Dimble's face for the last few hours. It was Mother Dimble's face with something left out, and the omission shocked Jane. "It is brutal," she thought, for its energy crushed her; but then she half changed her mind and thought, "It is I who am weak, trumpery." "It is mocking me," she thought, but then once more changed her mind and thought, "It is ignoring me. It doesn't see me"; for though there was an almost ogreish glee in the face, Jane did not seem to be invited to share the joke. She tried to look aside from the face — succeeded — and saw for the first time that there were other creatures present — four or five of them — no, more — a whole crowd of ridiculous little men: fat dwarfs in red caps with tassels on them, chubby, gnome-like little men, quite insufferably familiar, frivolous, and irrepressible. For there was no doubt that they, at any rate, were mocking her. They were pointing at her, nodding, mimicking, standing on their heads, turning somersaults. Jane was not yet frightened; partly because the extreme warmth of the air at this open window made her feel drowsy. It was really quite ridiculous for the time of year. Her main feeling was one of indignation. A suspicion which had crossed her mind once or twice before, now returned to her with irresistible force; the suspicion that the real universe might be simply silly. It was closely mixed up with the memories of that grown-up laughter — loud, careless, masculine laughter on the lips

of bachelor uncles — which had often infuriated her in childhood, and from which the intense seriousness of her school debating society had offered such a grateful escape.

But a moment later she was very frightened indeed. The giantess rose. They were all coming at her. With a great glow and a noise like fire the flame-robed woman and the malapert dwarfs had all come into the house. They were in the room with her. The strange woman had a torch in her hand. It burned with terrible, blinding brightness, crackling, and sent up a cloud of dense black smoke, and filled the bedroom with a sticky, resinous smell. “If they’re not careful,” thought Jane, “they’ll set the house on fire.” But she had hardly time to think of that for her whole attention was fixed by the outrageous behaviour of the little men. They began making hay of the room. In a few seconds the bed was a mere chaos, the sheets on the floor, the blankets snatched up and used by the dwarfs for tossing the fattest of their company, the pillows hurtling through the air, feathers flying everywhere. “Look out! Look out, can’t you?” shouted Jane, for the giantess was beginning to touch various parts of the room with her torch. She touched a vase on the mantelpiece. Instantly there rose from it a streak of colour which Jane took for fire. She was just moving to try to put it out when she saw that the same thing had happened to a picture on the wall. And then it happened faster and faster all round her. The very top-knots of the dwarfs were now on fire. But just as the terror of this became unbearable, Jane noticed that what was curling up from everything the torch had touched was not flame after all, but vegetation. Ivy and honeysuckle were growing up the legs of the bed, red roses were sprouting from the caps of the little men, and from every direction huge lilies rose to her knees and waist, shooting out their yellow tongues at her. The smells, the heat, the crowding, and the strangeness made her feel faint. It never occurred to her to think she was dreaming. People mistake dreams for visions: no one ever mistook a vision for a dream. . . .

“Jane! Jane!” said the voice of Mrs. Dimble suddenly. “What on earth is the matter?”

Jane sat up. The room was empty, but the bed had all been pulled to pieces. She had apparently been lying on the floor. She felt cold and very tired.

“What *has* happened?” repeated Mrs. Dimble.

“I don’t know,” said Jane.

“Are you ill, child?” asked Mother Dimble.

“I must see the Director at once,” said Jane. “It’s all right. Don’t bother. I can get up by myself . . . really. But I’d like to see the Director at once.”

III

Mr. Bultitude’s mind was as furry and as unhuman in shape as his body. He did not remember, as a man in his situation would have remembered, the provincial zoo from which he had escaped during a fire, nor his first snarling and terrified arrival at the Manor, nor the slow stages whereby he had learned to love and trust its inhabitants. He did not know that he loved and trusted them now. He did not know that they were people, nor that he was a bear. Indeed he did not know that he existed at all: everything that is represented by the words *I* and *Me* and *Thou* was absent from his mind. When Mrs. Maggs gave him a tin of golden syrup, as she did every Sunday morning, he did not recognise either a giver or a recipient. Goodness occurred and he tasted it. And that was all. Hence his loves might, if you wished, be all described as cupboard loves: food and warmth, hands that caressed, voices that reassured, were their objects. But if by a cupboard love you meant something cold or calculating you would be quite misunderstanding the real quality of the beast’s sensations. He was no more like a human egoist than he was like a human altruist. There was no prose in his life. The appetencies which a human mind might disdain as cupboard loves were for him quivering and ecstatic aspirations which absorbed his whole being, infinite yearnings, stabbed with the threat of tragedy and shot through with the colours of Paradise. One of our race, if plunged back for a moment in the warm, trembling, iridescent pool of that pre-Adamite consciousness, would have emerged believing that he had grasped the absolute: for the states below reason and the states above it have, by their common contrast to the life we know, a certain superficial resemblance. Sometimes there returns to us from infancy the memory of a nameless delight or terror, unattached to any delightful or dreadful thing, a potent adjective floating in a nounless void, a pure quality. At such moments we have experience of the shallows of that pool. But fathoms deeper than any memory can take us, right down in the central warmth and dimness, the bear lived all its life.

To-day an unusual thing had happened to him — he had got out into the garden without being muzzled. He was always muzzled out of doors, not because there was any fear of his becoming dangerous but because of his partiality for fruit and for the sweeter kinds of vegetables. "'Tisn't that he's not tame," as Ivy Maggs had explained to Jane Studdock, "but that he isn't honest. He wouldn't leave us a thing if we let him have the run of his teeth." But to-day the precaution had been forgotten and the bear had passed a very agreeable morning investigating the turnips. Now — in the early afternoon — he had approached the garden wall. There was a chestnut tree within the wall which the bear could easily climb, and from its branches he could drop down on the far side. He was standing looking up at this tree. Mrs. Maggs would have described his state of mind by saying, "He knows perfectly well he's not allowed out of the garden." That was not how it appeared to Mr. Bultitude. He had no morals: but the Director had given him certain inhibitions. A mysterious reluctance arose, a clouding of the emotional weather, when the wall was too close; but mixed with this there was an opposite impulse to get beyond that wall. He did not, of course, know why, and was incapable even of raising the question. If the pressure behind this impulse could be translated into human terms at all, it would appear as something more like a mythology than a thought. One met bees in the garden, but never found a bee-hive. The bees all went away, over the wall. And to follow bees was the obvious thing to do. I think there was a sense in the bear's mind — one could hardly call it a picture — of endless green lands beyond the wall, and hives innumerable, and bees the size of sparrows, and waiting there, or else walking, trickling, oozing to meet one, something or someone stickier, sweeter, more golden than honey itself.

To-day, this unrest was upon him in an unusual degree. He was missing Ivy Maggs. He did not know that there was any such person and he did not remember her as we know remembering, but there was an unspecified lack in his experience. She and the Director were, in their different ways, the two main factors in his existence. He felt, in his own fashion, the supremacy of the Director. Meetings with him were to the bear what mystical experiences are to men, for the Director had brought back with him from Venus some shadow of man's lost prerogative to ennoble beasts. In his presence Mr. Bultitude trembled on the very borders of personality, thought the unthinkable and did the impossible, was troubled and enraptured with gleams from beyond his own woolly world, and came away tired. But with

Ivy he was perfectly at home — as a savage who believes in some remote High God is more at home with the little deities of wood and water. It was Ivy who fed him, chased him out of forbidden places, cuffed him, and talked to him all day long. It was her firm conviction that the creature "understood every word she said." If you took this literally it was untrue; but in another sense it was not so wide of the mark. For much of Ivy's conversation was the expression not of thought but of feeling, and of feelings Mr. Bultitude almost shared — feelings of alacrity, snugness, and physical affection. In their own way they understood one another pretty well.

Three times Mr. Bultitude turned away from the tree and the wall, but each time he came back. Then, very cautiously and quietly, he began to climb the tree. When he got up into the fork he sat there for a long time. He saw beneath him a steep grassy bank descending to a road. The desire and the inhibition were now both very strong. He sat there for nearly half an hour. Sometimes his mind wandered from the point and once he nearly went to sleep. In the end he got down on the outside of the wall. When he found that the thing had really happened he became so frightened that he sat still at the bottom of the grassy bank on the very edge of the road. Then he heard a noise.

A motor van came into sight. It was driven by a man in the livery of the N.I.C.E. and another man in the same livery sat beside him.

"Hullo . . . I say!" said the second man. "Pull up, Sid. What about *that*?"

"What?" said the driver.

"Haven't you got eyes in your head?" said the other.

"Gor," said Sid, pulling up. "A bloody great bear. I say — it couldn't be our own bear, could it?"

"Get on," said his mate. "She was in her cage all right this morning."

"You don't think she could have done a bunk? There'd be hell to pay for you and me. . . ."

"She couldn't have got here if she *had* done a bunk. Bears don't go forty miles an hour. That ain't the point. But hadn't we better pinch this one?"

"We haven't got no orders," said Sid.

"No. And we haven't failed to get that blasted wolf either, have we?"

"Wasn't our fault. The old woman what said she'd sell wouldn't sell, as you're there to witness, young Len. We did our best. Told her that experiments at Belbury weren't what she thought. Told her the brute would

have the time of its life and be made no end of a pet. Never told so many lies in one morning in my life. She'd been got at by someone."

"Course it wasn't our fault. But the boss won't take no notice of that. It's get on or get out at Belbury."

"Get out?" said Sid. "I wish to hell I knew how to."

Len spat over the side and there was a moment's silence.

"Anyway," said Sid presently, "what's the good of taking a bear back?"

"Well, isn't it better than coming back with nothing?" said Len. "And bears cost money. I know they want another one. And here it is free."

"All right," said Sid ironically, "if you're so keen on it, just hop out and ask him to step in."

"Dope," said Len.

"Not on my bit of dinner, you don't," said Sid.

"You're a bucking good mate to have," said Len, groping in a greasy parcel. "It's a good thing for you I'm not the sort of chap who'd split on you."

"You done it already," said the driver. "I know all your little games."

Len had by this time produced a thick sandwich and was dabbing it with some strong-smelling liquid from a bottle. When it was thoroughly saturated, he opened the door and went a pace forward, still holding the door in one hand. He was now about six yards from the bear, which had remained perfectly still ever since it saw them. He threw the sandwich to it.

Quarter of an hour later Mr. Bultitude lay on his side, unconscious and breathing heavily. They had no difficulty in tying up his mouth and all four paws, but they had great difficulty in lifting him into the van.

"That's done something to my ticker," said Sid, pressing his hand to his left side.

"Curse your ticker," said Len, rubbing the sweat out of his eyes. "Come on."

Sid climbed back into the driving seat, sat still for a few seconds, panting and muttering "Christ" at intervals. Then he started his engine up and they drove away.

IV

For some time now Mark's waking life was divided between periods by the Sleeper's bedside and periods in the room with the spotted ceiling. The

training in objectivity which took place in the latter cannot be described fully. The reversal of natural inclination which Frost inculcated was not spectacular or dramatic, but the details would be unprintable and had, indeed, a kind of nursery fatuity about them which is best ignored. Often Mark felt that one good roar of coarse laughter would have blown away the whole atmosphere of the thing: but laughter was unhappily out of the question. There indeed lay the horror — to perform petty obscenities which a very silly child might have thought funny all under the unchangingly serious inspection of Frost, with a stop watch and a note-book and all the ritual of scientific experiment. Some of the things he had to do were merely meaningless. In one exercise he had to mount the step-ladder and touch some one spot on the ceiling, selected by Frost: just touch it with his forefinger and then come down again. But either by association with the other exercises or because it really concealed some significance, this proceeding always appeared to Mark to be the most indecent and even inhuman of all his tasks. And day by day, as the process went on, that idea of the Straight or the Normal which had occurred to him during his first visit to this room, grew stronger and more solid in his mind till it became a kind of mountain. He had never before known what an Idea meant: he had always thought till now that they were things inside one's own head. But now, when his head was continually attacked and often completely filled with the clinging corruption of the training, this Idea towered up above him — something which obviously existed quite independently of himself and had hard rock surfaces which would not give, surfaces he could cling to.

The other thing that helped to save him was the Man in the Bed. Mark's discovery that he really could speak English had led to a curious acquaintance with him. It can hardly be said that they conversed. Both spoke, but the result was hardly conversation as Mark had hitherto understood the term. The man was so very allusive and used gesture so extensively that Mark's less sophisticated modes of communication were almost useless. Thus when Mark explained that he had no tobacco, the man had slapped an imaginary tobacco pouch on his knee at least six times and struck an imaginary match about as often, each time jerking his head sideways with a look of such relish as Mark had seldom seen on a human face. Then Mark went on to explain that though "they" were not foreigners, they were extremely dangerous people and that probably the Stranger's best plan would be to preserve his silence.

“Ah,” said the Stranger jerking his head again. “Ah. Eh?” And then, without exactly laying his finger on his lips he went through an elaborate pantomime which clearly meant the same thing. And it was impossible for a long time to get him off this subject. He went back and back to the theme of secrecy. “Ah,” he said, “don’t get nothing out of me. I tell ‘ee. Don’t get nothing out of me. Eh? I tell ‘ee. You and me knows. Ah?” and his look embraced Mark in such an apparently gleeful conspiracy that it warmed the heart. Believing this matter to be now sufficiently clear, Mark began, “But, as regards the future—” only to be met by another pantomime of secrecy, followed by the word “Eh?” in a tone which demanded an answer.

“Yes, of course,” said Mark. “We are both in considerable danger. And — —”

“Ah,” said the man. “Foreigners. Eh?”

“No, no,” said Mark. “I told you they weren’t. They seem to think *you* are, though. And that’s why — —”

“That’s right,” interrupted the man. “I know. Foreigners, I call them. I know. They get nothing out of me. You and me’s all right. Ah.”

“I’ve been trying to think out some sort of plan,” said Mark.

“Ah,” said the man approvingly.

“And I was wondering,” began Mark when the man suddenly leaned forwards and said with extraordinary energy “I tell ‘ee.”

“What?” said Mark.

“I got a plan.”

“What is it?”

“Ah,” said the man winking at Mark with infinite knowingness and rubbing his belly.

“Go on. What is it?” said Mark.

“How’d it be,” said the man, sitting up and applying his left thumb to his right forefinger as if about to propound the first step in a philosophical argument, “How’d it be now if you and I made ourselves a nice bit of toasted cheese?”

“I meant a plan for escape,” said Mark.

“Ah,” replied the man. “My old Dad, now. He never had a day’s illness in his life. Eh? How’s that for a bit of all right? Eh?”

“It’s a remarkable record,” said Mark.

“Ah. You may say so,” replied the other. “On the road all his life. Never had a stomach-ache. Eh?” and here, as if Mark might not know that malady,

he went through a long and extraordinarily vivid dumb show.

“Open-air life suited him, I suppose,” said Mark.

“And what did he attribute his health to?” asked the man. He pronounced the word *attribute* with great relish, laying the accent on the first syllable. “I ask everyone, what did he attribute his health to?”

Mark was about to reply when the man indicated by a gesture that the question was purely rhetorical and that he did not wish to be interrupted.

“He attributed his health,” continued the speaker with great solemnity, “to eating toasted cheese. Keeps the water out of the stomach, that’s what it does, eh? Makes a lining. Stands to reason. Ah!”

In several later interviews Mark endeavoured to discover something of the Stranger’s own history and particularly how he had been brought to Belbury. This was not easy to do, for though the tramp’s conversation was very autobiographical, it was filled almost entirely with accounts of conversations in which he had made stunning repartees whose points remained wholly obscure. Even where it was less intellectual in character, the allusions were too difficult for Mark, who was quite ignorant of the life of the roads though he had once written a very authoritative article on Vagrancy. But by repeated and (as he got to know his man) more cautious questioning, he couldn’t help getting the idea that the Tramp had been made to give up his clothes to a total stranger and then put to sleep. He never got the story in so many words. The Tramp insisted on talking as if Mark knew it already, and any pressure for a more accurate account produced only a series of nods, winks, and highly confidential gestures. As for the identity or appearance of the person who had taken his clothes, nothing whatever could be made out. The nearest Mark ever got to it, after hours of talk and deep potations, was some such statement as “Ah. He was a one!” or “He was a kind of — eh? *You* know?” or “That was a customer, that was.” These statements were made with enormous gusto as though the theft of the tramp’s clothes had excited his deepest admiration.

Indeed, throughout the man’s conversation this gusto was the most striking characteristic. He never passed any kind of moral judgement on the various things that had been done to him in the course of his career, nor did he ever try to explain them. Much that was unjust and still more that was simply unintelligible seemed to be accepted not only without resentment but with a certain satisfaction provided only that it was striking. Even about his present situation he showed very much less curiosity than Mark would have

thought possible. It did not make sense, but then the man did not expect things to make sense. He deplored the absence of tobacco and regarded the "Foreigners" as very dangerous people: but the main thing, obviously, was to eat and drink as much as possible while the present conditions lasted. And gradually Mark fell into line. The man's breath, and indeed his body, were malodorous, and his methods of eating were gross. But the sort of continual picnic which the two shared carried Mark back into that realm of childhood which we have all enjoyed before nicety began. Each understood perhaps an eighth part of what the other said, but a kind of intimacy grew between them. Mark never noticed until years later that here, where there was no room for vanity and no more power or security than that of "children playing in a giant's kitchen," he had unawares become a member of a "circle," as secret and as strongly fenced against outsiders as any that he had dreamed of.

Every now and then their *téte-à-téte* was interrupted. Frost or Wither or both would come in introducing some stranger who addressed the tramp in an unknown language, failed completely to get any response, and was ushered out again. The tramp's habit of submission to the unintelligible, mixed with a kind of animal cunning, stood him in good stead during these interviews. Even without Mark's advice, it would never have occurred to him to undeceive his captors by replying in English. Undeceiving was an activity wholly foreign to his mind. For the rest, his expression of tranquil indifference, varied occasionally by extremely sharp looks but never by the least sign of anxiety or bewilderment, left his interrogators mystified. Wither could never find in his face the evil he was looking for: but neither could he find any of that virtue which would, for him, have been the danger signal. The tramp was a type of man he had never met. The dupe, the terrified victim, the toady, the would-be accomplice, the rival, the honest man with loathing and hatred in his eyes, were all familiar to him. But not this.

And then, one day, there came an interview that was different.

V

"It sounds rather like a mythological picture by Titian come to life," said the Director with a smile, when Jane had described her experience in the lodge.

“Yes, but . . .” said Jane, and then stopped. “I see,” she began again, “it was very like that. Not only the woman and the . . . the dwarfs . . . but the glow. As if the air were on fire. But I always thought I liked Titian. I suppose I wasn’t really taking the pictures seriously enough. Just chattering about ‘the Renaissance’ the way one did.”

“You didn’t like it when it came out into real life?”

Jane shook her head.

“Was it real, sir?” she asked presently. “Are there such things?”

“Yes,” said the Director, “it was real enough. Oh, there are thousands of things within this square mile that I don’t know about yet. And I dare say that the presence of Merlinus brings out certain things. We are not living *exactly* in the twentieth century as long as he’s here. We overlap a bit; the focus is blurred. And you yourself . . . you are a seer. You were perhaps bound to meet her. She’s what you’ll get if you won’t have the other.”

“How do you mean, sir?” said Jane.

“You said she was a little like Mother Dimble. So she is. But Mother Dimble with something left out. Mother Dimble is friends with all that world as Merlinus is friends with the woods and rivers. But he isn’t a wood or a river himself. She has not rejected it, but she has baptized it. She is a Christian wife; and you, you know, are not. Neither are you a virgin. You have put yourself where you must meet that Old Woman and you have rejected all that has happened to her since Maleldil came to Earth. So you get her raw — not stronger than Mother Dimble would find her, but untransformed, demoniac. And you don’t like it. Hasn’t that been the history of your life?”

“You mean,” said Jane slowly, “I’ve been repressing something.”

The Director laughed; just that loud, assured, bachelor laughter which had often infuriated her on other lips.

“Yes,” he said. “But don’t think I’m talking of Freudian repressions. He knew only half the facts. It isn’t a question of inhibitions — inculcated shame — against natural desire. I’m afraid there’s no niche in the world for people that won’t be either Pagan or Christian. Just imagine a man who was too dainty to eat with his fingers and yet wouldn’t use forks!”

His laughter rather than his words had reddened Jane’s cheeks, and she was staring at him open-mouthed. Assuredly the Director was not in the least like Mother Dimble: but an odious realisation that he was, in this matter, on Mother Dimble’s side — that he also, though he did not belong

to that hot-coloured, archaic world, stood somehow in good diplomatic relations with it, from which she was excluded — had struck her like a blow. Some old female dream of finding a man who "really understood" was being insulted. She took it for granted, half unconsciously, that the Director was the most virginal of his sex: but she had not realised that this would leave his masculinity still on the other side of the stream from herself and even steeper, more emphatic, than that of common men. Some knowledge of a world beyond nature she had already gained from living in his house, and more from fear of death that night in the dingle. But she had been conceiving this world as "spiritual" in the negative sense — as some neutral, or democratic, vacuum where differences disappeared, where sex and sense were not transcended but simply taken away. Now the suspicion dawned upon her that there might be differences and contrasts all the way up, richer, sharper, even fiercer, at every rung of the ascent. How if this invasion of her own being in marriage from which she had recoiled, often in the very teeth of instinct, were not, as she had supposed, merely a relic of animal life or patriarchal barbarism, but rather the lowest, the first, and the easiest form of some shocking contact with reality which would have to be repeated — but in ever larger and more disturbing modes — on the highest levels of all?

"Yes," said the Director, "there is no escape. If it were a virginal rejection of the male, He would allow it. Such souls can by-pass the male and go on to meet something far more masculine, higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. But your trouble has been what old poets called *Daungier*. We call it Pride. You are offended by the masculine itself: the loud, irruptive, possessive thing — the gold lion, the bearded bull — which breaks through hedges and scatters the little kingdom of your primness as the dwarfs scattered the carefully made bed. The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. You had better agree with your adversary quickly."

"You mean I shall have to become a Christian?" said Jane.

"It looks like it," said the Director.

"But — I still don't see what that had to do with . . . with Mark," said Jane. This was perhaps not perfectly true. The vision of the universe which she had begun to see in the last few minutes had a curiously stormy quality

about it. It was bright, darting, and overpowering. Old Testament imagery of eyes and wheels for the first time in her life took on some possibility of meaning. And mixed with this was the sense that she had been manoeuvred into a false position. It ought to have been she who was saying these things to the Christians. Hers ought to have been the vivid, perilous world brought against their grey formalised one: hers the quick, vital movements and theirs the stained-glass attitudes. That was the antithesis she was used to. This time, in a sudden flash of purple and crimson, she remembered what stained glass was really like. And where Mark stood in all this new world she did not know. Certainly not quite in his old place. Something which she liked to think of as the opposite of Mark had been taken away. Something civilised, or modern, or scholarly, or (of late) spiritual which did not want to possess her, which valued her for the odd collection of qualities she called "herself," something without hands that gripped and without demands upon her. But if there were no such thing? Playing for time, she asked,

"Who was that Huge Woman?"

"I'm not sure," said the Director. "But I think I can make a guess. Did you know that all the planets are represented in each?"

"No, sir. I didn't."

"Apparently they are. There is no Oyarsa in Heaven who has not got his representative on Earth. And there is no world where you could not meet a little unfallen partner of our own black Archon, a kind of other self. That is why there was an Italian Saturn as well as a heavenly one, and a Cretan Jove as well as an Olympian. It was these earthly wraiths of the high intelligences that men met in old times when they reported that they had seen the gods. It was with those that a man like Merlin was (at times) conversant. Nothing from beyond the Moon ever really descended. What concerns you more, there is a terrestrial as well as a celestial Venus — Perelandra's wraith as well as Perelandra."

"And you think . . .?"

"I do: I have long known that this house is deeply under her influence. There is even copper in the soil. Also — the earth-Venus will be specially active here at present. For it is to-night that her heavenly archtype will really descend."

"I had forgotten," said Jane.

"You will not forget it once it has happened. All of you had better stay together — in the kitchen, perhaps. Do not come upstairs. To-night I will

bring Merlin before my masters, all five of them — Viritrilbia, Perelandra, Malacandra, Glund, and Lurga. He will be opened. Powers will pass into him."

"What will he *do*, sir?"

The Director laughed. "The first step is easy. The enemies at Belbury are already looking for experts in archaic western dialects, preferably Celtic. We shall send them an interpreter! Yes, by the splendour of Christ, we will send them one. 'Upon them He a spirit of frenzy sent to call in haste for their destroyer.' They have advertised in the papers for one! And after the first step . . . well, you know, it will be easy. In fighting those who serve devils one always has this on one's side; their masters hate them as much as they hate us. The moment we disable the human pawns enough to make them useless to Hell, their own masters finish the work for us. They break their tools."

There was a sudden knock on the door and Grace Ironwood entered.

"Ivy is back, sir," she said. "I think you'd better see her. No; she's alone. She never saw her husband. The sentence is over but they haven't released him. He's been sent on to Belbury for remedial treatment. Under some new regulation. Apparently it does not require a sentence from a court . . . but she's not very coherent. She is in great distress."

VI

Jane had gone into the garden to think. She accepted what the Director had said, yet it seemed to her nonsensical. His comparison between Mark's love and God's (since apparently there was a God) struck her nascent spirituality as indecent and irreverent. "Religion" ought to mean a realm in which her haunting female fear of being treated as a thing, an object of barter and desire and possession, would be set permanently at rest, and what she called her "true self" would soar upwards and expand in some freer and purer world. For still she thought that "Religion" was a kind of exhalation or a cloud of incense, something steaming up from specially gifted souls towards a receptive heaven. Then, quite sharply, it occurred to her that the Director never talked about Religion, nor did the Dimbles nor Camilla. They talked about God. They had no picture in their minds of some mist steaming upward: rather of strong, skilful hands thrust down to make and mend, perhaps even to destroy. Supposing one were a *thing* after all — a

thing designed and invented by Someone Else and valued for qualities quite different from what one had decided to regard as one's true self? Supposing all those people who, from the bachelor uncles down to Mark and Mother Dimble, had infuriatingly found her sweet and fresh when she wanted them to find her also interesting and important, had all along been simply right and perceived the sort of thing she was? Supposing Maleldil on this subject agreed with them and not with her? For one moment she had a ridiculous and scorching vision of a world in which God Himself would never understand, never take her with full seriousness. Then, at one particular corner of the gooseberry patch, the change came.

What awaited her there was serious to the degree of sorrow and beyond. There was no form nor sound. The mould under the bushes, the moss on the path, and the little brick border, were not visibly changed. But they were changed. A boundary had been crossed. She had come into a world, or into a Person, or into the presence of a Person. Something expectant, patient, inexorable, met her with no veil or protection between. In the closeness of that contact she perceived at once that the Director's words had been entirely misleading. This demand which now pressed upon her was not, even by analogy, like any other demand. It was the origin of all right demands and contained them. In its light you could understand them: but from them you could know nothing of it. There was nothing, and never had been anything, like this. And now there was nothing except this. Yet also, everything had been like this: only by being like this had anything existed. In this height and depth and breadth the little idea of herself which she had hitherto called *me* dropped down and vanished, unfluttering, into bottomless distance, like a bird in space without air. The name *me* was the name of a being whose existence she had never suspected, a being that did not yet fully exist but which was demanded. It was a person (not the person she had thought) yet also a thing — a made thing, made to please Another and in Him to please all others — a thing being made at this very moment, without its choice, in a shape it had never dreamed of. And the making went on amidst a kind of splendour or sorrow or both, whereof she could not tell whether it was in the moulding hands or in the kneaded lump.

Words take too long. To be aware of all this and to know that it had already gone made one single experience. It was revealed only in its departure. The largest thing that had ever happened to her had, apparently, found room for itself in a moment of time too short to be called time at all.

Her hand closed on nothing but a memory, and as it closed, without an instant's pause, the voices of those who have not joy rose howling and chattering from every corner of her being.

"Take care. Draw back. Keep your head. Don't commit yourself," they said. And then more subtly, from another quarter, "You have had a religious experience. This is very interesting. Not everyone does. How much better you will now understand the Seventeenth Century poets!" Or from a third direction, more sweetly, "Go on. Try to get it again. It will please the Director."

But her defences had been captured and these counter-attacks were unsuccessful.

FIFTEEN

The Descent of the Gods

I

All the house at St. Anne's was empty, but for two rooms. In the kitchen, drawn a little closer than usual about the fire and with the shutters closed, sat Dimble and MacPhee and Denniston and the women. Removed from them by many a long vacancy of stair and passage, the Pendragon and Merlin were together in the Blue Room.

If anyone had gone up the stairs and onto the lobby outside the Blue Room, he would have found something other than fear that barred his way — an almost physical resistance. If he had succeeded in forcing his way forward against it, he would have come into a region of tingling sounds that were clearly not voices though they had articulation: and if the passage were quite dark he would probably have seen a faint light, not like fire or moon, under the Director's door. I do not think he could have reached the door itself unbidden. Already the whole house would have seemed to him to be tilting and plunging like a ship in a Bay of Biscay gale. He would have been horribly compelled to feel this earth not as the base of the universe but as a ball spinning and rolling onwards, both at delirious speed, and not through emptiness but through some densely inhabited and intricately structured medium. He would have known sensuously, until his outraged senses forsook him, that the visitants in that room were in it not because they were at rest but because they glanced and wheeled through the packed reality of heaven (which men call empty space) to keep their beams upon this spot of the moving earth's hide.

The Druid and Ransom had begun to wait for these visitors soon after sundown. Ransom was on his sofa. Merlin sat beside him, his hands clasped, his body a little bent forward. Sometimes a drop of sweat trickled coldly down his grey cheek. He had at first addressed himself to kneel but Ransom forbade him. "See thou do it not!" he had said. "Have you forgotten that they are our fellow-servants?" The windows were uncurtained, and all the light that there was in the room came thence: frosty-red when they began their waiting, but later star-lit.

Long before anything happened in the Blue Room the party in the kitchen had made their ten o'clock tea. It was while they sat drinking it that the change occurred. Up till now they had instinctively been talking in subdued voices, as children talk in a room where their elders are busied about some august incomprehensible matter, a funeral, or the reading of a will. Now of a sudden they all began talking loudly at once, each, not contentiously but delightedly, interrupting the others. A stranger coming into the kitchen would have thought they were drunk, not soddenly but gaily drunk: would have seen heads bent close together, eyes dancing, an excited wealth of gesture. What they said, none of the party could ever afterwards remember. Dimble maintained that they had been chiefly engaged in making puns. MacPhee denied that he had ever, even that night, made a pun, but all agreed that they had been extraordinarily witty. If not plays upon words, yet certainly plays upon thoughts, paradoxes, fancies, anecdotes, theories laughingly advanced, yet, on consideration, well worth taking seriously, had flowed from them and over them with dazzling prodigality. Even Ivy forgot her great sorrow. Mother Dimble always remembered Denniston and her husband as they had stood, one on each side of the fireplace, in a gay intellectual duel, each capping the other, each rising above the other, up and up, like birds or aeroplanes in combat. If only one could have remembered what they said! For never in her life had she heard such talk — such eloquence, such melody (song could have added nothing to it), such toppling structures of double meaning, such sky-rockets of metaphor and allusion.

A moment after that and they were all silent. Calm fell, as suddenly as when one goes out of the wind behind a wall. They sat staring upon one another, tired and a little self-conscious.

Upstairs this first change had had a different operation. There came an instant at which both men braced themselves. Ransom gripped the side of his sofa: Merlin grasped his own knees and set his teeth. A rod of coloured light, whose colour no man can name or picture, darted between them: no more to see than that, but seeing was the least part of their experience. Quick agitation seized them: a kind of boiling and bubbling in mind and heart which shook their bodies also. It went to a rhythm of such fierce speed that they feared their sanity must be shaken into a thousand fragments. And then it seemed that this had actually happened. But it did not matter: for all the fragments — needle-pointed desires, brisk merriments, lynx-eyed

thoughts — went rolling to and fro like glittering drops and reunited themselves. It was well that both men had some knowledge of poetry. The doubling, splitting, and recombining of thoughts which now went on in them would have been unendurable for one whom that art had not already instructed in the counterpoint of the mind, the mastery of doubled and trebled vision. For Ransom, whose study had been for many years in the realm of words, it was heavenly pleasure. He found himself sitting within the very heart of language, in the white-hot furnace of essential speech. All fact was broken, splashed into cataracts, caught, turned inside out, kneaded, slain, and reborn as meaning. For the lord of Meaning himself, the herald, the messenger, the slayer of Argus, was with them: the angel that spins nearest the sun, Viritrilbia, whom men call Mercury and Thoth.

Down in the kitchen drowsiness stole over them after the orgy of speaking had come to an end. Jane, having nearly fallen asleep, was startled by her book falling from her hand, and looked about her. How warm it was . . . how comfortable and familiar. She had always liked wood fires, but to-night the smell of the logs seemed more than ordinarily sweet. She began to think it was sweeter than it could possibly be, that a smell of burning cedar or of incense pervaded the room. It thickened. Fragrant names hovered in her mind — nard and cassia's balmy smells and all Arabia breathing from a box: even something more subtly sweet, perhaps maddening — why not forbidden? — but she knew it was commanded. She was too drowsy to think deeply how this could be. The Dimbles were talking together, but in so low a voice that the rest could not hear. Their faces appeared to her transfigured. She could no longer see that they were old — only mature, like ripe fields in August, serene and golden with the tranquillity of fulfilled desire. On her other side, Arthur said something in Camilla's ear. There too . . . but as the warmth and sweetness of that rich air now fully mastered her brain, she could hardly bear to look on them: not through envy (that thought was far away) but because a sort of brightness flowed from them that dazzled her, as if the god and goddess in them burned through their bodies and through their clothes and shone before her in a young double-natured nakedness of rose-red spirit that overcame her. And all about them danced (as she half saw) not the gross and ridiculous dwarfs which she had seen that afternoon but grave and ardent spirits, bright winged, their boyish shapes smooth and slender like ivory rods.

In the Blue Room also Ransom and Merlin felt about this time that the temperature had risen. The windows, they did not see how or when, had swung open; at their opening the temperature did not drop, for it was from without that the warmth came. Through the bare branches, across the ground which was once more stiffening with frost, a summer breeze was blowing into the room, but the breeze of such a summer as England never has. Laden like heavy barges that glide nearly gunwale under, laden so heavily you would have thought it could not move, laden with ponderous fragrance of night-scented flowers, sticky gums, groves that drop odours, and with cool savour of midnight fruit, it stirred the curtains, it lifted a letter that lay on the table, it lifted the hair which had a moment before been plastered on Merlin's forehead. The room was rocking. They were afloat. A soft tingling and shivering as of foam and breaking bubbles ran over their flesh. Tears ran down Ransom's cheeks. He alone knew from what seas and what islands that breeze blew. Merlin did not: but in him also the inconsolable wound with which man is born waked and ached at this touching. Low syllables of prehistoric Celtic self-pity murmured from his lips. These yearnings and fondlings were, however, only the forerunners of the goddess. As the whole of her virtue seized, focused, and held that spot of the rolling earth in her long beam, something harder, shriller, more perilously ecstatic, came out of the centre of all the softness. Both the humans trembled — Merlin because he did not know what was coming, Ransom because he knew. And now it came. It was fiery, sharp, bright, and ruthless, ready to kill, ready to die, outspeeding light: it was Charity, not as mortals imagine it, not even as it has been humanised for them since the Incarnation of the Word, but the translunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated. They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it would burn their bones. They could not bear that it should continue. They could not bear that it should cease. So Perelandra, triumphant among planets, whom men call Venus, came and was with them in the room.

Down in the kitchen MacPhee sharply drew back his chair so that it grated on the tiled floor like a pencil squeaking on a slate. "Man!" he exclaimed, "it's a shame for us to be sitting here looking at the fire. If the Director hadn't got a game leg himself, I'll bet you he'd have found some other way for us to go to work."

Camilla's eyes flashed towards him. "Go on!" she said, "go on!"

“What do you mean, MacPhee?” said Dimble.

“He means fighting,” said Camilla.

“They’d be too many for us, I’m afraid,” said Arthur Denniston.

“Maybe so!” said MacPhee. “But maybe they’ll be too many for us this way, too. But it would be grand to have one go at them before the end. To tell you the truth, I sometimes feel I don’t greatly care what happens. But I wouldn’t be easy in my grave if I knew they’d won and I’d never had my hands on them. I’d like to be able to say as an old sergeant said to me in the first war, about a bit of a raid we did near Monchy. Our fellows did it all with the butt end, you know. ‘Sir,’ says he, ‘did ever you hear anything like the way their heads cracked?’”

“I think that’s disgusting,” said Mother Dimble.

“That part is, I suppose,” said Camilla. “But . . . oh, if one could have a charge in the old style. I don’t mind anything once I’m on a horse.”

“I can’t understand it,” said Dimble. “I’m not like you, MacPhee. I’m not brave. But I was just thinking as you spoke that I don’t feel afraid of being killed and hurt as I used to do. Not to-night.”

“We may be, I suppose,” said Jane.

“As long as we’re all together,” said Mother Dimble. “It might be . . . no, I don’t mean anything heroic . . . it might be a *nice* way to die.” And suddenly all their faces and voices were changed. They were laughing again, but it was a different kind of laughter. Their love for one another became intense. Each, looking on all the rest, thought, “I’m lucky to be here. I could die with these.” But MacPhee was humming to himself:

“King William said, Be not dismayed, for the loss of one commander.”

Upstairs it was, at first, much the same. Merlin saw in memory the wintry grass on Badon Hill, the long banner of the Virgin fluttering above the heavy British-Roman cataphracts, the yellow-haired barbarians. He heard the snap of the bows, the *click-click* of steel points in wooden shields, the cheers, the howling, the ringing of struck mail. He remembered also the evening, fires twinkling along the hill, frost making the gashes smart, starlight on a pool fouled with blood, eagles crowding together in the pale sky. And Ransom, it may be, remembered his long struggle in the caves of Perelandra. But all this passed. Something tonic and lusty and cheerily cold, like a sea-breeze, was coming over them. There was no fear anywhere: the blood inside them flowed as if to a marching-song. They felt themselves taking their places in the ordered rhythm of the universe, side by side with

punctual seasons and patterned atoms and the obeying Seraphim. Under the immense weight of their obedience their wills stood up straight and untiring like caryatides. Eased of all fickleness and all protestings they stood; gay, light, nimble, and alert. They had outlived all anxieties; care was a word without meaning. To live was to share without effort this processional romp. Ransom knew, as a man knows when he touches iron, the clear, taut splendour of that celestial spirit who now flashed between them: vigilant Malacandra, captain of a cold orb, whom men call Mars and Mavors, and Tyr who put his hand in the wolf-mouth. Ransom greeted his guests in the tongue of heaven. But he warned Merlin that now the time was coming when he must play the man. The three gods who had already met in the Blue Room were less unlike humanity than the two whom they still awaited. In Viritrilbia and Venus and Malacandra were represented those two of the Seven genders which bear a certain analogy to the biological sexes, and can therefore be in some measure understood by men. It would not be so with those who were now preparing to descend. These also doubtless had their genders, but we have no clue to them. These would be mightier energies: ancient eldils, steersmen of giant worlds which have never from the beginning been subdued to the sweet humiliations of organic life.

“Stir the fire, Denniston, for any sake. That’s a cold night,” said MacPhee in the kitchen.

“It must be cold outside,” said Dimble.

All thought of that; of stiff grass, hen-roosts, dark places in the middle of woods, graves. Then of the sun’s dying, the earth gripped, suffocated, in airless cold, the black sky lit only with stars. And then, not even stars: the heat-death of the universe, utter and final blackness of nonentity from which Nature knows no return. Another life? “Possibly,” thought MacPhee. “I believe,” thought Denniston. But the old life gone, all its times, all its hours and days, gone. Can even Omnipotence *bring back*? Where do years go, and why? Man never would understand it. The misgiving deepened. Perhaps there was nothing to be understood.

Saturn, whose name in the heavens is Lurga, stood in the Blue Room. His spirit lay upon the house, or even on the whole earth, with a cold pressure such as might flatten the very orb of Tellus to a wafer. Matched against the lead-like burden of his antiquity, the other gods themselves perhaps felt young and ephemeral. It was a mountain of centuries sloping

up from the highest antiquity we can conceive, up and up like a mountain whose summit never comes into sight, not to eternity where the thought can rest, but into more and still more time, into freezing wastes and silence of unnameable numbers. It was also strong like a mountain: its age was no mere morass of time where imagination can sink in reverie, but a living, self-remembering duration which repelled lighter intelligences from its structure as granite flings back waves, itself unwithered and undecayed, but able to wither any who approached it unadvised. Ransom and Merlin suffered a sensation of unendurable cold: and all that was strength in Lurga became sorrow as it entered them. Yet Lurga in that room was overmatched. Suddenly a greater spirit came — one whose influence tempered and almost transformed to his own quality the skill of leaping Mercury, the clearness of Mars, the subtler vibration of Venus, and even the numbing weight of Saturn.

In the kitchen his coming was felt. No one afterwards knew how it happened, but somehow the kettle was put on, the hot toddy was brewed. Arthur — the only musician among them — was bidden to get out his fiddle. The chairs were pushed back, the floor cleared. They danced. What they danced no one could remember. It was some round dance, no modern shuffling: it involved beating the floor, clapping of hands, leaping high. And no one, while it lasted, thought himself or his fellows ridiculous. It may, in fact, have been some village measure, not ill-suited to the tiled kitchen: the spirit in which they danced it was not so. It seemed to each that the room was filled with kings and queens, that the wildness of their dance expressed heroic energy, and its quieter movements had seized the very spirit behind all noble ceremonies.

Upstairs his mighty beam turned the Blue Room into a blaze of lights. Before the other angels a man might sink: before this he might die, but if he lived at all he would laugh. If you had caught one breath of the air that came from him, you would have felt yourself taller than before. Though you were a cripple, your walk would have become stately: though a beggar, you would have worn your rags magnanimously. Kingship and power and festal pomp and courtesy shot from him as sparks fly from an anvil. The ringing of bells, the blowing of trumpets, the spreading out of banners, are means used on earth to make a faint symbol of his quality. It was like a long sunlit wave, creamy-crested and arched with emerald, that comes on nine feet tall, with roaring and with terror and unquenchable laughter. It was like the first

beginning of music in the halls of some King so high and at some festival so solemn that a tremor akin to fear runs through young hearts when they hear it. For this was great Glund-Oyarsa, King of Kings, through whom the joy of creation principally blows across these fields of Arbol, known to men in old times as Jove and under that name, by fatal but not inexplicable misprision, confused with his Maker — so little did they dream by how many degrees the stair even of created being rises above him.

At his coming there was holiday in the Blue Room. The two mortals, momentarily caught up into the *Gloria* which those five excellent Natures perpetually sing, forgot for a time the lower and more immediate purpose of their meeting. Then they proceeded to operation. Merlin received the powers into him.

He looked different next day. Partly because his beard had been shaved: but also, because he was no longer his own man. No one doubted that his final severance from the body was near. Later in the day MacPhee drove him off and dropped him in the neighbourhood of Belbury.

II

Mark had fallen into a doze in the tramp's bedroom that day, when he was startled, and driven suddenly to collect himself, by the arrival of visitors. Frost came in first and held the door open. Two others followed. One was the Deputy Director: the other was a man whom Mark had not seen before.

This person was dressed in a rusty cassock and carried in his hand a wide-brimmed black hat such as priests wear in many parts of the Continent. He was a very big man, and the cassock perhaps made him look bigger. He was clean shaven, revealing a large face with heavy and complicated folds in it, and he walked with his head a little bowed. Mark decided that he was a simple soul, probably an obscure member of some religious order who happened to be an authority on some even more obscure language. And it was to Mark rather odious to see him standing between those two birds of prey — Wither effusive and flattering on his right and Frost, on his left, stiff as a ramrod, waiting with scientific attention but also, as Mark could now see, with a certain cold dislike, for the result of the new experiment.

Wither talked to the stranger for some moments in a language which Mark could not follow but which he recognised as Latin. "A priest,

obviously," thought Mark. "But I wonder where from? Wither knows most of the ordinary languages. Would the old chap be a Greek? Doesn't look like a Levantine. More probably a Russian." But at this point Mark's attention was diverted. The tramp, who had closed his eyes when he heard the door-handle turning, had suddenly opened them, seen the stranger, and then shut them tighter than before. After this his behaviour was peculiar. He began emitting a series of very exaggerated snores and turned his back to the company. The stranger took a step nearer to the bed and spoke two syllables in a low voice. For a second or two the tramp lay as he was but seemed to be afflicted with a shivering fit: then, slowly, but with continuous movement, as when the bows of a ship come round in obedience to the rudder, he rolled round and lay staring up into the other's face. His mouth and his eyes were both opened very wide. From certain jerking of his head and hands and from certain ghastly attempts to smile, Mark concluded that he was trying to say something, probably of a deprecatory and insinuating kind. What next followed took his breath away. The stranger spoke again: and then, with much facial contortion, mixed with coughs and stammers and spluttering and expectoration, there came out of the tramp's mouth, in a high unnatural voice, syllables, words, a whole sentence, in some language that was neither Latin nor English. All this time the stranger kept his eyes fixed on those of the tramp.

The stranger spoke again. This time the tramp replied at much greater length and seemed to manage the unknown language a little more easily, though his voice remained quite unlike that in which Mark had heard him talking for the last few days. At the end of his speech he sat up in bed and pointed to where Wither and Frost were standing. Then the stranger appeared to ask him a question. The tramp spoke for the third time.

At this reply the stranger started back, crossed himself several times, and exhibited every sign of terror. He turned and spoke rapidly in Latin to the other two. Something happened to their faces when he spoke. They looked like dogs who have just picked up a scent. Then, with a loud exclamation the stranger caught up his skirts and made a bolt for the door. But the scientists were too quick for him. For a few minutes all three were wrangling there, Frost's teeth bared like an animal's, and the loose mask of Wither's face wearing, for once, a quite unambiguous expression. The old priest was being threatened. Mark found that he himself had taken a step forward. But before he could make up his mind how to act, the stranger,

shaking his head and holding out his hands, had come timidly back to the bedside. It was an odd thing that the tramp who had relaxed during the struggle at the door should suddenly stiffen again and fix his eyes on this frightened old man as if he were awaiting orders.

More words in the unknown language followed. The tramp once more pointed at Wither and Frost. The stranger turned and spoke to them in Latin, apparently translating. Wither and Frost looked at one another as if each waited for his fellow to act. What followed was pure lunacy. With infinite caution, wheezing and creaking, down went the whole shaky senility of the Deputy Director, down onto its knees: and half a second later with a jerky, metallic movement Frost got down beside him. When he was down he suddenly looked over his shoulder to where Mark was standing. The flash of pure hatred in his face, but hatred, as it were, crystallised so that it was no longer a passion and had no heat in it, was like touching metal in the Arctic where metal burns. “Kneel,” he bleated, and instantly turned his head. Mark never could remember afterwards whether he simply forgot to obey this order or whether his real rebellion dated from that moment.

The tramp spoke again, always with his eyes fixed on those of the man in the cassock. And again the latter translated, and then stood aside. Wither and Frost began going forward on their knees till they reached the bedside. The tramp’s hairy, dirty hand with its bitten nails was thrust out to them. They kissed it. Then it seemed that some further order was given them. They rose and Mark perceived that Wither was gently expostulating in Latin against this order. He kept on indicating Frost. The words *venia tua* (each time emended to *venia vestra*) recurred so often that Mark could pick them out. But apparently the expostulation was unsuccessful: a few moments later Frost and Wither had both left the room.

[Footnote 4] “With your kind permission”; or, “If you will pardon me.”

As the door shut, the tramp collapsed like a deflated balloon. He rolled himself to and fro on the bed muttering, “Gor’, blimey. Couldn’t have believed it. It’s a knock-out. A fair knock-out.” But Mark had little leisure to attend to this. He found that the stranger was addressing him, and though he could not understand the words, he looked up. Instantly he wished to look away again and found that he could not. He might have claimed with some reason that he was by now an expert in the endurance of alarming faces. But that did not alter the fact that when he looked on this he felt

himself afraid. Almost before he had time to realise this he felt himself drowsy. A moment later he fell into his chair and slept.

III

"Well?" said Frost, as soon as they found themselves outside the door.

"It is . . . er . . . profoundly perplexing," said the Deputy Director.

They walked down the passage conversing in low tones as they went.

"It certainly looked — I say *looked*," continued Frost, "as if the man in the bed were being hypnotised and the Basque priest were in charge of the situation."

"Oh, surely, my dear friend, that would be a most disquieting hypothesis."

"Excuse me. I have made no hypothesis. I am describing how it looked."

"And how, on your hypothesis — forgive me, but that is what it is — would a Basque priest come to invent the story that our guest was Merlinus Ambrosius?"

"That is the point. If the man in the bed is *not* Merlinus, then someone else, and someone quite outside our calculations, namely the priest, knows our whole plan of campaign."

"And that, my dear friend, is why the retention of both these persons and a certain extreme delicacy in our attitude to both is required — at least until we have some further light."

"They must, of course, be detained."

"I would hardly say *detained*. It has implications . . . I do not venture to express any doubts at present as to the identity of our distinguished guest. There is no question of detention. On the contrary, the most cordial welcome, the most meticulous courtesy . . ."

"Do I understand that you had always pictured Merlinus entering the Institute as a Dictator rather than a colleague?"

"As to that," said Wither, "my conception of the personal, or even official, relations between us had always been elastic and ready for all necessary adaptations. It would be a very real grief to me if I thought you were allowing any misplaced sense of your own dignity . . . ah, in short, provided he *is* Merlinus . . . you understand me?"

"Where are you taking us at the moment?"

“To my own apartments. If you remember, the request was that we should provide our guest with some clothes.”

“There was no request. We were ordered.”

To this the Deputy Director made no reply. When both men were in his bedroom and the door was shut, Frost said, “I am not satisfied. You do not seem to realise the dangers of the situation. We must take into account the possibility that the man is not Merlinus. And if he is not Merlinus, then the priest knows things he ought not to know. To allow an impostor and a spy to remain at large in the Institute is out of the question. We must find out at once where that priest gets his knowledge from. And where did you get the priest from?”

“I think that is the kind of shirt which would be most suitable,” said Wither, laying it on the bed. “The suits are in here. The . . . ah . . . clerical personage said he had come in answer to our advertisement. I wish to do full justice to the point of view you have expressed, my dear Frost. On the other hand, to reject the real Merlinus . . . to alienate a power which is an integral factor in our plan . . . would be at least equally dangerous. It is not even certain that the priest would in any event be an enemy. He may have made independent contact with the Macrobes. He may be a potential ally.”

“Did you think he looked like it? His priesthood is against him.”

“All that we now want,” said Wither, “is a collar and tie. Forgive me for saying that I have never been able to share your root and branch attitude to religion. I am not speaking of dogmatic Christianity in its primitive form. But within religious circles — ecclesiastical circles — types of spirituality of very real value do from time to time arise. When they do they sometimes reveal great energy. Father Doyle, though not very talented, is one of our soundest colleagues: and Mr. Straik has in him the germs of that total allegiance (*objectivity* is, I believe, the term you prefer) which is so rare. It doesn’t do to be in any way narrow.”

“What do you actually propose to do?”

“We will, of course, consult the Head at once. I use that term, you understand, purely for convenience.”

“But how can you? Have you forgotten that this is the night of the inaugural banquet, and that Jules is coming down? He may be here in an hour. You will be dancing attendance on him till midnight.”

For a moment Wither’s face remained still, the mouth wide open. He had indeed forgotten that the puppet Director, the dupe of the Institute by whom

it duped the public, was coming that night. But the realisation that he had forgotten troubled him more than it would have troubled another. It was like the first cold breath of winter — the first little hint of a crack in that great secondary self or mental machine which he had built up to carry on the business of living while he, the real Wither, floated far away on the indeterminate frontiers of ghosthood.

“God bless my soul!” he said.

“You have therefore to consider at once,” said Frost, “what to do with these two men this very evening. It is out of the question that they should attend the banquet. It would be madness to leave them to their own devices.”

“Which reminds me that we have already left them alone — and with Studdock, too — for over ten minutes. We must go back with the clothes at once.”

“And without a plan?” enquired Frost, though following Wither out of the room as he said it.

“We must be guided by circumstances,” said Wither.

They were greeted on their return by a babble of imploring Latin from the man in the cassock. “Let me go,” he said; “I entreat you do not, for your mothers’ sakes, do violence to a poor harmless old man. I will tell nothing — God forgive me — but I cannot stay here. This man who says he is Merlinus come back from the dead — he is a diabolist, a worker of infernal miracles. Look! Look what he did to the poor young man the moment you had left the room.” He pointed to where Mark lay unconscious in his chair. “He did it with his eye, only by looking at him. The evil eye, the evil eye.”

“Silence!” said Frost in the same language, “and listen. If you do what you are told, no harm will come to you. If you do not, you will be destroyed. I think that if you are troublesome you may lose your soul as well as your life; for you do not sound likely to be a martyr.”

The man whimpered, covering his face with his hands. Suddenly, not as if he wished to but as if he were a machine that had been worked, Frost kicked him. “Get on,” he said. “Tell him we have brought such clothes as men wear now.” The man did not stagger when he was kicked.

The end of it was that the tramp was washed and dressed. When this had been done, the man in the cassock said, “He is saying that he must now be taken for a journey through all your house and shown the secrets.”

“Tell him,” said Wither, “that it will be a very great pleasure and privilege — —”

But here the tramp spoke again. “He says,” translated the big man, “first that he must see the Head and the beasts and the criminals who are being tormented. Secondly, that he will go with one of you alone. With you, sir,” and here he turned to Wither.

“I will allow no such arrangement,” said Frost in English.

“My dear Frost,” said Wither, “this is hardly the moment . . . and *one* of us must be free to meet Jules.”

The tramp had spoken again. “Forgive me,” said the man in the cassock, “I must follow what he says. The words are not mine. He forbids you to talk in his presence in a tongue which he cannot, even through me, understand. And he says it is an old habit of his to be obeyed. He is asking now whether you wish to have him for a friend or an enemy.”

Frost took a pace nearer to the pseudo-Merlin so that his shoulder touched the rusty cassock of the real one. Wither thought that Frost had intended to say something but had grown afraid. In reality, Frost found it impossible to remember any words. Perhaps it was due to the rapid shifts from Latin to English which had been going on. He could not speak. Nothing but nonsense syllables would occur to his mind. He had long known that his continued intercourse with the beings he called Macrobes might have effects on his psychology which he could not predict. In a dim sort of way the possibility of complete destruction was never out of his thoughts. He had schooled himself not to attend to it. Now, it seemed to be descending on him. He reminded himself that fear was only a chemical phenomenon. For the moment, clearly, he must step out of the struggle, come to himself, and make a new start later in the evening. For, of course, this could not be final. At the very worst it could only be the first hint of the end. Probably he had years of work before him. He would outlast Wither. He would kill the priest. Even Merlin, if it was Merlin, might not stand better with the Macrobes than himself. He stood aside, and the tramp, accompanied by the real Merlin and the Deputy Director, left the room.

Frost had been right in thinking that the aphasia would be only temporary. As soon as they were alone he found no difficulty in saying, as he shook Mark by the shoulder, “Get up. What do you mean by sleeping here? Come with me to the Objective Room.”

IV

Before proceeding to their tour of inspection Merlin demanded robes for the tramp, and Wither finally dressed him as a Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Edgestow. Thus arrayed, walking with his eyes half shut, and as delicately as if he were treading on eggs, the bewildered tinker was led upstairs and downstairs and through the zoo and into the cells. Every now and then his face underwent a kind of spasm as if he were trying to say something; but he never succeeded in producing any words except when the real Merlin asked him a question and fixed him with his eye. Of course, all this was not to the tramp what it would have been to anyone who made an educated and wealthy man's demands upon the universe. It was, no doubt, a "rum do" — the rummest do that had ever befallen him. The mere sensation of being clean all over would have made it that, even apart from the crimson robe and the fact that his own mouth kept on uttering sounds he did not understand and without his own consent. But it was not by any means the first inexplicable thing that had been done to him.

Meanwhile, in the Objective Room, something like a crisis had developed between Mark and Professor Frost. As soon as they arrived there Mark saw that the table had been drawn back. On the floor lay a large crucifix, almost life-size, a work of art in the Spanish tradition, ghastly and realistic. "We have half an hour to pursue our exercises," said Frost, looking at his watch. Then he instructed Mark to trample on it and insult it in other ways.

Now, whereas Jane had abandoned Christianity in early childhood, along with her belief in fairies and Santa Claus, Mark had never believed in it at all. At this moment, therefore, it crossed his mind for the very first time that there might conceivably be something in it. Frost, who was watching him carefully, knew perfectly well that this might be the result of the present experiment. He knew it for the very good reason that his own training by the Macrobes had, at one point, suggested the same odd idea to himself. But he had no choice. Whether he wished it or not, this sort of thing was part of the initiation.

"But, look here," said Mark.

"What is it?" said Frost. "Pray be quick. We have only a limited time at our disposal."

“This,” said Mark, pointing with an undefined reluctance to the horrible white figure on the cross, “this is all surely a pure superstition.”

“Well?”

“Well, if so, what is their objective about stamping on the face? Isn’t it just as subjective to spit on a thing like this as to worship it? I mean — damn it all — if it’s only a bit of wood, why do anything about it?”

“That is superficial. If you had been brought up in a non-Christian society, you would not be asked to do this. Of course it is a superstition: but it is that particular superstition which has pressed upon our society for a great many centuries. It can be experimentally shown that it still forms a dominant system in the subconscious of many individuals whose conscious thought appears to be wholly liberated. An explicit action in the reverse direction is therefore a necessary step towards complete objectivity. It is not a question for *a priori* discussion. We find in practice that it cannot be dispensed with.”

Mark himself was surprised at the emotions he was undergoing. He did not regard the image with anything at all like a religious feeling. Most emphatically it did not belong to that idea of the Straight or Normal or Wholesome which had, for the last few days, been his support against what he now knew of the innermost circle at Belbury. The horrible vigour of its realism was, indeed, in its own way as remote from that Idea as anything else in the room. That was one source of his reluctance. To insult even a carved image of such agony seemed an abominable act. But it was not the only source. With the introduction of this Christian symbol the whole situation had somehow altered. The thing was becoming incalculable. His simple antithesis of the Normal and the Diseased had obviously failed to take something into account. Why was the crucifix there? Why were more than half the poison-pictures religious? He had the sense of new parties to the conflict — potential allies and enemies which he had not suspected before. “If I take a step in any direction,” he thought, “I may step over a precipice.” A donkey-like determination to plant hoofs and stay still at all costs arose in his mind.

“Pray make haste,” said Frost.

The quiet urgency of the voice and the fact that he had so often obeyed it before, almost conquered him. He was on the verge of obeying and getting the whole silly business over, when the defencelessness of the figure deterred him. The feeling was a very illogical one. Not because its hands

were nailed and helpless, but because they were only made of wood and therefore even more helpless, because the thing, for all its realism, was inanimate and could not in any way hit back, he paused. The unretaliating face of a doll — one of Myrtle's dolls — which he had pulled to pieces in boyhood had affected him in the same way, and the memory, even now, was tender to the touch.

"What are you waiting for, Mr. Studdock?" said Frost.

Mark was well aware of the rising danger. Obviously, if he disobeyed, his last chance of getting out of Belbury alive might be gone. Even of getting out of this room. The smothering sensation once again attacked him. He was himself, he felt, as helpless as the wooden Christ. As he thought this, he found himself looking at the crucifix in a new way — neither as a piece of wood nor a monument of superstition but as a bit of history. Christianity was nonsense, but one did not doubt that the man had lived and had been executed thus by the Belbury of those days. And that, as he suddenly saw, explained why this image, though not itself an image of the Straight or Normal, was yet in opposition to crooked Belbury. It was a picture of what happened when the Straight met the Crooked, a picture of what the Crooked did to the Straight — what it would do to him if he remained straight. It was, in a more emphatic sense than he had yet understood, a *cross*.

"Do you intend to go on with the training or not?" said Frost. His eye was on the time. He knew that those others were conducting their tour of inspection and that Jules must have very nearly reached Belbury. He knew that he might be interrupted at any moment. He had chosen this time for this stage in Mark's initiation partly in obedience to an unexplained impulse (such impulses grew more frequent with him every day), but partly because he wished, in the uncertain situation which had now arisen, to secure Mark at once. He and Wither and possibly (by now) Straik were the only full initiates in the N.I.C.E. On them lay the danger of making any false step in dealing with the man who claimed to be Merlin and with his mysterious interpreter. For him who took the right steps there was a chance of ousting all the others, of becoming to them what they were to the rest of the Institute and what the Institute was to the rest of England. He knew that Wither was waiting eagerly for any slip on his own part. Hence it seemed to him of the utmost importance to bring Mark as soon as possible beyond that point after which there is no return, and the disciple's allegiance both to the

Macrobes and to the teacher who has initiated him becomes a matter of psychological, or even physical, necessity.

"Do you not hear what I am saying?" he asked Mark again.

Mark made no reply. He was thinking, and thinking hard because he knew that if he stopped even for a moment mere terror of death would take the decision out of his hands. Christianity was a fable. It would be ridiculous to die for a religion one did not believe. This Man himself, on that very cross, had discovered it to be a fable, and had died complaining that the God in whom he trusted had forsaken him — had, in fact, found the universe a cheat. But this raised a question that Mark had never thought of before. Was *that* the moment at which to turn against the Man? If the universe was a cheat, was that a good reason for joining its side? Supposing the Straight was utterly powerless, always and everywhere certain to be mocked, tortured, and finally killed by the Crooked, what then? Why not go down with the ship? He began to be frightened by the very fact that his fears seemed to have momentarily vanished. They had been a safeguard . . . they had prevented him, all his life, from making mad decisions like that which he was now making as he turned to Frost and said, "It's all bloody nonsense, and I'm damned if I do any such thing."

When he said this he had no idea what might happen next. He did not know whether Frost would ring a bell or produce a revolver or renew his demands. In fact, Frost simply went on staring at him and he stared back. Then he saw that Frost was listening, and he began to listen himself. A moment later the door opened. The room seemed suddenly to be full of people — a man in a red gown (Mark did not instantly recognise the tramp) and the huge man in the black gown and Wither.

V

In the great drawing-room at Belbury a singularly uncomfortable party was by now assembled. Horace Jules, Director of the N.I.C.E., had arrived about half an hour before. They had shown him to the Deputy Director's study, but the Deputy Director was not there. Then they had shown him to his own rooms and hoped he would take a long time settling in. He took a very short time. In five minutes he was downstairs again and on their hands, and it was still much too early for anyone to go and dress. He was now standing with

his back to the fire drinking a glass of sherry and the principal members of the Institute were standing round him. Conversation was hanging fire.

Conversation with Mr. Jules was always difficult, because he insisted on regarding himself not as a figure-head but as the real director of the Institute, and even as the source of most of its ideas. And since, in fact, any science he knew was that taught him at the University of London over fifty years ago, and anything else he knew had been acquired from writers like Haeckel and Joseph McCabe and Winwood Reade, it was not, in fact, possible to talk to him about most of the things the Institute was really doing. One was always engaged in inventing answers to questions which were actually meaningless and expressing enthusiasm for ideas which were out of date and had been crude even in their prime. That was why the absence of the Deputy Director in such interviews was so disastrous, for Wither alone was master of a conversational style that exactly suited Jules.

Jules was a cockney. He was a very little man, whose legs were so short that he had unkindly been compared to a duck. He had a turned-up nose and a face in which some original *bonhomie* had been much interfered with by years of good living and conceit. His novels had first raised him to fame and affluence; later, as editor of the weekly called *We Want to Know* he had become such a power in the country that his name was really necessary to the N.I.C.E.

“And as I said to the Archbishop,” observed Jules, “you may not know, my lord, said I, that modern research shows the temple at Jerusalem to have been about the size of an English village church.”

“God!” said Feverstone to himself, where he stood silent on the fringes of the group.

“Have a little more sherry, Director,” said Miss Hardcastle.

“Well, I don’t mind if I do,” said Jules. “It’s not at all bad sherry, though I think I could tell you of a place where we could get something better. And how are you getting on, Miss Hardcastle, with your reforms of our penal system?”

“Making real headway,” she replied. “I think some modification of the Pellotoff method — —”

“What I always say,” remarked Jules, interrupting her, “is, why not treat crime like any other disease? I’ve no use for punishment. What you want to do is to put the man on the right lines — give him a fresh start — give him an interest in life. It’s all perfectly simple if you look at it from that point of

view. I dare say you've been reading a little address on the subject I gave at Northampton."

"I agreed with you," said Miss Hardcastle.

"That's right," said Jules. "I tell you who didn't, though. Old Hingest — and by the by, that was a queer business. You never caught the murderer, did you? But though I'm sorry for the old chap, I never did quite see eye to eye with him. Very last time I met him one or two of us were talking about juvenile offenders, and do you know what he said? He said, 'The trouble with these courts for young criminals nowadays is that they're always binding them over when they ought to be bending them over.' Not bad, was it? Still, as Wither said — and, by the way, where *is* Wither?"

"I think he should be here any moment now," said Miss Hardcastle; "I can't imagine why he's not."

"I think," said Filostrato, "he have a breakdown with his car. He will be very desolated, Mr. Director, not to have given you the welcome."

"Oh, he needn't bother about that," said Jules, "I never was one for any formality, though I did think he'd be here when I arrived. You're looking very well, Filostrato. I'm following your work with great interest. I look upon you as one of the makers of mankind."

"Yes, yes," said Filostrato, "that is the real business. Already we begin — —"

"I try to help you all I can on the non-technical side," said Jules. "It's a battle I've been fighting for years. The whole question of our sex-life. What I always say is that once you get the whole thing out into the open, you don't have any more trouble. It's all this Victorian secrecy which does the harm. Making a mystery of it, I want every boy and girl in the country — —"

"God!" said Feverstone to himself.

"Forgive me," said Filostrato, who, being a foreigner, had not yet despaired of trying to enlighten Jules. "But that is not precisely the point."

"Now, I know what you're going to say," interrupted Jules, laying a fat forefinger on the Professor's sleeve. "And I dare say you don't read my little paper. But, believe me, if you looked up the first number of last month you'd find a modest little editorial which a chap like you might overlook because it doesn't use any technical terms. But I ask you just to read it and see if it doesn't put the whole thing in a nutshell and in a way that the man in the street can understand."

At this moment the clock struck a quarter.

“I say,” asked Jules, “what time is this dinner at?” He liked banquets, and specially banquets at which he had to speak.

“At quarter to eight,” said Miss Hardcastle.

“You know,” said Jules, “this fellow Wither really ought to be here. I mean to say. I’m not particular, but I don’t mind telling you, between you and me, that I’m a bit hurt. It isn’t the kind of thing a chap expects, is it?”

“I hope nothing’s gone wrong with him,” said Miss Hardcastle.

“You’d hardly have thought he’d have gone out anywhere, not on a day like this,” said Jules.

“*Ecco*,” said Filostrato. “Someone come.”

It was indeed Wither who entered the room, followed by a company whom Jules had not expected to see, and Wither’s face had certainly good reason to look even more chaotic than usual. He had been bustled round his own institute as if he were a kind of footman. He had not even been allowed to have the supply of air turned on for the Head when they made him take them into the Head’s room. And “Merlin” (if it was Merlin) had ignored it. Worst of all, it had gradually become clear to him that this intolerable incubus and his interpreter fully intended to be present at dinner. No one could be more keenly aware than Wither of the absurdity of introducing to Jules a shabby old priest who couldn’t speak English, in charge of what looked like a somnambulist chimpanzee dressed up as a Doctor of Philosophy. To tell Jules the real explanation — even if he knew which was the real explanation — was out of the question. For Jules was a simple man to whom the word “medieval” meant only “savage” and in whom the word “magic” roused memories of *The Golden Bough*. It was a minor nuisance that ever since their visit to the Objective Room he had been compelled to have both Frost and Studdock in attendance. Nor did it mend matters that as they approached Jules, and all eyes were fixed upon them, the pseudo-Merlin collapsed into a chair, muttering, and closed his eyes.

“My dear Director,” began Wither, a little out of breath, “this is one of the happiest moments of my life. I hope your comfort has been in every way attended to. It has been most unfortunate that I was called away at the very moment when I was expecting your arrival. A remarkable coincidence . . . another very distinguished person has joined us at the very same moment. A foreigner . . .”

“Oh,” interrupted Jules in a slightly rasping voice, “who’s he?”

“Allow me,” said Wither, stepping a little to one side.

“Do you mean *that*?” said Jules. The supposed Merlin sat with his arms hanging down on each side of the chair, his eyes closed, his head on one side, and a weak smile on his face. “Is he drunk? Or ill? And who is he, anyway?”

“He is, as I was observing, a foreigner,” began Wither.

“Well, that doesn’t make him go to sleep the moment he is introduced to me, does it?”

“Hush!” said Wither, drawing Jules a little out of the group and lowering his voice. “There are circumstances — it would be very difficult to go into it here — I have been taken by surprise and would, if you had not been here already, have consulted you at the first possible moment. Our distinguished guest has just undertaken a very long journey and has, I admit, certain eccentricities, and . . .”

“But who is he?” persisted Jules.

“His name is . . . er . . . Ambrosius. Dr. Ambrosius, you know.”

“Never ‘eard of him,” snapped Jules. At another time he might not have made this admission, but the whole evening was turning out differently from his expectations and he was losing his temper.

“Very few of us have heard of him *yet*,” said Wither. “But everyone will have heard of him soon. That is why, without in the least . . .”

“And who’s *that*?” asked Jules, indicating the real Merlin. “He looks as if he were enjoying himself.”

“Oh, that is merely Dr. Ambrosius’s interpreter.”

“Interpreter? Can’t he talk English?”

“Unfortunately not. He lives rather in a world of his own.”

“And can’t you get anyone except a priest to act for him? I don’t like the look of that fellow. We don’t want that sort of thing here at all. Hullo! And who are *you*?”

The last question was addressed to Straik, who had at this moment thrust his way up to the Director. “Mr. Jules,” he said, fixing the latter with a prophetic eye, “I am the bearer of a message to you which you must hear. I — —”

“Shut up,” said Frost to Straik.

“Really, Mr. Straik, really,” said Wither. Between them they shouldered him aside.

“Now look ‘ere, Mr. Wither,” said Jules, “I tell you straight I’m very far from satisfied. Here’s *another* parson. I don’t remember the name of any such person coming before me, and it wouldn’t have got past me if it had done, see? You and I’ll have to have a very serious conversation. It seems to me you’ve been making appointments behind my back and turning the place into a kind of seminary. And that’s a thing I won’t stand. Nor will the British people.”

“I know. I know,” said Wither. “I understand your feelings exactly. You can rely on complete sympathy. I am eager and waiting to explain the situation to you. In the meantime, perhaps, as Dr. Ambrosius seems slightly overcome and the dressing-bell has just sounded . . . oh, I beg your pardon. This *is* Dr. Ambrosius.”

The tramp, to whom the real magician had recently turned, was now risen from his chair, and approaching. Jules held out his hand sulkily. The other, looking over Jules’s shoulder and grinning in an inexplicable fashion, seized it and shook it, as if absent-mindedly, some ten or fifteen times. His breath, Jules noticed, was strong and his grip horny. He was not liking Dr. Ambrosius. And he disliked even more the massive form of the interpreter towering over them both.

SIXTEEN

Banquet at Belbury

I

It was with great pleasure that Mark found himself once more dressing for dinner and what seemed likely to be an excellent dinner. He got a seat with Filostrato on his right and a rather inconspicuous newcomer on his left. Even Filostrato seemed human and friendly compared with the two initiates, and to the newcomer his heart positively warmed. He noticed with surprise that the tramp sat at the high table between Jules and Wither, but did not often look in that direction, for the tramp, catching his eye, had imprudently raised his glass and winked at him. The strange priest stood patiently behind the tramp's chair. For the rest, nothing of importance happened until the King's health had been drunk and Jules rose to make his speech.

For the first few minutes anyone glancing down the long tables would have seen what we always see on such occasions. There were the placid faces of elderly *bons viveurs* whom food and wine had placed in a contentment which no amount of speeches could violate. There were the patient faces of responsible but serious diners who had long since learned how to pursue their own thoughts while attending to the speech just enough to respond wherever a laugh or a low rumble of serious assent was obligatory. There was the usual fidgety expression on the faces of young men unappreciative of port and hungry for tobacco. There was bright over-elaborate attention on the powdered faces of women who knew their duty to society. But if you have gone on looking down the tables you would presently have seen a change. You would have seen face after face look up and turn in the direction of the speaker. You would have seen first curiosity, then fixed attention, then incredulity. Finally, you would have noticed that the room was utterly silent, without a cough or a creak, that every eye was fixed on Jules, and soon every mouth opened in something between fascination and horror.

To different members of the audience the change came differently. To Frost it began at the moment when he heard Jules end a sentence with the

words “as gross an anachronism as to trust to calvary for salvation in modern war.” *Cavalry* thought Frost almost aloud. Why couldn’t the fool mind what he was saying. The blunder irritated him extremely. Perhaps — but hullo! what was this? Had his hearing gone wrong? For Jules seemed to be saying that the future density of mankind depended on the implosion of the horses of Nature. “He’s drunk,” thought Frost. Then, crystal clear in articulation, beyond all possibility of mistake, came “The madrigore of verjuice must be talthibianised.”

Wither was slower to notice what was happening. He had never expected the speech to have any meaning as a whole and for a long time the familiar catchwords rolled on in a manner which did not disturb the expectation of his ear. He thought, indeed, that Jules was sailing very near the wind, that a very small false step would deprive both the speaker and the audience of even the power to pretend that he was saying anything in particular. But as long as that border was not crossed, he rather admired the speech; it was in his own line. Then he thought: “Come! That’s going too far. Even they must see that you can’t talk about accepting the challenge of the past by throwing down the gauntlet of the future.” He looked cautiously down the room. All was well. But it wouldn’t be if Jules didn’t sit down pretty soon. In that last sentence there were surely words he didn’t know. What the deuce did he mean by *aholibate*? He looked down the room again. They were attending too much, always a bad sign. Then came the sentence, “The surrogates esemplanted in a continual of porous variations.”

Mark did not at first attend to the speech at all. He had plenty of other things to think of. The appearance of this spouting popinjay at the very crisis of his own history was a mere interruption. He was too endangered and yet also, in some precarious way, too happy to bother about Jules. Once or twice some phrase caught his ear and made him want to smile. What first awoke him to the real situation was the behaviour of those who sat near him. He was aware of their increasing stillness. He noticed that everyone except himself had begun to attend. He looked up and saw their faces. And then first he really listened. “We shall not,” Jules was saying, “we shall not till we can secure the erebation of all prostundiary initems.” Little as he cared for Jules, a sudden shock of alarm pierced him. He looked round again. Obviously it was not he who was mad — they had all heard the gibberish. Except possibly the Tramp, who looked as solemn as a judge. He had never heard a speech from one of these real toffs before and would have

been disappointed if he could understand it. Nor had he ever before drunk vintage port, and though he did not much like the taste, he had been working away like a man.

Wither had not forgotten for a moment that there were reporters present. That in itself did not matter much. If anything unsuitable appeared in to-morrow's paper, it would be child's play for him to say that the reporters were drunk or mad and break them. On the other hand, he might let the story pass. Jules was in many respects a nuisance, and this might be as good an opportunity as any other for ending his career. But this was not the immediate question. Wither was wondering whether he should wait till Jules sat down or whether he should rise and interrupt him with a few judicious words. He did not want a scene. It would be better if Jules sat down of his own accord. At the same time there was by now an atmosphere in that crowded room which warned Wither not to delay too long. Glancing down at the second hand of his watch, he decided to wait two minutes more. Almost as he did so he knew that he had misjudged it. An intolerable falsetto laugh rang out from the bottom of the table and would not stop. Some fool of a woman had got hysterics. Immediately Wither touched Jules on the arm, signed to him with a nod, and rose.

"Eh? Blotcher bulldoo?" muttered Jules. But Wither, laying his hand on the little man's shoulder, quietly but with all his weight, forced him down into a sitting position. Then Wither cleared his throat. He knew how to do that so that every eye in the room turned immediately to look at him. The woman stopped screaming. People who had been sitting dead still in strained positions moved and relaxed. Wither looked down the room for a second or two in silence, feeling his grip on the audience. He saw that he already had them in hand. There would be no more hysterics. Then he began to speak.

They ought to have all looked more and more comfortable as he proceeded; and there ought soon to have been murmurs of grave regret for the tragedy which they had just witnessed. That was what Wither expected. What he actually saw bewildered him. The same too attentive silence which had prevailed during Jules's speech had returned. Bright unblinking eyes and open mouths greeted him in every direction. The woman began to laugh again — or no, this time it was two women. Cosser, after one frightened glance, jumped up, overturning his chair, and bolted from the room.

The Deputy Director could not understand this, for to him his own voice seemed to be uttering the speech he had resolved to make. But the audience heard him saying, “Tidies and fugleman — I sheel foor that we all — er — most steeply rebut the defensible, though, I trust, lavatory, Aspasia which gleams to have selected our redeemed inspector this deceiving. It would — ah — be shark, very shark, from anyone’s debenture . . .”

The woman who had laughed rose hastily from her chair. The man seated next to her heard her murmur in his ear, “Vood wooloo.” He took in the meaningless syllables and her unnatural expression at one moment. Both for some reason infuriated him. He rose to help her to move back her chair with one of those gestures of savage politeness which often, in modern society, serve instead of blows. He wrenched the chair, in fact, out of her hand. She screamed, tripped on a ruck in the carpet and fell. The man on the other side of her saw her fall and saw the first man’s expression of fury. “Bot are you blammit?” he roared, leaning towards him with a threatening movement. Four or five people in that part of the room were now up. They were shouting. At the same time there was movement elsewhere. Several of the younger men were making for the door. “Bundlemen, bundlemen,” said Wither sternly, in a much louder voice. He had often before, merely by raising his voice and speaking one authoritative word, reduced troublesome meetings to order.

But this time he was not even heard. At least twenty people present were at that very moment attempting to do the same thing. To each of them it seemed plain that things were just at that stage when a word or so of plain sense, spoken in a new voice, would restore the whole room to sanity. One thought of a sharp word, one of a joke, one of something very quiet and telling. As a result fresh gibberish in a great variety of tones rang out from several places at once. Frost was the only one of the leaders who attempted to say nothing. Instead, he had pencilled a few words on a slip of paper, beckoned to a servant, and made him understand by signs that it was to be given to Miss Hardcastle.

By the time the message was put into her hands the clamour was universal. To Mark it sounded like the noise of a crowded restaurant in a foreign country. Miss Hardcastle smoothed out the paper and stooped her head to read. The message ran: *Blunt frippers intantly to pointed bdeluroid. Purgent. Cost.* She crumpled it up in her hand.

Miss Hardcastle had known before she got the message that she was three parts drunk. She had expected and intended to be so: she knew that later on in the evening she would go down to the cells and do things. There was a new prisoner there — a little fluffy girl of the kind the Fairy enjoyed — with whom she could pass an agreeable hour. The tumult of gibberish did not alarm her: she found it exciting. Apparently Frost wanted her to take some action. She decided that she would. She rose and walked the whole length of the room to the door, locked it, put the key in her pocket, and then turned to survey the company. She noticed for the first time that neither the supposed Merlin nor the Basque priest were anywhere to be seen. Wither and Jules, both on their feet, were struggling with each other. She set out towards them.

So many people had now risen that it took her a long time to reach them. All semblance of a dinner-party had disappeared: it was more like the scene at a London terminus on a bank holiday. Everyone was trying to restore order, but everyone was unintelligible, and everyone, in the effort to be understood, was talking louder and louder. She shouted several times herself. She even fought a good deal before she reached her goal.

There came an ear-splitting noise and after that, at last, a few seconds of dead silence. Mark noticed first that Jules had been killed: only secondly that Miss Hardcastle had shot him. After that it was difficult to be sure what happened. The stampede and the shouting may have concealed a dozen reasonable plans for disarming the murderess, but it was impossible to concert them. Nothing came of them but kicking, struggling, leaping on tables and under tables, pressing on and pulling back, screams, breaking of glass. She fired again and again. It was the smell more than anything else which recalled the scene to Mark in later life: the smell of the shooting mixed with the sticky compound smell of blood and port and Madeira.

Suddenly the confusion of cries ran all together into one thin long-drawn noise of terror. Everyone had become *more* frightened. Something had darted very quickly across the floor between the two long tables and disappeared under one of them. Perhaps half the people present had not seen what it was — had only caught a gleam of black and tawny. Those who had seen it clearly could not tell the others: they could only point and scream meaningless syllables. But Mark had recognised it. It was a tiger.

For the first time that evening everybody realised how many hiding-places the room contained. The tiger might be under any of the tables. It

might be in any of the deep bay windows, behind the curtains. There was a screen across one corner of the room, too.

It is not to be supposed that even now none of the company kept their heads. With loud appeals to the whole room or with urgent whispers to their immediate neighbours they tried to stem the panic, to arrange an orderly retreat from the room, to indicate how the brute could be lured or scared into the open and shot. But the doom of gibberish frustrated all their efforts. They could not arrest the two movements which were going on. The majority had not seen Miss Hardcastle lock the door: they were pressing towards it, to get out at all costs: they would fight, they would kill if they could, rather than not reach the door. A large majority, on the other hand, knew that the door was locked. There must be another door, the one used by the servants, the one whereby the tiger had got in. They were pressing to the opposite end of the room to find it. The whole centre of the room was occupied by the meeting of these two waves — a huge football scrum, at first noisy with frantic efforts at explanation, but soon, as the struggle thickened, almost silent except for the sound of labouring breath, kicking or trampling feet, and meaningless muttering.

Four or five of these combatants lurched heavily against a table, pulling off the cloth in their fall and with it all the fruit-dishes, decanters, glasses, plates. Out of that confusion with a howl of terror broke the tiger. It happened so quickly that Mark hardly took it in. He saw the hideous head, the cat’s snarl of the mouth, the flaming eyes. He heard a shot — the last. Then the tiger had disappeared again. Something fat and white and bloodied was down among the feet of the scrummers. Mark could not recognise it at first, for the face, from where he stood, was upside down, and the grimaces disguised it until it was quite dead. Then he recognised Miss Hardcastle.

Wither and Frost were no longer to be seen. There was a growling close at hand. Mark turned, thinking he had located the tiger. Then he caught out of the corner of his eye a glimpse of something smaller and greyer. He thought it was an Alsatian. If so, the dog was mad. It ran along the table, its tail between its legs, slavering. A woman, standing with her back to the table, turned, saw it, tried to scream, next moment went down as the creature leaped at her throat. It was a wolf. “Ai — ai!!” squealed Filostrato, and jumped on the table. Something else had darted between his feet. Mark saw it streak across the floor and enter the scrum and wake that mass of

interlocked terror into new and frantic convulsions. It was some kind of snake.

Above the chaos of sounds which now awoke — there seemed to be a new animal in the room every minute — there came at last one sound in which those still capable of understanding could take comfort. *Thud — thud — thud*; the door was being battered from the outside. It was a huge folding door, a door by which a small locomotive could almost enter, for the room was made in imitation of Versailles. Already one or two of the panels were splintering. The noise maddened those who had made that door their goal. It seemed also to madden the animals. They did not stop to eat what they killed, or not more than to take one lick of the blood. There were dead and dying bodies everywhere by now, for the scrum was by this time killing as many as the beasts. And always from all sides went up the voices trying to shout to those beyond the door, “Quick! Quick! Hurry!” but shouting only nonsense. Louder and louder grew the noise at the door. As if in imitation a great gorilla leaped on the table where Jules had sat and began drumming on its chest. Then, with a roar, it jumped down into the crowd.

At last the door gave. Both wings gave. The passage, framed in the doorway, was dark. Out of the darkness there came a grey snaky something. It swayed in the air: then began methodically to break off the splintered wood on each side and make the doorway clear. Then Mark saw distinctly how it swooped down, curled itself round a man — Steele, he thought, but everyone looked different now — and lifted him bodily high off the floor. After that, monstrous, improbable, the huge shape of the elephant thrust its way into the room: its eyes enigmatic, its ears standing stiffly out like devil’s wings on each side of its head. It stood for a second with Steele writhing in the curl of its trunk and then dashed him to the floor. It trampled him. After that it raised head and trunk again and brayed horribly, then plunged straight forward into the room, trumpeting and trampling — continuously trampling like a girl treading grapes, heavily and soon wetly trampling in a pash of blood and bones, of flesh, wine, fruit, and sodden table-cloth. Something more than danger darted from the sight into Mark’s brain. The pride and insolent glory of the beast, the carelessness of its killings, seemed to crush his spirit even as its flat feet were crushing women and men. Here, surely, came the King of the world . . . then everything went black and he knew no more.

II

When Mr. Bultitude had come to his senses he had found himself in a dark place full of unfamiliar smells. This did not very greatly surprise or trouble him. He was inured to mystery. To poke his head into any spare bedroom at St. Anne's, as he sometimes managed to do, was an adventure no less remarkable than that which had now befallen him. And the smells here were, on the whole, promising. He perceived that food was in the neighbourhood and — more exciting still — a female of his own species. There were a great many other animals about too, apparently, but that was rather irrelevant than alarming. He decided to go and find both the female bear and the food. It was then he discovered that walls met him in three directions and bars in the fourth: he could not get out. This, combined with an inarticulate want for the human companionship to which he was accustomed, gradually plunged him into depression. Sorrow such as only animals know — huge seas of disconsolate emotion with not one little raft of reason to float on — drowned him fathoms deep. In his own fashion he lifted up his voice and wept.

And yet, not very far away from him, another, and human, captive was almost equally engulfed. Mr. Maggs, seated in a little white cell, chewed steadily on his great sorrow as only a simple man can chew. An educated man in his circumstances would have found misery streaked with reflection; would have been thinking how this new idea of cure instead of punishment, so humane in seeming, had in fact deprived the criminal of all rights and by taking away the *name* punishment made the *thing* infinite. But Mr. Maggs thought all the time simply of one thing: that this was the day he had counted on all through his sentence, that he had expected by this time to be having his tea at home with Ivy (she'd have got something tasty for him the first night) and that it hadn't happened. He sat quite still. About once in every two minutes a single large tear trickled down his cheek. He wouldn't have minded so much if they'd let him have a packet of fags.

It was Merlin who brought release to both. He had left the dining-room as soon as the curse of Babel was well fixed upon the enemies. No one had seen him go. Wither had once heard his voice calling loud and intolerably glad above the riot of nonsense, "*Qui Verbum Dei contempserunt, eis auferetur etiam Verbum hominis*" ("They that have despised the Word of God, from them shall the word of man also be taken away"). After that he

did not see him again, nor the tramp either. Merlin had gone and spoiled his house. He had liberated beasts and men. The animals that were already maimed he killed with an instantaneous motion of the powers that were in him, swift and painless as the mild shafts of Artemis. To Mr. Maggs he had handed a written message. It ran as follows:

"DEAREST TOM, — I do hope your well and the Director here is one of the right sort and he says to come as quick as you can to the Manor at St. Anne's. And dont go through Edgestow Tom whatever you do but come any way you can I should think someone had give you a Lift. Everything is all-right no more now. Lots of love ever your own IVY."

The other prisoners he let go where they pleased. The tramp, finding Merlin's back turned on him for a second, and having noticed that the house seemed to be empty, made his escape, first into the kitchen and thence, reinforced with all the edibles his pockets would hold, into the wide world. I have not been able to trace him further.

The beasts, except for one donkey who disappeared about the same time as the tramp, Merlin sent to the dining-room, maddened with his voice and touch. But he retained Mr. Bultitude. The latter had recognised him at once as the same man whom he had sat beside in the Blue Room: less sweet and sticky than on that occasion, but recognisably the same. Even without the brilliantine there was that in Merlin which exactly suited the bear and at their meeting it "made him all the cheer that a beast can make a man." He laid his hand on its head and whispered in its ear, and its dark mind was filled with excitement as though some long forbidden and forgotten pleasure were suddenly held out to it. Down the long, empty passages of Belbury it padded behind them. Saliva dripped from its mouth and it was beginning to growl. It was thinking of warm, salt tastes, of the pleasant resistances of bone, of things to crunch and lick and worry.

III

Mark felt himself shaken; then the cold shock of water dashed in his face. With difficulty he sat up. The room was empty except for the bodies of the distorted dead. The unmoved electric light glared down on hideous confusion — food and filth, spoiled luxury and mangled men, each more hideous by reason of the other. It was the supposed Basque priest who had roused him. *Surge, miselle* ("Get up, wretched boy"), he said, helping Mark

to his feet. Mark rose; he had some cuts and bruises and his head ached, but he was substantially uninjured. The man held out to him wine in one of the great silver cups, but Mark turned away from it with a shudder. He looked with bewilderment on the face of the stranger and found that a letter was being put into his hand. “Your wife awaits you,” it ran, “at the Manor at St. Anne’s on the Hill. Come quickly by road as best you can. Do not go near Edgestow. — A. DENNISTON.” He looked again at Merlin and thought his face terrible. But Merlin met his glance with a look of unsmiling authority, laid a hand on his shoulder, and impelled him over all the tinkling and slippery havoc to the door. His fingers sent a prickly sensation through Mark’s skin. He was led down to the cloakroom, made to fling on a coat and hat (neither were his own) and thence out under the stars, bitter cold and two o’clock in the morning, Sirius bitter green, a few flakes of dry snow beginning to fall. He hesitated. The stranger stood back from him for a second, then, with his open hand, struck him on the back; Mark’s bones ached at the memory as long as he lived. Next moment he found himself running as he had never run since boyhood; not in fear, but because his legs would not stop. When he became master of them again he was half a mile from Belbury, and looking back he saw a light in the sky.

IV

Wither was not among those killed in the dining-room. He naturally knew all the possible ways out of the room, and even before the coming of the tiger he had slipped away. He understood what was happening, if not perfectly, yet better than anyone else. He saw that the Basque interpreter had done the whole thing. And, by that, he knew also that powers more than human had come down to destroy Belbury; only one in the saddle of whose soul rode Mercury himself could thus have unmade language. And this again told him something worse. It meant that his own dark Masters had been completely out in their calculations. They had talked of a barrier which made it impossible that powers from Deep Heaven should reach the surface of the Earth: had assured him that nothing from outside could pass the Moon’s orbit. All their polity was based on the belief that Tellus was blockaded, beyond the reach of such assistance and left (as far as that went) to their mercy and his. Therefore he knew that everything was lost.

It is incredible how little this knowledge moved him. It could not, because he had long ceased to believe in knowledge itself. What had been in his far-off youth a merely aesthetic repugnance to realities that were crude or vulgar, had deepened and darkened, year after year, into a fixed refusal of everything that was in any degree other than himself. He had passed from Hegel into Hume, thence through Pragmatism, and thence through Logical Positivism, and out at last into the complete void. The indicative mood now corresponded to no thought that his mind could entertain. He had willed with his whole heart that there should be no reality and no truth, and now even the imminence of his own ruin could not wake him. The last scene of *Dr. Faustus* where the man raves and implores on the edge of Hell is, perhaps, stage fire. The last moments before damnation are not often so dramatic. Often the man knows with perfect clarity that some still possible action of his own will could yet save him. But he cannot make this knowledge real to himself. Some tiny habitual sensuality, some resentment too trivial to waste on a blue-bottle, the indulgence of some fatal lethargy, seems to him at that moment more important than the choice between total joy and total destruction. With eyes wide open, seeing that the endless terror is just about to begin and yet (for the moment) unable to feel terrified, he watches passively, not moving a finger for his own rescue, while the last links with joy and reason are severed, and drowsily sees the trap close upon his soul. So full of sleep are they at the time when they leave the right way.

Straik and Filostrato were also still alive. They met in one of the cold, lighted passages, so far away from the dining-room that the noise of the carnage was but a faint murmur. Filostrato was hurt, his right arm badly mauled. They did not speak — both knew that the attempt would be useless — but walked on side by side. Filostrato was intending to get round to the garage by a back way: he thought that he might still be able to drive, in a fashion, at least as far as Sterk.

As they rounded a corner they both saw what they had often seen before but had expected never to see again — the Deputy Director, stooped, creaking, pacing, humming his tune. Filostrato did not want to go with him, but Wither, as if noticing his wounded condition, offered him an arm. Filostrato tried to decline it: nonsense syllables came from his mouth. Wither took his left arm firmly; Straik seized the other, the mauled arm. Squealing and shivering with pain, Filostrato accompanied them perforce.

But worse awaited him. He was not an initiate, he knew nothing of the Dark Eldils. He believed that his skill had really kept Alcasan's brain alive. Hence, even in his pain, he cried out with horror when he found the other two drawing him through the ante-room of the Head and into the Head's presence without pausing for any of those antiseptic preparations which he had always imposed on his colleagues. He tried vainly to tell them that one moment of such carelessness might undo all his work. But this time it was in the room itself that his conductors began undressing. And this time they took off all their clothes.

They plucked off his, too. When the right sleeve, stiff with blood, would not move, Wither got a knife from the ante-room and ripped it. In the end, the three men stood naked before the Head — gaunt, big-boned Straik, Filostrato a wobbling mountain of fat, Wither an obscene senility. Then the high ridge of terror from which Filostrato was never again to descend, was reached; for what he thought impossible began to happen. No one had read the dials, adjusted the pressures, or turned on the air and the artificial saliva. Yet words came out of the dry gaping mouth of the dead man's head. "Adore!" it said.

Filostrato felt his companions forcing his body forwards, then up again, then forwards and downwards a second time. He was compelled to bob up and down in rhythmic obeisance, the others meanwhile doing the same. Almost the last thing he saw on earth was the skinny folds on Wither's neck shaking like the wattles of a turkey-cock. Almost the last thing he heard was Wither beginning to chant. Then Straik joined in. Then, horribly, he found he was singing himself —

"Ouroborindra!
Ouroborindra!
Ouroborindra ba-ba-hee!"

But not for long. "Another," said the voice, "give me another head." Filostrato knew at once why they were forcing him to a certain place in the wall. He had devised it all himself. In the wall that separated the Head's room from the ante-chamber there was a little shutter. When drawn back it revealed a window in the wall, and a sash to that window which could fall quickly and heavily. But the sash was a knife. The little guillotine had not been meant to be used like this! They were going to murder him uselessly,

unscientifically! If he were doing it to one of them, all would have been different; everything would have been prepared weeks beforehand — the temperature of both rooms exactly right, the blade sterilised, the attachments all ready to be made almost before the head was severed. He had even calculated what changes the terror of the victim would probably make in his blood-pressure: the artificial blood-stream would be arranged accordingly, so as to take over its work with the least possible breach of continuity. His last thought was that he had underestimated the terror.

The two initiates, red from top to toe, gazed at each other, breathing heavily. Almost before the fat dead legs and buttocks of the Italian had ceased quivering, they were driven to begin the ritual again —

“Ouroborindra!
Ouroborindra!
Ouroborindra ba-ba-hee!”

The same thought struck both of them at one moment— “It will ask for another.” And Straik remembered that Wither had that knife. He wrenched himself free from the rhythm with a frightful effort: claws seemed to be tearing his chest from inside. Wither saw what he meant to do. As Straik bolted, Wither was already after him. Straik reached the ante-room, slipped in Filostrato’s blood. Wither slashed repeatedly with his knife. He had not strength to cut through the neck, but he had killed the man. He stood up, pains gnawing at his old man’s heart. Then he saw the Italian’s head lying on the floor. It seemed to him good to pick it up and carry it into the inner room: show it to the original Head. He did so. Then he realised that something was moving in the ante-room. Could it be that they had not shut the outer door? He could not remember. They had come in, forcing Filostrato along between them: it was possible . . . everything had been so abnormal. He put down his burden — carefully, almost courteously, even now — and stepped towards the door between the two rooms. Next moment he drew back. A great bear, rising to its hind legs as he came in sight of it, had met him in the doorway — its mouth open, its eyes flaming, its forepaws spread out as if for an embrace. Was this what Straik had become? He knew (though even now he could not attend to it) that he was on the very frontier of a world where such things could happen.

V

No one at Belbury that night had been cooler than Feverstone. He was neither an initiate like Wither nor a dupe like Filostrato. He knew about the Macrobes, but it wasn't the sort of thing he was interested in. He knew that the Belbury scheme might not work, but he knew that if it didn't he would get out in time. He had a dozen lines of retreat kept open. He had also a perfectly clear conscience and had played no tricks with his mind. He had never slandered another man except to get his job, never cheated except because he wanted money, never really disliked people unless they bored him. He saw at a very early stage that something was going wrong. One had to guess how far wrong. Was this the end of Belbury? If so, he must get back to Edgestow and work up the position he had already prepared for himself as the protector of the University against the N.I.C.E. On the other hand, if there were any chance of figuring as the man who had saved Belbury at a moment of crisis, that would be definitely the better line. He would wait as long as it was safe. And he waited a long time. He found a hatch through which hot dishes were passed from the kitchen passage into the dining-room. He got through it and watched the scene. His nerves were excellent, and he thought he could pull and bolt the shutter in time if any dangerous animal made for the hatch. He stood there during the whole massacre, his eyes bright, something like a smile on his face, smoking endless cigarettes and drumming with his hard fingers on the sill of the hatch. When it was all over he said to himself, "Well, I'm damned!" It had certainly been a most extraordinary show.

The beasts had all streaked away somewhere. He knew there was a chance of meeting one or two of them in the passages, but he'd have to risk that. Danger — in moderation — acted on him like a tonic. He worked his way to the back of the house and into the garage; it looked as if he must go to Edgestow at once. He could not find his car in the garage — indeed, there were far fewer cars than he had expected. Apparently several other people had had the idea of getting away while the going was good, and his own car had been stolen. He felt no resentment, and set about finding another of the same make. It took him a longish time, and when he had found one he had considerable difficulty in starting her up. The night was cold — going to snow, he thought. He scowled, for the first time that night: he hated snow. It was after two o'clock when he got going.

Just before he started he had the odd impression that someone had got into the back of the car behind him. “Who’s that?” he asked sharply. He decided to get out and see. But to his surprise his body did not obey this decision: instead it drove the car out of the garage and round to the front and out into the road. The snow was definitely falling by now. He found he could not turn his head and could not stop driving. He was going ridiculously fast, too, in this damned snow. He had no choice. He’d often heard of cars being driven from the back seat, but now it seemed to be really happening. Then to his dismay he found he had left the road. The car, still at a reckless speed, was bumping and leaping along what was called Gipsy Lane or (by the educated) Wayland Street — the old Roman Road from Belbury to Edgestow, all grass and ruts. “Here! What the devil am I doing?” thought Feverstone. “Am I tight? I’ll break my neck at this game if I don’t look out!” But on the car went as if driven by one who regarded this track as an excellent road and the obvious route to Edgestow.

VI

Frost had left the dining-room a few minutes after Wither. He did not know where he was going or what he was about to do. For many years he had theoretically believed that all which appears in the mind as motive or intention is merely a by-product of what the body is doing. But for the last year or so — since he had been initiated — he had begun to taste as fact what he had long held as theory. Increasingly, his actions had been without motive. He did this and that, he said thus and thus, and did not know why. His mind was a mere spectator. He could not understand why that spectator should exist at all. He resented its existence, even while assuring himself that resentment also was merely a chemical phenomenon. The nearest thing to a human passion which still existed in him was a sort of cold fury against all who believed in the mind. There was no tolerating such an illusion! There were not, and must not be, such things as men. But never, until this evening, had he been quite so vividly aware that the body and its movements were the only reality, that the self which seemed to watch the body leaving the dining-room and setting out for the chamber of the Head, was a nonentity. How infuriating that the body should have power thus to project a phantom self!

Thus the Frost whose existence Frost denied watched his body go into the ante-room, watched it pull up sharply at the sight of a naked and bloodied corpse. The chemical reaction called shock, occurred. Frost stooped, turned the body over, and recognised Straik. A moment later his flashing pince-nez and pointed beard looked into the room of the Head itself. He hardly noticed that Wither and Filostrato lay there dead. His attention was fixed by something more serious. The bracket where the Head ought to have been was empty: the metal ring twisted, the rubber tubes tangled and broken. Then he noticed a head on the floor: stooped and examined it. It was Filostrato's. Of Alcasan's head he found no trace, unless some mess of broken bones beside Filostrato's were it.

Still not asking what he would do, or why, Frost went to the garage. The whole place was silent and empty; the snow was thick on the ground by this. He came up with as many petrol tins as he could carry. He piled all the inflammables he could think of together in the Objective Room. Then he locked himself in by locking the outer door of the ante-room. Whatever it was that dictated his actions then compelled him to push the key into the speaking-tube which communicated with the passage. When he had pushed it as far in as his fingers could reach, he took a pencil from his pocket and pushed with that. Presently he heard the clink of the key falling on the passage floor outside. That tiresome illusion, his consciousness, was screaming in protest: his body, even had he wished, had no power to attend to those screams. Like the clockwork figure he had chosen to be, his stiff body, now terribly cold, walked back into the Objective Room, poured out the petrol and threw a lighted match into the pile. Not till then did his controllers allow him to suspect that death itself might not after all cure the illusion of being a soul — nay, might prove the entry into a world where that illusion raged infinite and unchecked. Escape for the soul, if not for the body, was offered him. He became able to know (and simultaneously refused the knowledge) that he had been wrong from the beginning, that souls and personal responsibility existed. He half saw: he wholly hated. The physical torture of the burning was hardly fiercer than his hatred of that. With one supreme effort he flung himself back into his illusion. In that attitude eternity overtook him as sunrise in old tales overtakes trolls and turns them into unchangeable stone.

SEVENTEEN

Venus at St. Anne's

I

Daylight came with no visible sunrise as Mark was climbing to the highest ground in his journey. The white road, still virgin of human traffic, showed the footprints of here and there a bird and here and there a rabbit, for the snow-shower was just then coming to its end in a flurry of larger and slower flakes. A big lorry, looking black and warm in that landscape, overtook him. The man put out his head. "Going Birmingham way, mate?" he asked.

"Roughly," said Mark. "At least I'm going to St. Anne's."

"Where's that, then?" said the driver.

"Up on the hill behind Pennington," said Mark.

"Ah," said the man, "I could take you to the corner. Save you a bit."

Mark got in beside him.

It was mid-morning when the man dropped him at a corner beside a little country hotel. The snow had all lain and there was more in the sky and the day was extremely silent. Mark went into the little hotel and found a kind elderly landlady. He had a hot bath and a capital breakfast, and then went to sleep in a chair before a roaring fire. He did not wake till about four. He reckoned he was only a few miles from St. Anne's, and decided to have tea before he set out. He had tea. At the landlady's suggestion he had a boiled egg with his tea. Two shelves in the little sitting-room were filled with bound volumes of *The Strand*. In one of these he found a serial children's story which he had begun to read as a child, but abandoned because his tenth birthday came when he was half-way through it and he was ashamed to read it after that. Now, he chased it from volume to volume till he had finished it. It was good. The grown-up stories to which, after his tenth birthday, he had turned instead of it, now seemed to him, except for *Sherlock Holmes*, to be rubbish. "I suppose I must get on soon," he said to himself.

His slight reluctance to do so did not proceed from weariness — he felt, indeed, perfectly rested and better than he had felt for several weeks — but from a sort of shyness. He was going to see Jane: and Denniston: and

(probably) the Dimbles as well. In fact, he was going to see Jane in what he now felt to be her proper world. But not his. For he now thought that with all his lifelong eagerness to reach an inner circle he had chosen the *wrong* circle. Jane was where she belonged. He was going to be admitted only out of kindness, because Jane had been fool enough to marry him. He did not resent it, but he felt shy. He saw himself as this new circle must see him — as one more little vulgarian, just like the Steeles and the Cossers, dull, inconspicuous, frightened, calculating, cold. He wondered vaguely why he was like that. How did other people — people like Denniston or Dimble — find it so easy to saunter through the world with all their muscles relaxed and a careless eye roving the horizon, bubbling over with fancy and humour, sensitive to beauty, not continually on their guard and not needing to be? What was the secret of that fine, easy laughter which he could not by any efforts imitate? Everything about them was different. They could not even fling themselves into chairs without suggesting by the very posture of their limbs a certain lordliness, a leonine indolence. There was elbow-room in their lives, as there had never been in his. They were Hearts: he was only a Spade. Still, he must be getting on. . . . Of course, Jane was a Heart. He must give her her freedom. It would be quite unjust to think that his love for her had been basely sensual. Love, Plato says, is the son of Want. Mark's body knew better than his mind had known till recently, and even his sensual desires were the true index of something which he lacked and Jane had to give. When she had first crossed the dry and dusty world which his mind inhabited she had been like a spring shower; in opening himself to it he had not been mistaken. He had gone wrong only in assuming that marriage, by itself, gave him either power or title to appropriate that freshness. As he now saw, one might as well have thought one could buy a sunset by buying the field from which one had seen it.

He rang the bell and asked for his bill.

II

That same afternoon Mother Dimble and the three girls were upstairs in the big room which occupied nearly the whole top floor of one wing at the Manor, and which the Director called the Wardrobe. If you had glanced in you would have thought for one moment that they were not in a room at all but in some kind of forest — a tropical forest glowing with bright colours.

A second glance and you might have thought they were in one of those delightful upper rooms at a big shop where carpets standing on end and rich stuffs hanging from the roof make a kind of woven forest of their own. In fact, they were standing amidst a collection of robes of state — dozens of robes which hung, each separate, from its little pillar of wood.

"That would do beautifully for you, Ivy," said Mother Dimble, lifting with one hand the fold of a vividly green mantle over which thin twists and spirals of gold played in a festive pattern. "Come, Ivy," she continued, "don't you like it? You're not still fretting about Tom, are you? Hasn't the Director told you he'll be here to-night or to-morrow midday at the latest?"

Ivy looked at her with troubled eyes.

"'Tisn't that," she said. "Where'll the Director himself be?"

"But you can't want him to stay, Ivy," said Camilla, "not in continual pain. And his work will be done — if all goes well at Edgestow."

"He has longed to go back to Perelandra," said Mother Dimble. "He's — sort of home-sick. Always, always . . . I could see it in his eyes."

"Will that Merling man come back here?" asked Ivy.

"I don't think so," said Jane. "I don't think either he or the Director expected him to. And then my dream last night. It looked as if he was on fire . . . I don't mean burning, you know, but light — all sorts of lights in the most curious colours shooting out of him and running up and down him. That was the last thing I saw: Merlin standing there like a kind of pillar and all those dreadful things happening all round him. And you could see in his face that he was a man used up to the last drop, if you know what I mean — that he'd fall to pieces the moment the powers let him go."

"We're not getting on with choosing our dresses for to-night."

"What is it made of?" said Camilla, fingering and then smelling the green mantle. It was a question worth asking. It was not in the least transparent, yet all sorts of lights and shades dwelled in its rippling folds, and it flowed through Camilla's hands like a waterfall. Ivy became interested.

"Gor!" she said, "however much a yard would it be?"

"There," said Mother Dimble as she draped it skilfully round Ivy. Then she said "Oh!" in genuine amazement. All three stood back from Ivy, staring at her with delight. The commonplace had not exactly gone from her form and face: the robe had taken it up, as a great composer takes up a folk-tune and tosses it like a ball through his symphony and makes of it a

marvel, yet leaves it still itself. A “pert fairy” or “dapper elf,” a small though perfect sprightliness, stood before them: but still recognisably Ivy Maggs.

“Isn’t that like a man!” exclaimed Mrs. Dimble. “There’s not a mirror in the room.”

“I don’t believe we were meant to see ourselves,” said Jane. “He said something about being mirrors enough to one another.”

“I would just like to see what I’m like at the back,” said Ivy.

“Now, Camilla,” said Mother Dimble, “there’s no puzzle about you. This is obviously your one.”

“Oh, do you think *that* one?” said Camilla.

“Yes, of course,” said Jane.

“You’ll look ever so nice in that,” said Ivy.

It was a long slender thing which looked like steel in colour, though it was soft as foam to the touch. It wrapped itself close about her loins and flowed out in a glancing train at her heels. “Like a mermaid,” thought Jane: and then “Like a Valkyrie.”

“I’m afraid,” said Mother Dimble, “you must wear a coronet with that one.”

“Wouldn’t that be rather . . . ?”

But Mother Dimble was already setting it on her head. That reverence (it need have nothing to do with money value) which nearly all women feel for jewellery hushed three of them for a moment. There were, perhaps, no such diamonds in England. The splendour was fabulous, preposterous.

“What are you all staring at?” asked Camilla, who had seen but one flash as the crown was raised in Mrs. Dimble’s hands and did not know that she stood “like starlight, in the spoils of provinces.”

“Are they real?” said Ivy.

“Where did they come from, Mother Dimble?” asked Jane.

“Treasure of Logres, dears, treasure of Logres,” said Mrs. Dimble. “Perhaps from beyond the Moon or before the flood. Now, Jane.”

Jane could see nothing specially appropriate in the robe which the others agreed in putting on her. Blue was, indeed, her colour, but she thought of something a little more austere and dignified. Left to her own judgement, she would have called this a little “fussy.” But when she saw the others all clap their hands, she submitted. Indeed, it did not now occur to her to do

otherwise, and the whole matter was forgotten a moment later in the excitement of choosing a robe for Mother Dimble.

“Something quiet,” she said. “I’m an old woman and I don’t want to be ridiculous.”

“This wouldn’t do at all,” said Camilla, walking down the long row of hanging splendours, herself like a meteor as she passed against that background of purple and gold and scarlet and soft snow and elusive opal, of fur, silk, velvet, taffeta, and brocade. “That’s lovely,” she said, “but not for you. And oh! — look at that. But it wouldn’t do. I don’t see anything . . .”

“Here! Oh, do come and look! Come here,” cried Ivy, as if she were afraid her discovery would run away unless the others attended to it quickly.

“Oh! Yes, yes, indeed,” said Jane.

“Certainly,” said Camilla.

“Put it on, Mother Dimble,” said Ivy. “You know you got to.” It was of that almost tyrannous flame colour which Jane had seen in her vision down in the lodge, but differently cut, with fur about the great copper brooch that clasped the throat, with long sleeves and hangings from them. And there went with it a many-cornered cap. And they had no sooner clasped the robe than all were astonished, none more than Jane, though indeed she had had best reason to foresee the result. For now this provincial wife of a rather obscure scholar, this respectable and barren woman with grey hair and double chin, stood before her, not to be mistaken, as a kind of priestess or sybil, the servant of some prehistoric goddess of fertility — an old tribal matriarch, mother of mothers, grave, formidable, and august. A long staff, curiously carved as if a snake twined up it, was apparently part of the costume: they put it in her hand.

“Am I awful?” said Mother Dimble, looking in turn at the three silent faces.

“You look lovely,” said Ivy.

“It is exactly right,” said Camilla.

Jane took up the old lady’s hand and kissed it. “Darling,” she said, “*aweful*, in the old sense, is just what you *do* look.”

“What are the men going to wear?” asked Camilla suddenly.

“*They* can’t very well go in fancy dress, can they?” said Ivy. “Not if they’re cooking and bringing things in and out all the time. And I must say if this is to be the last night and all I do think we ought to have done the

dinner, anyway. Let them do as they like about the wine. And what they'll do with that goose is more than I like to think, because I don't believe that Mr. MacPhee ever roasted a bird in his life, whatever he says."

"They can't spoil the oysters, anyway," said Camilla.

"That's right," said Ivy. "Nor the plum pudding, not really. Still, I'd like just to go down and take a look."

"You'd better not," said Jane with a laugh. "You know what he's like when he's in charge in the kitchen."

"I'm not afraid of *him*," said Ivy, almost, but not quite, putting out her tongue. And in her present dress the gesture was not uncomely.

"You needn't be in the least worried about the dinner, girls," said Mother Dimble. "He will do it very well. Always provided he and my husband don't get into a philosophical argument just when they ought to be dishing up. Let's go and enjoy ourselves. How very warm it is in here."

"'s lovely," said Ivy.

At that moment the whole room shook from end to end.

"What on earth's that?" said Jane.

"If the war was still on I'd have said it was a bomb," said Ivy.

"Come and look," said Camilla, who had regained her composure sooner than any of the others and was now at the window which looked west towards the valley of the Wynd. "Oh, look!" she said again. "No. It's not fire. And it's not searchlights. And it's not forked lightning. Ugh! . . . there's another shock. And there . . . Look at that. It's as bright as day there beyond the church. What am I talking about, it's only three o'clock. It's brighter than day. And the heat!"

"It has begun," said Mother Dimble.

III

At about the same time that morning when Mark had climbed into the lorry, Feverstone, not much hurt but a good deal shaken, climbed out of the stolen car. That car had ended its course upside down in a deep ditch, and Feverstone, always ready to look on the bright side, reflected as he extricated himself that things might have been worse — it might have been his own car. The snow was deep in the ditch and he was very wet. As he stood up and looked about him he saw that he was not alone. A tall and massive figure in a black cassock was before him, about five yards distant.

Its back was towards him, and it was already walking steadily away. “Hi!” shouted Feverstone. The other turned and looked at him in silence for a second or two; then it resumed its walk. Feverstone felt at once that this was not the sort of man he would get on with — in fact he had never liked the look of anyone less. Nor could he, in his broken and soaking pumps, follow the four-mile-an-hour stride of those booted feet. He did not attempt it. The black figure came to a gate, there stopped and made a whinnying noise. He was apparently talking to a horse across the gate. Next moment (Feverstone did not quite see how it happened) the man was over the gate and on the horse’s back and off at a canter across a wide field that rose milk-white to the sky-line.

Feverstone had no idea where he was, but clearly the first thing to do was to reach a road. It took him much longer than he expected. It was not freezing now and deep puddles lay hidden beneath the snow in many places. At the bottom of the first hill he came to such a morass that he was driven to abandon the track of the Roman road and try striking across the fields. The decision was fatal. It kept him for two hours looking for gaps in hedges and trying to reach things that looked like roads from a distance but turned out to be nothing of the sort when one reached them. He had always hated the country and always hated weather, and he was not at any time fond of walking.

Near twelve o’clock he found a road with no signposts that led him an hour later into a main road. Here, thank heavens, there was a fair amount of traffic, both cars and pedestrians, all going one way. The first three cars took no notice of his signals. The fourth stopped. “Quick. In you get,” said the driver.

“Going to Edgestow?” asked Feverstone, his hand on the door.

“Good Lord, no!” said the other. “*There’s* Edgestow!” (and he pointed behind him)— “if you want to go *there*.” The man seemed surprised and considerably excited.

In the end there was nothing for it but walking. Every vehicle was going away from Edgestow, none going towards it. Feverstone was a little surprised. He knew all about the exodus (indeed, it had been part of his plan to clear the city as far as possible), but he had supposed it would be over by now. But all that afternoon as he splashed and slipped through the churned snow, the fugitives were still passing him. We have, naturally, hardly any first-hand evidence for what happened in Edgestow that afternoon and

evening. But we have plenty of stories as to how so many people came to leave it at the last moment. They filled the papers for weeks and lingered in private talks for months, and in the end became a joke. “No, I *don’t* want to hear how you got out of Edgestow” came to be a catch phrase. But behind all the exaggerations there remains the undoubted truth that a quite astonishing number of citizens left the town just in time. One had had a message from a dying father; another had decided quite suddenly, and he couldn’t just say why, to go and take a little holiday: another went because the pipes in his house had been burst by the frost and he thought he might as well go away till they were put right. Not a few had gone because of some trivial event which seemed to them an omen — a dream, a broken looking-glass, tea-leaves in a cup. Omens of a more ancient kind had also revived during this crisis. One had heard his donkey, another her cat, say “as clear as clear,” “*Go away.*” And hundreds were still leaving for the old reason — because their houses had been taken from them, their livelihood destroyed, and their liberties threatened by the Institutional Police.

It was at about four o’clock that Feverstone found himself flung on his face. That was the first shock. They continued, increasing in frequency, during the hours that followed — horrible shudderings, and soon heavings, of the earth, and a growing murmur of widespread subterranean noise. The temperature began to rise. Snow was disappearing in every direction and at times he was knee-deep in water. Haze from the melting snow filled the air. When he reached the brow of the last steep descent into Edgestow he could see nothing of the city: only fog through which extraordinary coruscations of light came up to him. Another shock sent him sprawling. He now decided not to go down: he would turn and follow the traffic — work over to the railway line and try to get to London. The picture of a steaming bath at his club, of himself on the fender of the smoking-room telling this whole story, rose in his mind. It would be something to have survived both Belbury and Bracton. He had survived a good many things in his day and believed in his luck.

He was already a few paces down the hill when he made this decision, and he turned at once. But instead of going up he found he was still descending. As if he were in shale on a mountain slope, instead of on a metalled road, the ground slipped away backwards where he trod on it. When he arrested his descent he was thirty yards lower. He began again. This time he was flung off his feet, rolled head over heels, stones, earth,

grass, and water pouring over him and round him in riotous confusion. It was as when a great wave overtakes you while you are bathing, but this time it was an earth wave. He got to his feet once again; set his face to the hill. Behind him the valley seemed to have turned into Hell. The pit of fog had been ignited and burned with blinding violet flame, water was roaring somewhere, buildings crashing, mobs shouting. The hill in front of him was in ruins — no trace of road, hedge, or field, only a cataract of loose raw earth. It was also far steeper than it had been. His mouth and hair and nostrils were full of earth. The slope was growing steeper as he looked at it. The ridge heaved up and up. Then the whole wave of earth rose, arched, trembled, and with all its weight and noise poured down on him.

IV

"Why Logres, sir?" said Camilla.

Dinner was over at St. Anne's and they sat at their wine in a circle about the dining-room fire. As Mrs. Dimble had prophesied, the men had cooked it very well: only after their serving was over and the board cleared had they put on their festal garments. Now all sat at their ease and all diversely splendid: Ransom crowned, at the right of the hearth, Grace Ironwood in black and silver opposite him. It was so warm that they had let the fire burn low, and in the candlelight the court dresses seemed to glow of themselves.

"Tell them, Dimble," said Ransom. "I will not talk much from now on."

"Are you tired, sir?" said Grace. "Is the pain bad?"

"No, Grace," he replied, "it isn't that. But now that it's so very nearly time for me to go, all this begins to feel like a dream. A happy dream, you understand: all of it, even the pain. I want to taste every drop. I feel as though it would be dissolved if I talked much."

"I suppose you *got* to go, sir?" said Ivy.

"My dear," said he, "what else is there to do? I have not grown a day or an hour older since I came back from Perelandra. There is no natural death to look forward to. The wound will only be healed in the world where it was got."

"All this has the disadvantage of being clean contrary to the observed laws of Nature," observed MacPhee. The Director smiled without speaking, as a man who refuses to be drawn.

“It is not contrary to the laws of Nature,” said a voice from the corner where Grace Ironwood sat, almost invisible in the shadows. “You are quite right. The laws of the universe are never broken. Your mistake is to think that the little regularities we have observed on one planet for a few hundred years are the real unbreakable laws; whereas they are only the remote results which the true laws bring about more often than not; as a kind of accident.”

“Shakespeare never breaks the real laws of poetry,” put in Dimble. “But by following them he breaks every now and then the little regularities which critics mistake for the real laws. Then the little critics call it a ‘licence.’ But there’s nothing licentious about it to Shakespeare.”

“And that,” said Denniston, “is why nothing in Nature is *quite* regular. There are always exceptions. A good average uniformity, but not complete.”

“Not many exceptions to the law of death have come my way,” observed MacPhee.

“And *how*,” said Grace with much emphasis, “how should *you* expect to be there on more than one such occasion? Were you a friend of Arthur’s or Barbarossa’s? Did you know Enoch or Elijah?”

“Do you mean,” said Jane, “that the Director . . . the Pendragon . . . is going where they went?”

“He will be with Arthur, certainly,” said Dimble. “I can’t answer for the rest. There are people who have never died. We do not yet know why. We know a little more than we did about the How. There are many places in the universe — I mean, this same physical universe in which our planet moves — where an organism can last practically for ever. Where Arthur is, we know.”

“Where?” said Camilla.

“In the Third Heaven, in Perelandra. In Aphallin, the distant island which the descendants of Tor and Tinidril will not find for a hundred centuries. Perhaps alone?” . . . he hesitated and looked at Ransom, who shook his head.

“And that is where Logres comes in, is it?” said Camilla. “Because he will be with Arthur?”

Dimble was silent for a few minutes, arranging and rearranging the fruit-knife and fruit-fork on his plate.

“It all began,” he said, “when we discovered that the Arthurian story is mostly true history. There was a moment in the Sixth Century when something that is always trying to break through into this country nearly succeeded. Logres was our name for it — it will do as well as another. And then . . . gradually we began to see all English history in a new way. We discovered the haunting.”

“What haunting?” asked Camilla.

“How something we may call Britain is always haunted by something we may call Logres. Haven’t you noticed that we are two countries? After every Arthur, a Mordred; behind every Milton, a Cromwell: a nation of poets, a nation of shopkeepers; the home of Sidney — and of Cecil Rhodes. Is it any wonder they call us hypocrites? But what they mistake for hypocrisy is really the struggle between Logres and Britain.”

He paused and took a sip of wine before proceeding.

“It was long afterwards,” he said, “after the Director had returned from the Third Heaven, that we were told a little more. This haunting turned out to be not only from the other side of the invisible wall. Ransom was summoned to the bedside of an old man then dying in Cumberland. His name would mean nothing to you if I told it. That man was the Pendragon, the successor of Arthur and Uther and Cassibelaun. Then we learned the truth. There has been a secret Logres in the very heart of Britain all these years; an unbroken succession of Pendragons. That old man was the seventy-eighth from Arthur: our Director received from him the office and the blessing; to-morrow we shall know, or to-night, who is to be the eightieth. Some of the Pendragons are well known to history, though not under that name. Others you have never heard of. But in every age they and the little Logres which gathered round them have been the fingers which gave the tiny shove or the almost imperceptible pull, to prod England out of the drunken sleep or to draw her back from the final outrage into which Britain tempted her.”

“This new history of yours,” said MacPhee, “is a wee bit lacking in documents.”

“It has plenty,” said Dimble with a smile. “But you do not know the language they’re written in. When the history of these last few months comes to be written in *your* language, and printed, and taught in schools, there will be no mention in it of you and me, nor of Merlin and the

Pendragon and the Planets. And yet in these months Britain rebelled most dangerously against Logres and was defeated only just in time."

"Aye," said MacPhee, "and it could be right good history without mentioning you and me or most of those present. I'd be greatly obliged if anyone would tell me what we *have* done — always apart from feeding the pigs and raising some very decent vegetables."

"You have done what was required of you," said the Director. "You have obeyed and waited. It will often happen like that. As one of the modern authors has told us, the altar must often be built in one place in order that the fire from heaven may descend somewhere else. But don't jump to conclusions. You may have plenty of work to do before a month is passed. Britain has lost a battle, but she will rise again."

"So that, meanwhile, is England," said Mother Dimble. "Just this swaying to and fro between Logres and Britain?"

"Yes," said her husband. "Don't you feel it? The very quality of England. If we've got an ass's head it is by walking in a fairy wood. We've heard something better than we can do, but can't quite forget it . . . can't you see it in everything English — a kind of awkward grace, a humble, humorous incompleteness? How right Sam Weller was when he called Mr. Pickwick an angel in gaiters! Everything here is either better or worse than — —"

"Dimble!" said Ransom. Dimble, whose tone had become a little impassioned, stopped and looked towards him. He hesitated and (as Jane thought) almost blushed before he began again.

"You're right, sir," he said with a smile. "I was forgetting what you have warned me always to remember. This haunting is no peculiarity of ours. Every people has its own haunter. There's no special privilege for England — no nonsense about a chosen nation. We speak about Logres because it is *our* haunting, the one we know about."

"All this," said MacPhee, "seems a very roundabout way of saying that there's good and bad men everywhere."

"It's not a way of saying that at all," answered Dimble. "You see, MacPhee, if one is thinking simply of goodness in the abstract, one soon reaches the fatal idea of something standardised — some common kind of life to which all nations ought to progress. Of course there are universal rules to which all goodness must conform. But that's only the grammar of virtue. It's not there that the sap is. He doesn't make two blades of grass the same: how much less two saints, two nations, two angels. The whole work

of healing Tellus depends on nursing that little spark, on incarnating that ghost, which is still alive in every real people, and different in each. When Logres really dominates Britain, when the goddess Reason, the divine clearness, is really enthroned in France, when the order of Heaven is really followed in China — why, then it will be spring. But meantime, our concern is with Logres. We've got Britain down but who knows how long we can hold her down? Edgestow will not recover from what is happening to her to-night. But there will be other Edgestows."

"I wanted to ask about Edgestow," said Mother Dimble. "Aren't Merlin and the eldils a trifle . . . well, *wholesale*. Did *all* Edgestow deserve to be wiped out?"

"Who are you lamenting?" said MacPhee. "The jobbing town council that'd have sold their own wives and daughters to bring the N.I.C.E. to Edgestow?"

"Well, I don't know much about them," said she. "But in the university. Even Bracton itself. We all knew it was a horrible College, of course. But did they really mean any great harm with all their fussy little intrigues? Wasn't it more *silly* than anything else?"

"Och aye," said MacPhee. "They were only playing themselves. Kittens letting on to be tigers. But there was a real tiger about and their play ended by letting her in. They've no call to complain if, when the hunter's after her, he lets them have a bit of a lead in their guts, too. It'll learn them not to keep bad company."

"Well, then, the fellows of other colleges. What about Northumberland and Duke's?"

"I know," said Denniston. "One's sorry for a man like Churchwood. I knew him well; he was an old dear. All his lectures were devoted to proving the impossibility of ethics, though in private life he'd have walked ten miles rather than leave a penny debt unpaid. But all the same . . . was there a single doctrine practised at Belbury which hadn't been preached by some lecturer at Edgestow? Oh, of course, they never thought anyone would *act* on their theories! No one was more astonished than they when what they'd been talking of for years suddenly took on reality. But it was their own child coming back to them: grown up and unrecognisable, but their own."

"I'm afraid it's all true, my dear," said Dimble. "*Trahison des clercs.* None of us are quite innocent."

"That's nonsense, Cecil," said Mrs. Dimble.

“You are all forgetting,” said Grace, “that nearly everyone except the very good (who were ripe for fair dismissal) and the very bad, had already left Edgestow. But I agree with Arthur. Those who have forgotten Logres sink into Britain. Those who call for Nonsense will find that it comes.”

At that moment she was interrupted. A clawing and whining noise at the door had become audible.

“Open the door, Arthur,” said Ransom. A moment later the whole party rose to its feet with cries of welcome, for the new arrival was Mr. Bultitude.

“Oh, I never *did*,” said Ivy. “The pore thing! And all over snow, too. I’ll just take him down to the kitchen and get him something to eat. Wherever have you been, you bad thing? Eh? Just look at the state you’re in.”

V

For the third time in ten minutes the train gave a violent lurch and came to a standstill. This time the shock put all the lights out.

“This is really getting a bit too bad,” said a voice in the darkness. The four other passengers in the first-class compartment recognised it as belonging to the well-bred, bulky man in the brown suit; the well-informed man who at earlier stages of the journey had told everyone else where they ought to change and why one now reached Sterk without going through Stratford and who it was that really controlled the line.

“It’s serious for me,” said the same voice. “I ought to be in Edgestow by now.” He got up, opened the window, and stared out into the darkness. Presently one of the other passengers complained of the cold. He shut the window and sat down.

“We’ve already been here for ten minutes,” he said presently.

“Excuse me. Twelve,” said another passenger.

Still the train did not move. The noise of two men quarrelling in a neighbouring compartment became audible.

Suddenly a shock flung them all together in the darkness. It was as if the train, going at full speed, had been unskilfully pulled up.

“What the devil’s that?” said one.

“Open the doors.”

“Has there been a collision?”

“It’s all right,” said the well-informed man in a loud, calm voice. “Putting on another engine. And doing it very badly. It’s all these new

engine-drivers they've got in lately."

"Hullo!" said someone. "We're moving."

Slow and grunting, the train began to go.

"It takes its time getting up speed," said someone.

"Oh, you'll find it'll start making up for lost time in a minute," said the well-informed man.

"I wish they'd put the lights on again," said a woman's voice.

"We're *not* getting up speed," said another.

"We're losing it. Damn it! Are we stopping again?"

"No. We're still moving — oh!!" — once more a violent shock hit them. It was worse than the last one. For nearly a minute everything seemed to be rocking and rattling.

"This is outrageous!" exclaimed the well-informed man, once more opening the window. This time he was more fortunate. A dark figure waving a lantern was walking past beneath him.

"Hi! Porter! Guard!" he bellowed.

"It's all right, ladies and gentlemen, it's all right, keep your seats," shouted the dark figure, marching past and ignoring him.

"There's no good letting all that cold air in, sir," said the passenger next the window.

"There's some sort of light ahead," said the well-informed man.

"Signal against us?" asked another.

"No. Not a bit like that. The whole sky's lit up. Like a fire, or like searchlights."

"I don't care what it's like," said the chilly man. "If only — oh!"

Another shock. And then, far away in the darkness, vague disastrous noise. The train began to move again, still slowly, as if it were groping its way.

"I'll make a row about this," said the well-informed man. "It's a scandal."

About half an hour later the lighted platform of Sterk slowly loomed alongside.

"Station Announcer calling," said a voice. "Please keep your seats for an important announcement. Slight earthquake shock and floods have rendered the line to Edgestow impassable. No details available. Passengers for Edgestow are advised . . ."

The well-informed man, who was Curry, got out. Such a man always knows all the officials on a railway, and in a few minutes he was standing by the fire in the ticket-collector's office getting a further and private report of the disaster.

"Well, we don't exactly know yet, Mr. Curry," said the man. "There's been nothing coming through for about an hour. It's very bad, you know. They're putting the best face on it they can. There's never been an earthquake like it in England from what I can hear. And there's the floods, too. No, sir, I'm afraid you'll find nothing of Bracton College. All that part of the town went almost at once. It began there, I understand. I don't know what the casualties'll be. I'm glad I got my old Dad out last week."

Curry always in later years regarded this as one of the turning-points of his life. He had not up till then been a religious man. But the word that now instantly came into his mind was "Providential." You couldn't really look at it any other way. He'd been within an ace of taking the earlier train: and if he had . . . why, he'd have been a dead man by now. It made one think. The whole College wiped out! It would have to be rebuilt. There'd be a complete (or almost complete) new set of Fellows, a new Warden. It was Providential again that some responsible person should have been spared to deal with such a tremendous crisis. There couldn't be an ordinary election, of course. The College Visitor (who was the Lord Chancellor) would probably have to appoint a new Warden and then, in collaboration with him, a nucleus of new Fellows. The more he thought of it, the more fully Curry realised that the whole shaping of the future college rested with the sole survivor. It was almost like being a second founder. Providential — providential. He saw already in imagination the portrait of that second founder in the new-built hall, his statue in the new-built quadrangle, the long, long chapter consecrated to him in the College History. All this time, and without the least hypocrisy, habit and instinct had given his shoulders just such a droop, his eyes such a solemn sternness, his brow such a noble gravity, as a man of good feeling might be expected to exhibit on hearing such news. The ticket-collector was greatly edified. "You could see he felt it bad," as he said afterwards. "But he could take it. He's a fine old chap."

"When is the next train to London?" asked Curry. "I must be in town first thing to-morrow morning."

VI

Ivy Maggs, it will be remembered, had left the dining-room for the purpose of attending to Mr. Bultitude's comfort. It therefore surprised everyone when she returned in less than a minute with a wild expression on her face.

"Oh, come quick, someone. Come quick!" she gasped. "There's a bear in the kitchen."

"A bear, Ivy?" said the Director. "But of course — —"

"Oh, I don't mean Mr. Bultitude, sir. There's a strange bear; another one."

"Indeed!"

"And it's eaten up all what was left of the goose and half the ham and all the junket, and now it's lying along the table eating everything as it goes along and wriggling from one dish to another and a-breaking all the crockery. Oh, do come quick! There'll be nothing left."

"And what line is Mr. Bultitude taking about all this, Ivy?" asked Ransom.

"Well, that's what I want someone to come and see. He's carrying on something dreadful, sir. I never see anything like it. First of all he just stood lifting up his legs in a funny way as if he thought he could dance, which we all know he can't. But now he's got up on the dresser on his hind legs and there he's kind of bobbing up and down, making the awfullest noise — squeaking like — and he's put one foot into the plum pudding already and he's got his head all mixed up in the string of onions and I can't do *nothing* with him, really I can't."

"This is very odd behaviour for Mr. Bultitude. You don't think, my dear, that the stranger might be a *she* bear?"

"Oh, don't say that, sir!" exclaimed Ivy with extreme dismay.

"I think that's the truth, Ivy. I strongly suspect that this is the future Mrs. Bultitude."

"It'll be the present Mrs. Bultitude if we sit here talking about it much longer," said MacPhee, rising to his feet.

"Oh dear, what *shall* we do?" said Ivy.

"I am sure Mr. Bultitude is quite equal to the situation," replied the Director. "At present the lady is refreshing herself. *Sine Cerere et Baccho*, Dimble. We can trust them to manage their own affairs."

"No doubt, no doubt," said MacPhee. "But not in our kitchen."

"Ivy, my dear," said Ransom, "you must be very firm. Go into the kitchen and tell the strange bear I want to see her. You wouldn't be afraid,

would you?”

“Afraid? Not me. I’ll show her who’s the Director here. Not that it isn’t only natural for her.”

“What’s the matter with that Jackdaw?” said Dr. Dimble.

“I think it’s trying to get out,” said Denniston. “Shall I open the window?”

“It’s warm enough to have the window open, anyway,” said the Director. And as the window was opened Baron Corvo hopped out and there was a scuffle and a chattering just outside.

“Another love affair,” said Mrs. Dimble. “It sounds as if Jack had found a Jill. . . . What a delicious night!” she added. For as the curtain swelled and lifted over the open window, all the freshness of a midsummer night seemed to be blowing into the room. At that moment, a little farther off, came a sound of whinnying.

“Hullo!” said Denniston, “the old mare is excited, too.”

“‘Sh! Listen!” said Jane.

“That’s a different horse,” said Denniston.

“It’s a stallion,” said Camilla.

“This,” said MacPhee with great emphasis, “is becoming indecent!”

“On the contrary,” said Ransom, “decent, in the old sense, *decens*, fitting, is just what she is. Venus herself is over St. Anne’s.”

“She comes more near the Earth than she was wont,” quoted Dimble, “to make men mad.”

“She is nearer than any astronomer knows,” said Ransom. “The work at Edgestow is done, the other gods have withdrawn. She waits still, and when she returns to her sphere I will ride with her.”

Suddenly in the semi-darkness Mrs. Dimble’s voice cried sharply, “Look out! Look out! Cecil! I’m sorry. I can’t stand bats. They’ll get in my hair!” *Cheep cheep* went the voices of the two bats as they flickered to and fro above the candles. Because of their shadows they seemed to be four bats instead of two.

“You’d better go, Margaret,” said the Director. “You and Cecil had better both go. I shall be gone very soon now. There is no need of long good-byes.”

“I really think I *must* go,” said Mother Dimble. “I can’t stand bats.”

“Comfort Margaret, Cecil,” said Ransom. “No. Do not stay. I’m not dying. Seeing people off is always folly. It’s neither good mirth nor good

sorrow.”

“You mean us to go, sir?” said Dimble.

“Go, my dear friends. *Urendi Maleldil.*”

He laid his hands on their heads: Cecil gave his arm to his wife and they went.

“Here she is, sir,” said Ivy Maggs, re-entering the room a moment later, flushed and radiant. A bear waddled at her side, its muzzle white with junket and its cheeks sticky with gooseberry jam. “And — oh, sir!” she added.

“What is it, Ivy?” said the Director.

“Please, sir, it’s poor Tom. It’s my husband. And if you don’t mind — —”

“You’ve given him something to eat and drink, I hope?”

“Well, yes, I have. There wouldn’t have been nothing if those bears had been there much longer.”

“What has Tom got, Ivy?”

“I give him the cold pie and the pickles (he always was a great one for pickles) and the end of the cheese and a bottle of stout, and I’ve put the kettle on so as we can make ourselves — so as he can make himself a nice cup of tea. And he’s enjoying it ever so, sir, and he said would you mind him not coming up to say how d’you do because he never was much of a one for company if you take my meaning.”

All this time the strange bear had been standing perfectly still with its eyes fixed on the Director. Now he laid his hand on its flat head. “*Urendi Maleldil*,” he said. “You are a good bear. Go to your mate — but here he is,” for at that moment the door, which was already a little ajar, was pushed further open to admit the enquiring and slightly anxious face of Mr. Bultitude. “Take her, Bultitude. But not in the house. Jane, open the other window, the French window. It is like a night in July.” The window swung open and the two bears went blundering out into the warmth and the wetness. Everyone noticed how light it had become.

“Are those birds all daft that they’re singing at quarter to twelve?” asked MacPhee.

“No,” said Ransom. “They are sane. Now, Ivy, you want to go and talk to Tom. Mother Dimble has put you both in the little room half-way up the stairs, not in the lodge, after all.”

“Oh, sir,” said Ivy, and stopped. The Director leaned forward and laid his hand on her head. “Of course you want to go,” he said. “Why, he’s hardly had time to see you in your new dress yet. Have you no kisses to give him?” he said, and kissed her. “Then give him mine, which are not mine but by derivation. Don’t cry. You are a good woman. Go and heal this man. *Urendi Maleldil* — we shall meet again.”

“What’s all yon squealing and squeaking?” said MacPhee. “I hope it’s not the pigs got loose. For I tell you there’s already as much carrying on about this house and garden as I can stand.”

“I think it’s hedgehogs,” said Grace Ironwood.

“That last sound was somewhere in the house,” said Jane.

“Listen!” said the Director, and for a short time all were still. Then his face relaxed into a smile. “It’s my friends behind the wainscot,” he said. “There are revels there, too —

“*So geht es in Snützepützhaüsel*
Da singen und tanzen die Maüsel!”

“I suppose,” said MacPhee drily, producing his snuff-box from under the ash-coloured and slightly monastic-looking robe in which, contrary to his own judgement, the others had seen fit to clothe him, “I suppose we may think ourselves lucky that no giraffes, hippopotami, elephants, or the like have seen fit to — God almighty, what’s that?” For as he spoke, a long grey flexible tube came in between the swaying curtains and, passing over MacPhee’s shoulder, helped itself to a bunch of bananas.

“In the name of Hell, where’s all them beasts coming from?” he said.

“They are the liberated prisoners from Belbury,” said the Director. “She comes more near the Earth than she was wont to — to make Earth sane. Perelandra is all about us and Man is no longer isolated. We are now as we ought to be — between the angels who are our elder brothers and the beasts who are our jesters, servants, and playfellows.”

Whatever MacPhee was attempting to say in reply was drowned by an ear-splitting noise from beyond the window.

“Elephants! Two of them,” said Jane weakly. “Oh, the celery! And the rose beds!”

“By your leave, Mr. Director,” said MacPhee sternly, “I’ll just draw these curtains. You seem to forget there are ladies present.”

“No,” said Grace Ironwood in a voice as strong as his, “there will be nothing unfit for anyone to see. Draw them wider. How light it is! Brighter than moonlight: almost brighter than day. A great dome of light stands over the whole garden. Look! The elephants are dancing. How high they lift their feet. And they go round and round. And oh, look! — how they lift their trunks. And how ceremonial they are. It is like a minuet of giants. They are not like the other animals. They are a sort of good daemons.”

“They are moving away,” said Camilla.

“They will be as private as human lovers,” said the Director. “They are not common beasts.”

“I think,” said MacPhee, “I’ll away down to my office and cast some accounts. I’d feel easier in my mind if I were inside and the door locked before any crocodiles or kangaroos start courting in the middle of all my files. There’d better be one man about the place keep his head this night, for the rest of you are clean daft. Good night, ladies.”

“Good-bye, MacPhee,” said Ransom.

“No, no,” said MacPhee, standing well back but extending his hand. “You’ll speak none of your blessings over me. If ever I take to religion, it won’t be your kind. My uncle was Moderator of the General Assembly. But there’s my hand. What you and I have seen together . . . but no matter for that. And I’ll say this, Dr. Ransom, that with all your faults (and there’s no man alive knows them better than myself) you are the best man, taking you by and large, that ever I knew or heard of. You are . . . you and I . . . but there are the ladies crying. I don’t rightly know what I was going to say. I’m away this minute. Why would a man want to lengthen it? God bless you, Dr. Ransom. Ladies, I’ll wish you a good night.”

“Open all the windows,” said Ransom. “The vessel in which I must ride is now almost within the air of this World.”

“It is growing brighter every minute,” said Denniston.

“Can we be with you to the very end?” said Jane.

“Child,” said the Director, “you should not stay till then.”

“Why, sir?”

“You are waited for.”

“Me, sir?”

“Yes. Your husband is waiting for you in the lodge. It was your own marriage chamber that you prepared. Should you not go to him?”

“Must I go *now*?”

“If you leave the decision with me, it is now that I would send you.”

“Then I will go, sir. But — but — am I a bear or a hedgehog?”

“More. But not less. Go in obedience and you will find love. You will have no more dreams. Have children instead. *Urendi Maleldil.*”

VII

Long before he reached St. Anne’s, Mark had come to realise that either he himself or else the world about him was in a very strange condition. The journey took him longer than he expected, but that was perhaps fully accounted for by one or two mistakes that he made. Much harder to explain was the horror of light to the west, over Edgestow, and the throbbings and bouncings of the earth. Then came the sudden warmth and the torrents of melted snow rolling down the hillside. Everything became a mist: and then, as the lights in the west vanished, this mist grew softly luminous in a different place — above him, as though the light rested on St. Anne’s. And all the time he had the curious impression that things of very diverse shapes and sizes were slipping past him in the haze — animals, he thought. Perhaps it was all a dream; or perhaps it was the end of the world: or perhaps he was dead. But in spite of all perplexities, he was conscious of extreme well-being. His mind was ill at ease, but as for his body — health and youth and pleasure and longing seemed to be blowing towards him from the cloudy light upon the hill. He never doubted that he must keep on.

His mind was not at ease. He knew that he was going to meet Jane, and something was beginning to happen to him which ought to have happened to him far earlier. That same laboratory outlook upon love which had forestalled in Jane the humility of a wife, had equally forestalled in him, during what passed for courtship, the humility of a lover. Or if there had ever arisen in him at some wiser moment the sense of “Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear,” he had put it away from him. False theories, at once prosaic and fanciful, had made it seem to him a mood frowsty, unrealistic, and outmoded. Now, belated, after all favours had been conceded, the unexpected misgiving was coming over him. He tried to shake it off. They were married, weren’t they? And they were sensible, modern people? What could be more natural, more ordinary?

But then certain moments of unforgettable failure in their short married life rose in his imagination. He had thought often enough of what he called

Jane's "moods." This time at last he thought of his own clumsy importunity. And the thought would not go away. Inch by inch all the lout and clown and clod-hopper in him was revealed to his own reluctant inspection; the coarse, male boor with horny hands and hobnailed shoes and beefsteak jaw, not rushing in — for that can be carried off — but blundering, sauntering, stumping in where great lovers, knights and poets, would have feared to tread. An image of Jane's skin, so smooth, so white (or so he now imagined it) that a child's kiss might make a mark on it, floated before him. How had he dared? Her driven snow, her music, her sacrosanctity, the very style of all her movements . . . how had he dared? And dared, too, with no sense of daring, nonchalantly, in careless stupidity! The very thoughts that crossed her face from moment to moment, all of them beyond his reach, made (had he but had the wit to see it) a hedge about her which such as he should never have had the temerity to pass. Yes, yes — of course it was she who had allowed him to pass it: perhaps in luckless, misunderstanding pity. And he had taken blackguardly advantage of that noble error in her judgement; had behaved as if he were native to that fenced garden and even its natural possessor.

All this, which should have been uneasy joy, was torment to him, for it came too late. He was discovering the hedge after he had plucked the rose, and not only plucked it but torn it all to pieces and crumpled it with hot, thumb-like, greedy fingers. How had he dared? And who that understood could forgive him? He knew now what he must look like in the eyes of her friends and equals. Seeing that picture, he grew hot to the forehead, alone there in the mist.

The word *Lady* had made no part of his vocabulary save as a pure form, or else in mockery. He had laughed too soon.

Well, he would release her. She would be glad to be rid of him. Rightly glad. It would now almost have shocked him to believe otherwise. Ladies in some noble and spacious room, discoursing in cool ladyhood together, either with exquisite gravity or with silver laughter — how should they *not* be glad when the intruder had gone? — the loud-voiced or tongue-tied creature, all boots and hands, whose true place was in the stable. What should he do in such a room — where his very admiration could only be insult, his best attempts to be either grave or gay could only reveal unbridgeable misunderstanding? What he had called her coldness seemed

now to be her patience. Whereof the memory scalded. For he loved her now. But it was all spoiled: too late to mend matters.

Suddenly the diffused light brightened and flushed. He looked up and perceived a great lady standing by a doorway in a wall. It was not Jane, not like Jane. It was larger, almost gigantic. It was not human, though it was like a woman divinely tall, part naked, part wrapped in a flame-coloured robe. Light came from it. The face was enigmatic, ruthless, he thought, inhumanly beautiful. It was opening the door for him. He did not dare disobey ("Surely," he thought, "I must have died") and he went in: found himself in some place of sweet smells and bright fires, with food and wine and a rich bed.

VIII

And Jane went out of the big house with the Director's kiss upon her lips and his words in her ears, into the liquid light and supernatural warmth of the garden and across the wet lawn (birds were everywhere) and past the seesaw and the greenhouse and the piggeries, going down all the time, down to the lodge, descending the ladder of humility. First she thought of the Director, then she thought of Maleldil. Then she thought of her obedience and the setting of each foot before the other became a kind of sacrificial ceremony. And she thought of children, and of pain and death. And now she was half-way to the lodge, and thought of Mark and of all his sufferings. When she came to the lodge she was surprised to see it all dark and the door shut. As she stood at the door with one hand on the latch, a new thought came to her. How if Mark did not want her — not to-night, nor in that way, nor any time, nor in any way? How if Mark were not there, after all? A great gap — of relief or of disappointment, no one could say — was made in her mind by this thought. Still she did not move the latch. Then she noticed that the window, the bedroom window, was open. Clothes were piled on a chair inside the room so carelessly that they lay over the sill: the sleeve of a shirt — Mark's shirt — even hung over down the outside wall. And in all this damp, too. How exactly like Mark! Obviously it was high time she went in.

THE END

The Chronicles of Narnia Order Index



Original Publication Order:

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950)
Prince Caspian (1951)
The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952)
The Silver Chair (1953)
The Horse and His Boy (1954)
The Magician's Nephew (1955)
The Last Battle (1956)

Narnia History Order:

The Magician's Nephew
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
The Horse and His Boy
Prince Caspian
The Voyage of the Dawn Treader
The Silver Chair
The Last Battle

The Chronicles of Narnia



Malvern College, a boarding school in Worcestershire — in September 1913, Lewis enrolled at Malvern College, where he remained until the following June. He found the school socially competitive.

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE (1950)

Published by Geoffrey Bles in 1950, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* remains the best known of the seven novels of Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* and remains his most widely read book today. Although it was written as well as published as the first in the series, it is now regarded as volume two in recent editions, which are sequenced by Narnia history order, beginning with *The Magician's Nephew*, which was later published in 1955.

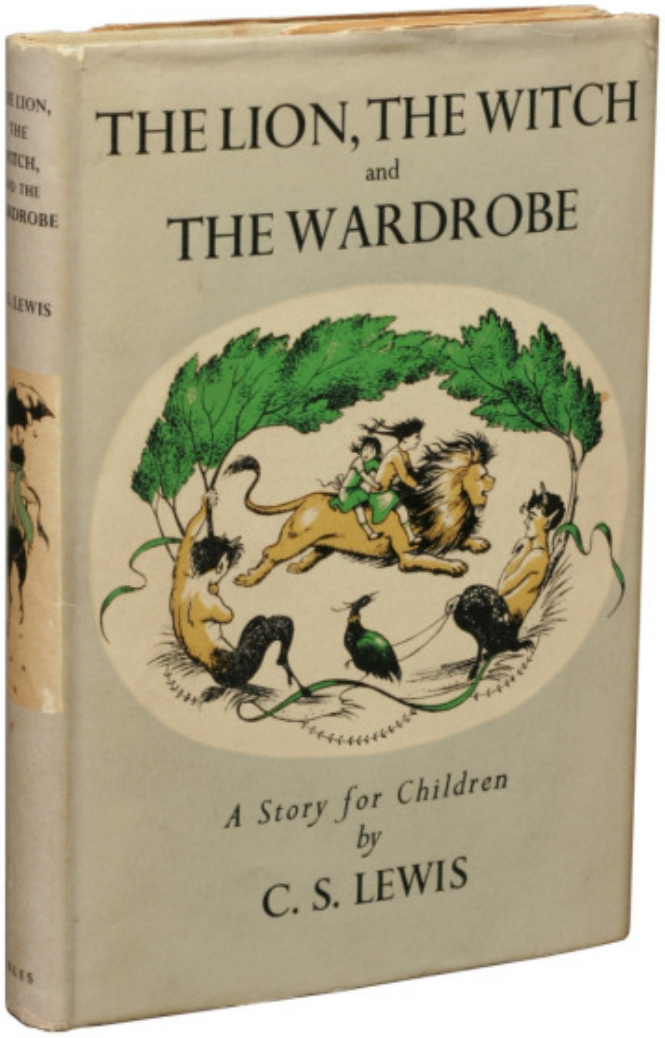
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe introduces the fantasy land of Narnia, featuring talking animals and mythical creatures, tyrannised by a White Witch that has ruled for a hundred years of deep winter. The narrative opens with a frame story, explaining how four English children, the siblings Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy Pevensie – are among many children evacuated from London during World War II to escape the Blitz. They are relocated to a large, old country house, which is the home of Professor Digory Kirke. The youngest child, Lucy, visits Narnia three times through the magical device of a wardrobe in a spare room. All four children are together on her third visit, which verifies her fantastic claims and comprises the subsequent 12 of 17 chapters, except for a brief conclusion. In Narnia, the siblings seem to fulfil an old prophecy and so are soon adventuring both to save Narnia and their lives. Lewis wrote the book for, and dedicated it to, his goddaughter Lucy Barfield, who was the daughter of Owen Barfield, the author's friend, teacher, adviser and trustee.

Lewis described his inspiration for the novel in an essay titled *It All Began with a Picture*: "The Lion all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood. This picture had been in my mind since I was about sixteen. Then one day, when I was about forty, I said to myself: 'Let's try to make a story about it.'" In August 1948, during a visit by an American writer, Chad Walsh, Lewis talked vaguely about completing a children's book he had begun "in the tradition of E. Nesbit". After this conversation not much happened until the beginning of the next year. Then everything changed: "At first I had very little idea how the story would go. But then suddenly Aslan came bounding into it. I think I had

been having a good many dreams of lions about that time. Apart from that, I don't know where the Lion came from or why he came. But once he was there, he pulled the whole story together, and soon he pulled the six other Narnian stories in after him."

The main story of the novel serves as an allegory of Christ's crucifixion, when Aslan sacrifices himself for Edmund, a traitor that may deserve death, in the same way that Christians believe Jesus, betrayed by Judas, sacrificed himself for sinners. Aslan is killed on the Stone Table, symbolising Mosaic Law, which breaks when he is resurrected, representing the replacement of the strict justice of Old Testament law with redeeming grace and forgiveness granted on the basis of substitutional atonement, according to Christian theology. As with the Christian Passion, it is women, the characters Susan and Lucy, that tend to Aslan's body after he dies and are the first to see him after his resurrection.

Lewis enjoyed immensely writing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and embarked on the sequel, *Prince Caspian*, soon after finishing the first novel. He completed the sequel by end of 1949, less than a year after finishing the initial novel. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* had few readers during 1949 and was not published until late in 1950, so the author's initial enthusiasm did not stem from a favourable reception by the public. While Lewis is known today on the strength of the Narnia stories as a highly successful children's writer, the initial critical response was muted. At the time it was fashionable for children's stories to be realistic; fantasy and fairy tales were seen as indulgent, appropriate only for very young readers and potentially harmful to older children, even hindering their ability to relate to everyday life. Some reviewers considered the tale overtly moralistic or the Christian elements over-stated, attempting to indoctrinate children. Others were concerned that the many violent incidents might frighten children. Lewis' publisher, Geoffrey Bles, feared that the Narnia tales would not sell and might damage Lewis' reputation and affect sales of his other books. Nevertheless, the novel and its successors were highly popular with young readers and Lewis' publisher was soon eager to release further Narnia stories.



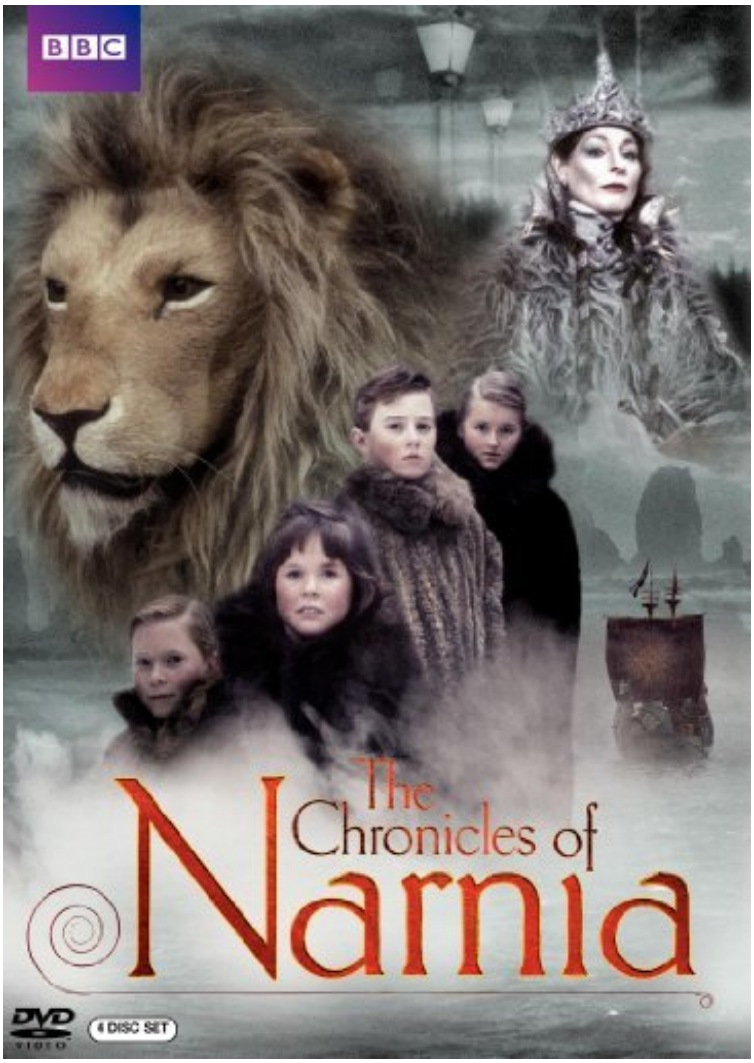
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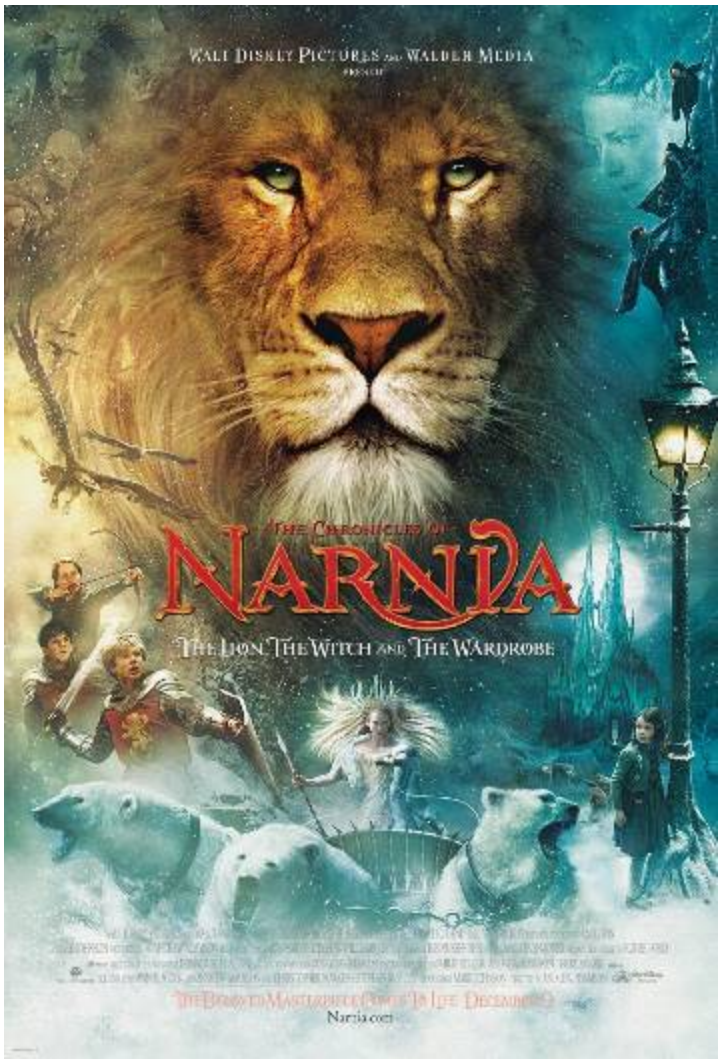
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The 1979 television animation adaptation



The third television adaptation, which was produced in 1988 by the BBC, using a combination of live actors, animatronic puppets and animation.



The 2005 film adaptation

To Lucy Barfield

My dear Lucy,

I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairy tales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again. You can then take it down from some upper shelf, dust it, and tell me what you think of it. I shall probably be too deaf to hear, and too old to understand a word you say, but I shall still be

your affectionate Godfather,
C. S. Lewis

CHAPTER I

Lucy Looks into a Wardrobe

Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids. They were sent to the house of an old Professor who lived in the heart of the country, ten miles from the nearest railway station and two miles from the nearest post office. He had no wife and he lived in a very large house with a housekeeper called Mrs. Macready and three servants. (Their names were Ivy, Margaret and Betty, but they do not come into the story much.) He himself was a very old man with shaggy white hair, which grew over most of his face as well as on his head, and they liked him almost at once; but on the first evening when he came out to meet them at the front door he was so odd-looking that Lucy (who was the youngest) was a little afraid of him, and Edmund (who was the next youngest) wanted to laugh and had to keep on pretending he was blowing his nose to hide it.

As soon as they had said good night to the Professor and gone upstairs on the first night, the boys came into the girls' room and they all talked it over.

"We've fallen on our feet and no mistake," said Peter. "This is going to be perfectly splendid. That old chap will let us do anything we like."

"I think he's an old dear," said Susan.

"Oh, come off it!" said Edmund, who was tired and pretending not to be tired, which always made him bad-tempered. "Don't go on talking like that."

"Like what?" said Susan; "and anyway, it's time you were in bed."

"Trying to talk like Mother," said Edmund. "And who are you to say when I'm to go to bed? Go to bed yourself."

"Hadn't we all better go to bed?" said Lucy. "There's sure to be a row if we're heard talking here."

"No there won't," said Peter. "I tell you this is the sort of house where no one's going to mind what we do. Anyway, they won't hear us. It's about ten minutes' walk from here down to that dining room, and any amount of stairs and passages in between."

“What’s that noise?” said Lucy suddenly. It was a far larger house than she had ever been in before and the thought of all those long passages and rows of doors leading into empty rooms was beginning to make her feel a little creepy.

“It’s only a bird, silly,” said Edmund.

“It’s an owl,” said Peter. “This is going to be a wonderful place for birds. I shall go to bed now. I say, let’s go and explore to-morrow. You might find anything in a place like this. Did you see those mountains as we came along? And the woods? There might be eagles. There might be stags. There’ll be hawks.”

“Badgers!” said Lucy.

“Snakes!” said Edmund.

“Foxes!” said Susan.

But when next morning came, there was a steady rain falling, so thick that when you looked out of the window you could see neither the mountains nor the woods nor even the stream in the garden.

“Of course it *would* be raining!” said Edmund. They had just finished breakfast with the Professor and were upstairs in the room he had set apart for them — a long, low room with two windows looking out in one direction and two in another.

“Do stop grumbling, Ed,” said Susan. “Ten to one it’ll clear up in an hour or so. And in the meantime we’re pretty well off. There’s a wireless and lots of books.”

“Not for me,” said Peter, “I’m going to explore in the house.”

Everyone agreed to this and that was how the adventures began. It was the sort of house that you never seem to come to the end of, and it was full of unexpected places. The first few doors they tried led only into spare bedrooms, as everyone had expected that they would; but soon they came to a very long room full of pictures and there they found a suit of armour; and after that was a room all hung with green, with a harp in one corner; and then came three steps down and five steps up, and then a kind of little upstairs hall and a door that led out onto a balcony, and then a whole series of rooms that led into each other and were lined with books — most of them very old books and some bigger than a Bible in a church. And shortly after that they looked into a room that was quite empty except for one big wardrobe; the sort that has a looking-glass in the door. There was nothing else in the room at all except a dead blue-bottle on the window-sill.

“Nothing there!” said Peter, and they all trooped out again — all except Lucy. She stayed behind because she thought it would be worth while trying the door of the wardrobe, even though she felt almost sure that it would be locked. To her surprise it opened quite easily, and two moth-balls dropped out.

Looking into the inside, she saw several coats hanging up — mostly long fur coats. There was nothing Lucy liked so much as the smell and feel of fur. She immediately stepped into the wardrobe and got in among the coats and rubbed her face against them, leaving the door open, of course, because she knew that it is very foolish to shut oneself into any wardrobe. Soon she went further in and found that there was a second row of coats hanging up behind the first one. It was almost quite dark in there and she kept her arms stretched out in front of her so as not to bump her face into the back of the wardrobe. She took a step further in — then two or three steps — always expecting to feel woodwork against the tips of her fingers. But she could not feel it.

“This must be a simply enormous wardrobe!” thought Lucy, going still further in and pushing the soft folds of the coats aside to make room for her. Then she noticed that there was something crunching under her feet. “I wonder is that more moth-balls?” she thought, stooping down to feel it with her hands. But instead of feeling the hard, smooth wood of the floor of the wardrobe, she felt something soft and powdery and extremely cold, “This is very queer,” she said, and went on a step or two further.

Next moment she found that what was rubbing against her face and hands was no longer soft fur but something hard and rough and even prickly. “Why, it is just like branches of trees!” exclaimed Lucy. And then she saw that there was a light ahead of her; not a few inches away where the back of the wardrobe ought to have been, but a long way off. Something cold and soft was falling on her. A moment later she found that she was standing in the middle of a wood at night-time with snow under her feet and snowflakes falling through the air.

Lucy felt a little frightened, but she felt very inquisitive and excited as well. She looked back over her shoulder and there, between the dark tree-trunks, she could still see the open doorway of the wardrobe and even catch a glimpse of the empty room from which she had set out. (She had, of course, left the door open, for she knew that it is a very silly thing to shut oneself into a wardrobe.) It seemed to be still daylight there. “I can always

get back if anything goes wrong," thought Lucy. She began to walk forward, *crunch-crunch*, over the snow and through the wood towards the other light.

In about ten minutes she reached it and found that it was a lamp-post. As she stood looking at it, wondering why there was a lamp-post in the middle of a wood and wondering what to do next, she heard a pitter patter of feet coming towards her. And soon after that a very strange person stepped out from among the trees into the light of the lamp-post.

He was only a little taller than Lucy herself and he carried over his head an umbrella, white with snow. From the waist upwards he was like a man, but his legs were shaped like a goat's (the hair on them was glossy black) and instead of feet he had goat's hoofs. He also had a tail, but Lucy did not notice this at first because it was neatly caught up over the arm that held the umbrella so as to keep it from trailing in the snow. He had a red woollen muffler round his neck and his skin was rather reddish too. He had a strange, but pleasant little face with a short pointed beard and curly hair, and out of the hair there stuck two horns, one on each side of his forehead. One of his hands, as I have said, held the umbrella: in the other arm he carried several brown paper parcels. What with the parcels and the snow it looked just as if he had been doing his Christmas shopping. He was a Faun. And when he saw Lucy he gave such a start of surprise that he dropped all his parcels.

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the Faun.

CHAPTER II

What Lucy Found There

“Good evening,” said Lucy. But the Faun was so busy picking up his parcels that at first he did not reply. When he had finished he made her a little bow.

“Good evening, good evening,” said the Faun. “Excuse me — I don’t want to be inquisitive — but should I be right in thinking that you are a Daughter of Eve?”

“My name’s Lucy,” said she, not quite understanding him.

“But you are — forgive me — you are what they call a girl?” asked the Faun.

“Of course I’m a girl,” said Lucy.

“You are in fact Human?”

“Of course I’m human,” said Lucy, still a little puzzled.

“To be sure, to be sure,” said the Faun. “How stupid of me! But I’ve never seen a Son of Adam or a Daughter of Eve before. I am delighted. That is to say—” and then he stopped as if he had been going to say something he had not intended but had remembered in time. “Delighted, delighted,” he went on. “Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Tumnus.”

“I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Tumnus,” said Lucy.

“And may I ask, O Lucy, Daughter of Eve,” said Mr. Tumnus, “how you have come into Narnia?”

“Narnia? What’s that?” said Lucy.

“This is the land of Narnia,” said the Faun, “where we are now; all that lies between the lamp-post and the great castle of Cair Paravel on the eastern sea. And you — you have come from the wild woods of the west?”

“I — I got in through the wardrobe in the spare room,” said Lucy.

“Ah!” said Mr. Tumnus in a rather melancholy voice, “if only I had worked harder at geography when I was a little Faun, I should no doubt know all about those strange countries. It is too late now.”

“But they aren’t countries at all,” said Lucy, almost laughing. “It’s only just back there — at least — I’m not sure. It is summer there.”

“Meanwhile,” said Mr. Tumnus, “it is winter in Narnia, and has been for ever so long, and we shall both catch cold if we stand here talking in the snow. Daughter of Eve from the far land of Spare Oom where eternal summer reigns around the bright city of War Drobe, how would it be if you came and had tea with me?”

“Thank you very much, Mr. Tumnus,” said Lucy. “But I was wondering whether I ought to be getting back.”

“It’s only just round the corner,” said the Faun, “and there’ll be a roaring fire — and toast — and sardines — and cake.”

“Well, it’s very kind of you,” said Lucy. “But I shan’t be able to stay long.”

“If you will take my arm, Daughter of Eve,” said Mr. Tumnus, “I shall be able to hold the umbrella over both of us. That’s the way. Now — off we go.”

And so Lucy found herself walking through the wood arm in arm with this strange creature as if they had known one another all their lives.

They had not gone far before they came to a place where the ground became rough and there were rocks all about and little hills up and little hills down. At the bottom of one small valley Mr. Tumnus turned suddenly aside as if he were going to walk straight into an unusually large rock, but at the last moment Lucy found he was leading her into the entrance of a cave. As soon as they were inside she found herself blinking in the light of a wood fire. Then Mr. Tumnus stooped and took a flaming piece of wood out of the fire with a neat little pair of tongs, and lit a lamp. “Now we shan’t be long,” he said, and immediately put a kettle on.

Lucy thought she had never been in a nicer place. It was a little, dry, clean cave of reddish stone with a carpet on the floor and two little chairs (“one for me and one for a friend,” said Mr. Tumnus) and a table and a dresser and a mantelpiece over the fire and above that a picture of an old Faun with a grey beard. In one corner there was a door which Lucy thought must lead to Mr. Tumnus’ bedroom, and on one wall was a shelf full of books. Lucy looked at these while he was setting out the tea things. They had titles like *The Life and Letters of Silenus* or *Nymphs and Their Ways* or *Men, Monks and Gamekeepers; a Study in Popular Legend* or *Is Man a Myth*?

“Now, Daughter of Eve!” said the Faun.

And really it was a wonderful tea. There was a nice brown egg, lightly boiled, for each of them, and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast with honey, and then a sugar-topped cake. And when Lucy was tired of eating the Faun began to talk. He had wonderful tales to tell of life in the forest. He told about the midnight dances and how the Nymphs who lived in the wells and the Dryads who lived in the trees came out to dance with the Fauns; about long hunting parties after the milk-white Stag who could give you wishes if you caught him; about feasting and treasure-seeking with the wild Red Dwarfs in deep mines and caverns far beneath the forest floor; and then about summer when the woods were green and old Silenus on his fat donkey would come to visit them, and sometimes Bacchus himself, and then the streams would run with wine instead of water and the whole forest would give itself up to jollification for weeks on end. "Not that it isn't always winter now," he added gloomily. Then to cheer himself up he took out from its case on the dresser a strange little flute that looked as if it were made of straw and began to play. And the tune he played made Lucy want to cry and laugh and dance and go to sleep all at the same time. It must have been hours later when she shook herself and said,

"Oh Mr. Tumnus — I'm so sorry to stop you, and I do love that tune — but really, I must go home. I only meant to stay for a few minutes."

"It's no good *now*, you know," said the Faun, laying down his flute and shaking his head at her very sorrowfully.

"No good?" said Lucy, jumping up and feeling rather frightened. "What do you mean? I've got to go home at once. The others will be wondering what has happened to me." But a moment later she asked, "Mr. Tumnus! Whatever is the matter?" for the Faun's brown eyes had filled with tears and then the tears began trickling down his cheeks, and soon they were running off the end of his nose; and at last he covered his face with his hands and began to howl.

"Mr. Tumnus! Mr. Tumnus!" said Lucy in great distress. "Don't! Don't! What is the matter? Aren't you well? Dear Mr. Tumnus, do tell me what is wrong." But the Faun continued sobbing as if his heart would break. And even when Lucy went over and put her arms round him and lent him her handkerchief, he did not stop. He merely took the handkerchief and kept on using it, wringing it out with both hands whenever it got too wet to be any more use, so that presently Lucy was standing in a damp patch.

“Mr. Tumnus!” bawled Lucy in his ear, shaking him. “Do stop. Stop it at once! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great big Faun like you. What on earth are you crying about?”

“Oh — oh — oh!” sobbed Mr. Tumnus, “I’m crying because I’m such a bad Faun.”

“I don’t think you’re a bad Faun at all,” said Lucy. “I think you are a very good Faun. You are the nicest Faun I’ve ever met.”

“Oh — oh — you wouldn’t say that if you knew,” replied Mr. Tumnus between his sobs. “No, I’m a bad Faun. I don’t suppose there ever was a worse Faun since the beginning of the world.”

“But what have you done?” asked Lucy.

“My old father, now,” said Mr. Tumnus, “that’s his picture over the mantelpiece. He would never have done a thing like this.”

“A thing like what?” said Lucy.

“Like what I’ve done,” said the Faun. “Taken service under the White Witch. That’s what I am. I’m in the pay of the White Witch.”

“The White Witch? Who is she?”

“Why, it is she that has got all Narnia under her thumb. It’s she that makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!”

“How awful!” said Lucy. “But what does she pay you for?”

“That’s the worst of it,” said Mr. Tumnus with a deep groan. “I’m a kidnapper for her, that’s what I am. Look at me, Daughter of Eve. Would you believe that I’m the sort of Faun to meet a poor innocent child in the wood, one that had never done me any harm, and pretend to be friendly with it, and invite it home to my cave, all for the sake of lulling it asleep and then handing it over to the White Witch?”

“No,” said Lucy. “I’m sure you wouldn’t do anything of the sort.”

“But I have,” said the Faun.

“Well,” said Lucy rather slowly (for she wanted to be truthful and yet not to be too hard on him), “well, that was pretty bad. But you’re so sorry for it that I’m sure you will never do it again.”

“Daughter of Eve, don’t you understand?” said the Faun. “It isn’t something I *have* done. I’m doing it now, this very moment.”

“What do you mean?” cried Lucy, turning very white.

“You are the child,” said Mr. Tumnus. “I had orders from the White Witch that if ever I saw a Son of Adam or a Daughter of Eve in the wood, I was to catch them and hand them over to her. And you are the first I ever

met. And I've pretended to be your friend and asked you to tea, and all the time I've been meaning to wait till you were asleep and then go and tell *her*."

"Oh but you won't, Mr. Tumnus," said Lucy. "You won't, will you? Indeed, indeed you really mustn't."

"And if I don't," said he, beginning to cry again, "she's sure to find out. And she'll have my tail cut off, and my horns sawn off, and my beard plucked out, and she'll wave her wand over my beautiful cloven hoofs and turn them into horrid solid hoofs like a wretched horse's. And if she is extra and specially angry she'll turn me into stone and I shall be only a statue of a Faun in her horrible house until the four thrones at Cair Paravel are filled — and goodness knows when that will happen, or whether it will ever happen at all."

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Tumnus," said Lucy. "But please let me go home."

"Of course I will," said the Faun. "Of course I've got to. I see that now. I hadn't known what Humans were like before I met you. Of course I can't give you up to the Witch; not now that I know you. But we must be off at once. I'll see you back to the lamp-post. I suppose you can find your own way from there back to Spare Oom and War Drobe?"

"I'm sure I can," said Lucy.

"We must go as quietly as we can," said Mr. Tumnus. "The whole wood is full of *her* spies. Even some of the trees are on her side."

They both got up and left the tea things on the table, and Mr. Tumnus once more put up his umbrella and gave Lucy his arm, and they went out into the snow. The journey back was not at all like the journey to the Faun's cave; they stole along as quickly as they could, without speaking a word, and Mr. Tumnus kept to the darkest places. Lucy was relieved when they reached the lamp-post again.

"Do you know your way from here, Daughter of Eve?" said Tumnus.

Lucy looked very hard between the trees and could just see in the distance a patch of light that looked like daylight. "Yes," she said, "I can see the wardrobe door."

"Then be off home as quick as you can," said the Faun, "and — c-can you ever forgive me for what I meant to do?"

"Why, of course I can," said Lucy, shaking him heartily by the hand. "And I do hope you won't get into dreadful trouble on my account."

“Farewell, Daughter of Eve,” said he. “Perhaps I may keep the handkerchief?”

“Rather!” said Lucy, and then ran towards the far-off patch of daylight as quickly as her legs would carry her. And presently instead of rough branches brushing past her she felt coats, and instead of crunching snow under her feet she felt wooden boards, and all at once she found herself jumping out of the wardrobe into the same empty room from which the whole adventure had started. She shut the wardrobe door tightly behind her and looked around, panting for breath. It was still raining and she could hear the voices of the others in the passage.

“I’m here,” she shouted. “I’m here. I’ve come back, I’m all right.”

CHAPTER III

Edmund and the Wardrobe

Lucy ran out of the empty room into the passage and found the other three.

"It's all right," she repeated, "I've come back."

"What on earth are you talking about, Lucy?" asked Susan.

"Why?" said Lucy in amazement, "haven't you all been wondering where I was?"

"So you've been hiding, have you?" said Peter. "Poor old Lu, hiding and nobody noticed! You'll have to hide longer than that if you want people to start looking for you."

"But I've been away for hours and hours," said Lucy.

The others all stared at one another.

"Batty!" said Edmund tapping his head. "Quite batty."

"What do you mean, Lu?" asked Peter.

"What I said," answered Lucy. "It was just after breakfast when I went into the wardrobe, and I've been away for hours and hours, and had tea, and all sorts of things have happened."

"Don't be silly, Lucy," said Susan. "We've only just come out of that room a moment ago, and you were there then."

"She's not being silly at all," said Peter, "she's just making up a story for fun, aren't you, Lu? And why shouldn't she?"

"No, Peter, I'm not," she said. "It's — it's a magic wardrobe. There's a wood inside it, and it's snowing, and there's a Faun and a witch and it's called Narnia; come and see."

The others did not know what to think, but Lucy was so excited that they all went back with her into the room. She rushed ahead of them, flung open the door of the wardrobe and cried, "Now! go in and see for yourselves."

"Why, you goose," said Susan, putting her head inside and pulling the fur coats apart, "it's just an ordinary wardrobe, look! there's the back of it."

Then everyone looked in and pulled the coats apart; and they all saw — Lucy herself saw — a perfectly ordinary wardrobe. There was no wood and no snow, only the back of the wardrobe, with hooks on it. Peter went in and rapped his knuckles on it to make sure that it was solid.

“A jolly good hoax, Lu,” he said as he came out again, “you have really taken us in, I must admit. We half believed you.”

“But it wasn’t a hoax at all,” said Lucy, “really and truly. It was all different a moment ago. Honestly it was. I promise.”

“Come, Lu,” said Peter, “that’s going a bit far. You’ve had your joke. Hadn’t you better drop it now?”

Lucy grew very red in the face and tried to say something, though she hardly knew what she was trying to say, and burst into tears.

For the next few days she was very miserable. She could have made it up with the others quite easily at any moment if she could have brought herself to say that the whole thing was only a story made up for fun. But Lucy was a very truthful girl and she knew that she was really in the right; and she could not bring herself to say this. The others who thought she was telling a lie, and a silly lie too, made her very unhappy. The two elder ones did this without meaning to do it, but Edmund could be spiteful, and on this occasion he was spiteful. He sneered and jeered at Lucy and kept on asking her if she’d found any other new countries in other cupboards all over the house. What made it worse was that these days ought to have been delightful. The weather was fine and they were out of doors from morning to night, bathing, fishing, climbing trees, birds’ nesting, and lying in the heather. But Lucy could not properly enjoy any of it. And so things went on until the next wet day.

That day, when it came to the afternoon and there was still no sign of a break in the weather, they decided to play hide-and-seek. Susan was “It” and as soon as the others scattered to hide, Lucy went to the room where the wardrobe was. She did not mean to hide in the wardrobe, because she knew that would only set the others talking again about the whole wretched business. But she did want to have one more look inside it; for by this time she was beginning to wonder herself whether Narnia and the Faun had not been a dream. The house was so large and complicated and full of hiding places that she thought she would have time to have one look into the wardrobe and then hide somewhere else. But as soon as she reached it she heard steps in the passage outside, and then there was nothing for it but to jump into the wardrobe and hold the door closed behind her. She did not shut it properly because she knew that it is very silly to shut oneself into a wardrobe, even if it is not a magic one.

Now the steps she had heard were those of Edmund; and he came into the room just in time to see Lucy vanishing into the wardrobe. He at once decided to get into it himself — not because he thought it a particularly good place to hide but because he wanted to go on teasing her about her imaginary country. He opened the door. There were the coats hanging up as usual, and a smell of mothballs, and darkness and silence, and no sign of Lucy. “She thinks I’m Susan come to catch her,” said Edmund to himself, “and so she’s keeping very quiet in at the back.” He jumped in and shut the door, forgetting what a very foolish thing this is to do. Then he began feeling about for Lucy in the dark. He had expected to find her in a few seconds and was very surprised when he did not. He decided to open the door again and let in some light. But he could not find the door either. He didn’t like this at all and began groping wildly in every direction; he even shouted out. “Lucy! Lu! Where are you? I know you’re here.”

There was no answer and Edmund noticed that his own voice had a curious sound — not the sound you expect in a cupboard but a kind of open-air sound. He also noticed that he was unexpectedly cold; and then he saw a light.

“Thank goodness,” said Edmund, “the door must have swung open of its own accord.” He forgot all about Lucy and went towards the light which he thought was the open door of the wardrobe. But instead of finding himself stepping out into the spare room he found himself stepping out from the shadow of some thick dark fir trees into an open place in the middle of a wood.

There was crisp, dry snow under his feet and more snow lying on the branches of the trees. Overhead there was a pale blue sky, the sort of sky one sees on a fine winter day in the morning. Straight ahead of him he saw between the tree trunks the sun, just rising, very red and clear. Everything was perfectly still, as if he were the only living creature in that country. There was not even a robin or a squirrel among the trees, and the wood stretched as far as he could see in every direction. He shivered.

He now remembered that he had been looking for Lucy; and also how unpleasant he had been to her about her “imaginary country” which now turned out not to have been imaginary at all. He thought that she must be somewhere quite close and so he shouted, “Lucy! Lucy! I’m here too — Edmund.”

There was no answer.

“She’s angry about all the things I’ve been saying lately,” thought Edmund. And though he did not like to admit that he had been wrong, he also did not much like being alone in this strange, cold, quiet place; so he shouted again.

“I say, Lu! I’m sorry I didn’t believe you. I see now you were right all along. Do come out. Make it Pax.”

Still there was no answer.

“Just like a girl,” said Edmund to himself, “sulking somewhere, and won’t accept an apology.” He looked round him again and decided he did not much like this place, and had almost made up his mind to go home, when he heard, very far off in the wood, a sound of bells. He listened and the sound came nearer and nearer and at last there swept into sight a sledge drawn by two reindeer.

The reindeer were about the size of Shetland ponies and their hair was so white that even the snow hardly looked white compared with them; their branching horns were gilded and shone like something on fire when the sunrise caught them. Their harness was of scarlet leather and covered with bells. On the sledge, driving the reindeer, sat a fat dwarf who would have been about three feet high if he had been standing. He was dressed in polar bear’s fur and on his head he wore a red hood with a long gold tassel hanging down from its point; his huge beard covered his knees and served him instead of a rug. But behind him, on a much higher seat in the middle of the sledge sat a very different person — a great lady, taller than any woman that Edmund had ever seen. She also was covered in white fur up to her throat and held a long straight golden wand in her right hand and wore a golden crown on her head. Her face was white — not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing sugar, except for her very red mouth. It was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern.

The sledge was a fine sight as it came sweeping towards Edmund with the bells jingling and the Dwarf cracking his whip and the snow flying up on each side of it.

“Stop!” said the Lady, and the Dwarf pulled the reindeer up so sharp that they almost sat down. Then they recovered themselves and stood champing their bits and blowing. In the frosty air the breath coming out of their nostrils looked like smoke.

“And what, pray, are you?” said the Lady, looking hard at Edmund.

“I’m — I’m — my name’s Edmund,” said Edmund rather awkwardly. He did not like the way she looked at him.

The Lady frowned. “Is that how you address a Queen?” she asked, looking sterner than ever.

“I beg your pardon, your Majesty, I didn’t know,” said Edmund.

“Not know the Queen of Narnia?” cried she. “Ha! You shall know us better hereafter. But I repeat — what are you?”

“Please, your Majesty,” said Edmund, “I don’t know what you mean. I’m at school — at least I was — it’s the holidays now.”

CHAPTER IV

Turkish Delight

“But what are you?” said the Queen again. “Are you a great overgrown dwarf that has cut off its beard.”

“No, your Majesty,” said Edmund, “I never had a beard, I’m a boy.”

“A boy!” said she. “Do you mean you are a Son of Adam?”

Edmund stood still, saying nothing. He was too confused by this time to understand what the question meant.

“I see you are an idiot, whatever else you may be,” said the Queen. “Answer me, once and for all, or I shall lose my patience. Are you human?”

“Yes, your Majesty,” said Edmund.

“And how, pray, did you come to enter my dominions?”

“Please, your Majesty, I came in through a wardrobe.”

“A wardrobe? What do you mean?”

“I — I opened a door and just found myself here, your Majesty,” said Edmund.

“Ha!” said the Queen, speaking more to herself than to him. “A door. A door from the world of men! I have heard of such things. This may wreck all. But he is only one, and he is easily dealt with.” As she spoke these words she rose from her seat and looked Edmund full in the face, her eyes flaming; at the same moment she raised her wand. Edmund felt sure that she was going to do something dreadful but he seemed unable to move. Then, just as he gave himself up for lost, she appeared to change her mind.

“My poor child,” she said in quite a different voice, “how cold you look! Come and sit with me here on the sledge and I will put my mantle around you and we will talk.”

Edmund did not like this arrangement at all but he dared not disobey; he stepped on to the sledge and sat at her feet, and she put a fold of her fur mantle around him and tucked it well in.

“Perhaps something hot to drink?” said the Queen. “Should you like that?”

“Yes please, your Majesty,” said Edmund, whose teeth were chattering.

The Queen took from somewhere among her wrappings a very small bottle which looked as if it were made of copper. Then, holding out her arm,

she let one drop fall from it on to the snow beside the sledge. Edmund saw the drop for a second in mid-air, shining like a diamond. But the moment it touched the snow there was a hissing sound and there stood a jewelled cup full of something that steamed. The Dwarf immediately took this and handed it to Edmund with a bow and a smile; not a very nice smile. Edmund felt much better as he began to sip the hot drink. It was something he had never tasted before, very sweet and foamy and creamy, and it warmed him right down to his toes.

"It is dull, Son of Adam, to drink without eating," said the Queen presently. "What would you like best to eat?"

"Turkish Delight, please, your Majesty," said Edmund.

The Queen let another drop fall from her bottle on to the snow, and instantly there appeared a round box, tied with green silk ribbon, which, when opened, turned out to contain several pounds of the best Turkish Delight. Each piece was sweet and light to the very centre and Edmund had never tasted anything more delicious. He was quite warm now, and very comfortable.

While he was eating the Queen kept asking him questions. At first Edmund tried to remember that it is rude to speak with one's mouth full, but soon he forgot about this and thought only of trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted to eat, and he never asked himself why the Queen should be so inquisitive. She got him to tell her that he had one brother and two sisters, and that one of his sisters had already been in Narnia and had met a Faun there, and that no one except himself and his brother and his sisters knew anything about Narnia. She seemed especially interested in the fact that there were four of them, and kept on coming back to it. "You are sure there are just four of you?" she asked. "Two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve, neither more nor less?" and Edmund, with his mouth full of Turkish Delight, kept on saying, "Yes, I told you that before," and forgetting to call her "Your Majesty" but she didn't seem to mind now.

At last the Turkish Delight was all finished and Edmund was looking very hard at the empty box and wishing that she would ask him whether he would like some more. Probably the Queen knew quite well what he was thinking; for she knew, though Edmund did not, that this was enchanted Turkish Delight and that anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till

they killed themselves. But she did not offer him any more. Instead, she said to him,

"Son of Adam, I should so much like to see your brother and your two sisters. Will you bring them to see me?"

"I'll try," said Edmund, still looking at the empty box.

"Because, if you did come again — bringing them with you of course — I'd be able to give you some more Turkish Delight. I can't do it now, the magic will only work once. In my own house it would be another matter."

"Why can't we go to your house now?" said Edmund. When he had first got on to the sledge he had been afraid that she might drive away with him to some unknown place from which he would not be able to get back, but he had forgotten about that fear now.

"It is a lovely place, my house," said the Queen. "I am sure you would like it. There are whole rooms full of Turkish Delight, and what's more, I have no children of my own. I want a nice boy whom I could bring up as a Prince and who would be King of Narnia when I am gone. While he was Prince he would wear a gold crown and eat Turkish Delight all day long; and you are much the cleverest and handsomest young man I've ever met. I think I would like to make you the Prince — some day, when you bring the others to visit me."

"Why not now?" said Edmund. His face had become very red and his mouth and fingers were sticky. He did not look either clever or handsome whatever the Queen might say.

"Oh, but if I took you there now," said she, "I shouldn't see your brother and your sisters. I very much want to know your charming relations. You are to be the Prince and — later on — the King; that is understood. But you must have courtiers and nobles. I will make your brother a Duke and your sisters Duchesses."

"There's nothing special about *them*," said Edmund, "and, anyway, I could always bring them some other time."

"Ah, but once you were in my house," said the Queen, "you might forget all about them. You would be enjoying yourself so much that you wouldn't want the bother of going to fetch them. No. You must go back to your own country now and come to me another day, *with them*, you understand. It is no good coming without them."

"But I don't even know the way back to my own country," pleaded Edmund.

“That’s easy,” answered the Queen. “Do you see that lamp?” She pointed with her wand and Edmund turned and saw the same lamp-post under which Lucy had met the Faun. “Straight on, beyond that, is the way to the World of Men. And now look the other way” — here she pointed in the opposite direction— “and tell me if you can see two little hills rising above the trees.”

“I think I can,” said Edmund.

“Well my house is between those two hills. So next time you come you have only to find the lamp-post and look for those two hills and walk through the wood till you reach my house. You had better keep the river on your right when you get to it. But remember — you must bring the others with you. I might have to be very angry with you if you came alone.”

“I’ll do my best,” said Edmund.

“And, by the way,” said the Queen, “you needn’t tell them about me. It would be fun to keep it a secret between us two, wouldn’t it? Make it a surprise for them. Just bring them along to the two hills — a clever boy like you will easily think of some excuse for doing that — and when you come to my house you could just say ‘Let’s see who lives here’ or something like that. I am sure that would be best. If your sister has met one of the Fauns, she may have heard strange stories about me — nasty stories that might make her afraid to come to me. Fauns will say anything, you know, and now—”

“Please, please,” said Edmund suddenly, “please couldn’t I have just one piece of Turkish Delight to eat on the way home?”

“No, no,” said the Queen with a laugh, “you must wait till next time.” While she spoke, she signalled to the Dwarf to drive on, but as the sledge swept away out of sight, the Queen waved to Edmund calling out, “Next time! Next time! Don’t forget. Come soon.”

Edmund was still staring after the sledge when he heard someone calling his own name, and looking round he saw Lucy coming towards him from another part of the wood.

“Oh, Edmund!” she cried. “So you’ve got in too! Isn’t it wonderful, and now—”

“All right,” said Edmund, “I see you were right and it is a magic wardrobe after all. I’ll say I’m sorry if you like. But where on earth have you been all this time? I’ve been looking for you everywhere.”

“If I’d known you had got in I’d have waited for you,” said Lucy who was too happy and excited to notice how snappishly Edmund spoke or how flushed and strange his face was. “I’ve been having lunch with dear Mr. Tumnus, the Faun, and he’s very well and the White Witch has done nothing to him for letting me go, so he thinks she can’t have found out and perhaps everything is going to be all right after all.”

“The White Witch?” said Edmund, “who’s she?”

“She is a perfectly terrible person,” said Lucy. “She calls herself the Queen of Narnia though she has no right to be queen at all, and all the Fauns and Dryads and Naiads and dwarfs and animals — at least all the good ones — simply hate her. And she can turn people into stone and do all kinds of horrible things. And she has made a magic so that it is always winter in Narnia — always winter, but it never gets to Christmas. And she drives about on a sledge, drawn by a reindeer, with her wand in her hand and a crown on her head.”

Edmund was already feeling uncomfortable from having eaten too many sweets, and when he heard that the Lady he had made friends with was a dangerous witch he felt even more uncomfortable. But he still wanted to taste that Turkish Delight again more than he wanted anything else.

“Who told you all that stuff about the White Witch?” he asked.

“Mr. Tumnus, the Faun,” said Lucy.

“You can’t always believe what Fauns say,” said Edmund, trying to sound as if he knew far more about them than Lucy.

“Who said so?” asked Lucy.

“Everyone knows it,” said Edmund, “ask anybody you like. But it’s pretty poor sport standing here in the snow. Let’s go home.”

“Yes, let’s,” said Lucy. “Oh Edmund, I *am* glad you’ve got in too. The others will have to believe in Narnia now that both of us have been there. What fun it will be.”

But Edmund secretly thought that it would not be as good fun for him as for her. He would have to admit that Lucy had been right, before all the others, and he felt sure the others would all be on the side of the Fauns and the animals; but he was already more than half on the side of the Witch. He did not know what he would say, or how he would keep his secret once they were all talking about Narnia.

By this time they had walked a good way. Then suddenly they felt coats around them instead of branches and next moment they were both standing

outside the wardrobe in the empty room.

“I say,” said Lucy, “you do look awful, Edmund. Don’t you feel well?”

“I’m all right,” said Edmund, but this was not true. He was feeling very sick.

“Come on then,” said Lucy, “let’s find the others. What a lot we shall have to tell them! And what wonderful adventures we shall have now that we’re all in it together.”

CHAPTER V

Back on This Side of the Door

Because the game of hide-and-seek was still going on, it took Edmund and Lucy some time to find the others. But when at last they were all together (which happened in the long room, where the suit of armour was) Lucy burst out,

"Peter! Susan! It's all true. Edmund has seen it too. There is a country you can get to through the wardrobe. Edmund and I both got in. We met one another in there, in the wood. Go on, Edmund; tell them all about it."

"What's all this about, Ed?" said Peter.

And now we come to one of the nastiest things in this story. Up to that moment Edmund had been feeling sick, and sulky, and annoyed with Lucy for being right, but he hadn't made up his mind what to do. When Peter suddenly asked him the question he decided all at once to do the meanest and most spiteful thing he could think of. He decided to let Lucy down.

"Tell us, Ed," said Susan.

And Edmund gave a very superior look as if he were far older than Lucy (there was really only a year's difference) and then a little snigger and said, "Oh, yes, Lucy and I have been playing — pretending that all her story about a country in the wardrobe is true. Just for fun, of course. There's nothing there really."

Poor Lucy gave Edmund one look and rushed out of the room.

Edmund, who was becoming a nastier person every minute, thought that he had scored a great success, and went on at once to say, "There she goes again. What's the matter with her? That's the worst of young kids, they always—"

"Look here," said Peter turning on him savagely, "shut up! You've been perfectly beastly to Lu ever since she started this nonsense about the wardrobe and now you go playing games with her about it and setting her off again. I believe you did it simply out of spite."

"But it's all nonsense," said Edmund, very taken aback.

"Of course it's all nonsense," said Peter, "that's just the point. Lu was perfectly all right when we left home, but since we've been down here she seems to be either going queer in the head or else turning into a most

frightful liar. But whichever it is, what good do you think you'll do by jeering and nagging at her one day and encouraging her the next?"

"I thought — I thought," said Edmund; but he couldn't think of anything to say.

"You didn't think anything at all," said Peter, "it's just spite. You've always liked being beastly to anyone smaller than yourself; we've seen that at school before now."

"Do stop it," said Susan; "it won't make things any better having a row between you two. Let's go and find Lucy."

It was not surprising that when they found Lucy, a good deal later, everyone could see that she had been crying. Nothing they could say to her made any difference. She stuck to her story and said:

"I don't care what you think, and I don't care what you say. You can tell the Professor or you can write to Mother or you can do anything you like. I know I've met a Faun in there and — I wish I'd stayed there and you are all beasts, beasts."

It was an unpleasant evening. Lucy was miserable and Edmund was beginning to feel that his plan wasn't working as well as he had expected. The two older ones were really beginning to think that Lucy was out of her mind. They stood in the passage talking about it in whispers long after she had gone to bed.

The result was that next morning they decided that they really would go and tell the whole thing to the Professor. "He'll write to Father if he thinks there is really something wrong with Lu," said Peter; "it's getting beyond us." So they went and knocked at the study door, and the Professor said "Come in," and got up and found chairs for them and said he was quite at their disposal. Then he sat listening to them with the tips of his fingers pressed together and never interrupting, till they had finished the whole story. After that he said nothing for quite a long time. Then he cleared his throat and said the last thing either of them expected.

"How do you know?" he asked, "that your sister's story is not true?"

"Oh, but—" began Susan, and then stopped. Anyone could see from the old man's face that he was perfectly serious. Then Susan pulled herself together and said, "But Edmund said they had only been pretending."

"That is a point," said the Professor, "which certainly deserves consideration; very careful consideration. For instance — if you will excuse me for asking the question — does your experience lead you to regard your

brother or your sister as the more reliable? I mean, which is the more truthful?”

“That’s just the funny thing about it, Sir,” said Peter. “Up till now, I’d have said Lucy every time.”

“And what do you think, my dear?” said the Professor, turning to Susan.

“Well,” said Susan, “in general, I’d say the same as Peter, but this couldn’t be true — all this about the wood and the Faun.”

“That is more than I know,” said the Professor, “and a charge of lying against someone whom you have always found truthful is a very serious thing; a very serious thing indeed.”

“We were afraid it mightn’t even be lying,” said Susan. “We thought there might be something wrong with Lucy.”

“Madness, you mean?” said the Professor quite coolly. “Oh, you can make your minds easy about that. One has only to look at her and talk to her to see that she is not mad.”

“But then,” said Susan and stopped. She had never dreamed that a grown-up would talk like the Professor and didn’t know what to think.

“Logic!” said the Professor half to himself. “Why don’t they teach logic at these schools? There are only three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth. You know she doesn’t tell lies and it is obvious that she is not mad. For the moment then and unless any further evidence turns up, we must assume that she is telling the truth.”

Susan looked at him very hard and was quite sure from the expression on his face that he was not making fun of them.

“But how could it be true, Sir?” said Peter.

“Why do you say that?” asked the Professor.

“Well, for one thing,” said Peter, “if it was real why doesn’t everyone find this country every time they go to the wardrobe? I mean, there was nothing there when we looked; even Lucy didn’t pretend there was.”

“What has that to do with it?” said the Professor.

“Well, Sir, if things are real, they’re there all the time.”

“Are they?” said the Professor; and Peter did not know quite what to say.

“But there was no time,” said Susan, “Lucy had had no time to have gone anywhere, even if there was such a place. She came running after us the very moment we were out of the room. It was less than a minute, and she pretended to have been away for hours.”

“That is the very thing that makes her story so likely to be true,” said the Professor. “If there really is a door in this house that leads to some other world (and I should warn you that this is a very strange house, and even I know very little about it) — if, I say, she had got into another world, I should not be at all surprised to find that that other world had a separate time of its own; so that however long you stayed there it would never take up any of our time. On the other hand, I don’t think many girls of her age would invent that idea for themselves. If she had been pretending, she would have hidden for a reasonable time before coming out and telling her story.”

“But do you really mean, Sir,” said Peter, “that there could be other worlds — all over the place, just round the corner — like that?”

“Nothing is more probable,” said the Professor, taking off his spectacles and beginning to polish them, while he muttered to himself, “I wonder what they do teach them at these schools.”

“But what are we to do?” said Susan. She felt that the conversation was beginning to get off the point.

“My dear young lady,” said the Professor, suddenly looking up with a very sharp expression at both of them, “there is one plan which no one has yet suggested and which is well worth trying.”

“What’s that?” said Susan.

“We might all try minding our own business,” said he. And that was the end of that conversation.

After this things were a good deal better for Lucy. Peter saw to it that Edmund stopped jeering at her, and neither she nor anyone else felt inclined to talk about the wardrobe at all. It had become a rather alarming subject. And so for a time it looked as if all the adventures were coming to an end; but that was not to be.

This house of the Professor’s — which even he knew so little about — was so old and famous that people from all over England used to come and ask permission to see over it. It was the sort of house that is mentioned in guide books and even in histories; and well it might be, for all manner of stories were told about it, some of them even stranger than the one I am telling you now. And when parties of sight-seers arrived and asked to see the house, the Professor always gave them permission, and Mrs. Macready, the housekeeper, showed them round, telling them about the pictures and the armour, and the rare books in the library. Mrs. Macready was not fond

of children, and did not like to be interrupted when she was telling visitors all the things she knew. She had said to Susan and Peter almost on the first morning (along with a good many other instructions) “And please remember you’re to keep out of the way whenever I’m taking a party over the house.”

“Just as if any of us would want to waste half the morning trailing round with a crowd of strange grown-ups!” said Edmund, and the other three thought the same. That was how the adventures began for the second time.

A few mornings later Peter and Edmund were looking at the suit of armour and wondering if they could take it to bits when the two girls rushed into the room and said, “Look out! Here comes the Macready and a whole gang with her.”

“Sharp’s the word,” said Peter, and all four made off through the door at the far end of the room. But when they had got out into the Green Room and beyond it, into the library, they suddenly heard voices ahead of them, and realised that Mrs. Macready must be bringing her party of sight-seers up the back stairs — instead of up the front stairs as they had expected. And after that — whether it was that they lost their heads, or that Mrs. Macready was trying to catch them, or that some magic in the house had come to life and was chasing them into Narnia — they seemed to find themselves being followed everywhere, until at last Susan said, “Oh bother those trippers! Here — let’s get into the Wardrobe Room till they’ve passed. No one will follow us in there.” But the moment they were inside they heard voices in the passage — and then someone fumbling at the door — and then they saw the handle turning.

“Quick!” said Peter, “there’s nowhere else,” and flung open the wardrobe. All four of them bundled inside it and sat there, panting, in the dark. Peter held the door closed but did not shut it; for, of course, he remembered, as every sensible person does, that you should never never shut yourself up in a wardrobe.

CHAPTER VI

Into the Forest

“I wish the Macready would hurry up and take all these people away,” said Susan presently, “I’m getting horribly cramped.”

“And what a filthy smell of camphor!” said Edmund.

“I expect the pockets of these coats are full of it,” said Susan, “to keep away moths.”

“There’s something sticking into my back,” said Peter.

“And isn’t it cold?” said Susan.

“Now that you mention it, it is cold,” said Peter, “and hang it all, it’s wet too. What’s the matter with this place? I’m sitting on something wet. It’s getting wetter every minute.” He struggled to his feet.

“Let’s get out,” said Edmund, “they’ve gone.”

“O-o-oh!” said Susan suddenly. And everyone asked her what was the matter.

“I’m sitting against a tree,” said Susan, “and look! It’s getting lighter — over there.”

“By jove, you’re right,” said Peter, “and look there — and there. It’s trees all round. And this wet stuff is snow. Why, I do believe we’ve got into Lucy’s wood after all.”

And now there was no mistaking it and all four children stood blinking in the daylight of a winter day. Behind them were coats hanging on pegs, in front of them were snow-covered trees.

Peter turned at once to Lucy.

“I apologise for not believing you,” he said, “I’m sorry. Will you shake hands?”

“Of course,” said Lucy, and did.

“And now,” said Susan, “what do we do next?”

“Do?” said Peter, “why, go and explore the wood, of course.”

“Ugh!” said Susan, stamping her feet, “it’s pretty cold. What about putting on some of these coats?”

“They’re not ours,” said Peter doubtfully.

“I am sure nobody would mind,” said Susan. “It isn’t as if we wanted to take them out of the house; we shan’t take them even out of the wardrobe.”

“I never thought of that, Su,” said Peter. “Of course, now you put it that way, I see. No one could say you had bagged a coat as long as you leave it in the wardrobe where you found it. And I suppose this whole country is in the wardrobe.”

They immediately carried out Susan’s very sensible plan. The coats were rather too big for them so that they came down to their heels and looked more like royal robes than coats when they had put them on. But they all felt a good deal warmer and each thought the others looked better in their new get-up and more suitable to the landscape.

“We can pretend we are Arctic explorers,” said Lucy.

“This is going to be exciting enough without any pretending,” said Peter, as he began leading the way forward into the forest. There were heavy darkish clouds overhead and it looked as if there might be more snow before night.

“I say,” began Edmund presently, “oughtn’t we to be bearing a bit more to the left, that is, if we are aiming for the lamp-post.” He had forgotten for the moment that he must pretend never to have been in the wood before. The moment the words were out of his mouth he realised that he had given himself away. Everyone stopped; everyone stared at him. Peter whistled.

“So you really were here,” he said, “that time Lu said she’d met you in here — and you made out she was telling lies.”

There was a dead silence. “Well, of all the poisonous little beasts—” said Peter and shrugged his shoulders and said no more. There seemed, indeed, no more to say and presently the four resumed their journey; but Edmund was saying to himself, “I’ll pay you all out for this, you pack of stuck-up, self-satisfied prigs.”

“Where *are* we going anyway?” said Susan, chiefly for the sake of changing the subject.

“I think Lu ought to be the leader,” said Peter, “goodness knows she deserves it. Where will you take us, Lu?”

“What about going to see Mr. Tumnus?” said Lucy. “He’s the nice Faun I told you about.”

Everyone agreed to this and off they went, walking briskly and stamping their feet. Lucy proved a good leader. At first she wondered whether she would be able to find the way, but she recognised an odd-looking tree in one place and a stump in another and brought them on to where the ground

became uneven and into the little valley and at last to the very door of Mr. Tumnus' cave. But there a terrible surprise awaited them.

The door had been wrenched off its hinges and broken to bits. Inside, the cave was dark and cold and had the damp feel and smell of a place that had not been lived in for several days. Snow had drifted in from the doorway and was heaped on the floor, mixed with something black, which turned out to be the charred sticks and ashes from the fire. Someone had apparently flung it about the room and then stamped it out. The crockery lay smashed on the floor and the picture of the Faun's father had been slashed into shreds with a knife.

"This is a pretty good wash-out," said Edmund, "not much good coming here."

"What's this?" said Peter, stooping down. He had just noticed a piece of paper which had been nailed through the carpet to the floor.

"Is there anything written on it?" asked Susan.

"Yes, I think there is," answered Peter, "but I can't read it in this light. Let's get out into the open air."

They all went out in the daylight and crowded round Peter as he read out the following words: —

"The former occupant of these premises, the Faun Tumnus, is under arrest and awaiting his trial on a charge of High Treason against her Imperial Majesty Jadis, Queen of Narnia, Chatelaine of Cair Paravel, Empress of the Lone Islands, etc., also of comforting her said Majesty's enemies, harbouring spies and fraternising with Humans.

Signed FENRIS ULF,
Captain of the Secret Police,

LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!"

The children stared at each other.

"I don't know that I'm going to like this place after all," said Susan.

"Who is this Queen, Lu?" said Peter. "Do you know anything about her?"

"She isn't a real queen at all," answered Lucy, "she's a horrible witch, the White Witch. Everyone — all the wood people — hate her. She has

made an enchantment over the whole country so that it is always winter here and never Christmas."

"I — I wonder if there's any point in going on," said Susan. "I mean, it doesn't seem particularly safe here and it looks as if it won't be much fun either. And it's getting colder every minute, and we've brought nothing to eat. What about just going home?"

"Oh, but we can't, we can't," said Lucy suddenly. "Don't you see? We can't just go home, not after this. It is all on my account that the poor Faun has got into this trouble. He hid me from the Witch and showed me the way back. That's what it means by comforting the Queen's enemies and fraternising with Humans. We simply must try to rescue him."

"A lot *we* could do!" said Edmund, "when we haven't even got anything to eat!"

"Shut up — you!" said Peter, who was still very angry with Edmund. "What do you think, Susan?"

"I've a horrid feeling that Lu is right," said Susan. "I don't want to go a step further and I wish we'd never come. But I think we must try to do something for Mr. Whatever-his-name is — I mean the Faun."

"That's what I feel too," said Peter. "I'm worried about having no food with us. I'd vote for going back and getting something from the larder, only there doesn't seem to be any certainty of getting into this country again when once you've got out of it. I think we'll have to go on."

"So do I," said both the girls.

"If only we knew where the poor chap was imprisoned!" said Peter.

They were all still, wondering what to do next, when Lucy said, "Look! There's a robin, with such a red breast. It's the first bird I've seen here. I say! — I wonder can birds talk in Narnia? It almost looks as if it wanted to say something to us." Then she turned to the Robin and said, "Please, can you tell us where Tumnus the Faun has been taken to?" As she said this she took a step towards the bird. It at once hopped away but only as far as to the next tree. There it perched and looked at them very hard as if it understood all they had been saying. Almost without noticing that they had done so, the four children went a step or two nearer to it. At this the Robin flew away again to the next tree and once more looked at them very hard. (You couldn't have found a robin with a redder chest or a brighter eye.)

"Do you know," said Lucy, "I really believe he means us to follow him."

"I've an idea he does," said Susan, "what do you think, Peter?"

“Well, we might as well try it,” answered Peter.

The Robin appeared to understand the matter thoroughly. It kept going from tree to tree, always a few yards ahead of them but always so near that they could easily follow it. In this way it led them on, slightly down hill. Wherever the Robin alighted a little shower of snow would fall off the branch. Presently the clouds parted overhead and the winter sun came out and the snow all around them grew dazzlingly bright. They had been travelling in this way for about half an hour, with the two girls in front, when Edmund said to Peter, “If you’re not still too high and mighty to talk to me, I’ve something to say which you’d better listen to.”

“What is it?” asked Peter.

“Hush! Not so loud,” said Edmund, “there’s no good frightening the girls. But have you realised what we’re doing?”

“What?” said Peter, lowering his voice to a whisper.

“We’re following a guide we know nothing about. How do we know which side that bird is on? Why shouldn’t it be leading us into a trap?”

“That’s a nasty idea. Still — a robin you know. They’re good birds in all the stories I’ve ever read. I’m sure a robin wouldn’t be on the wrong side.”

“If it comes to that, which *is* the right side? How do we know that the fauns are in the right and the Queen (yes, I know we’ve been *told* she’s a witch) is in the wrong? We don’t really know anything about either.”

“The Faun saved Lucy.”

“He *said* he did. But how do we know? And there’s another thing too. Has anyone the least idea of the way home from here?”

“Great Scott!” said Peter, “I hadn’t thought of that.”

“And no chance of dinner either,” said Edmund.

CHAPTER VII

A Day with the Beavers

While the two boys were whispering behind, both the girls suddenly cried "Oh!" and stopped. "The robin!" cried Lucy, "the robin. It's flown away." And so it had — right out of sight.

"And now what are we to do?" said Edmund, giving Peter a look which was as much as to say "What did I tell you?"

"Sh! Look!" said Susan.

"What?" said Peter.

"There's something moving among the trees — over there to the left."

They all stared as hard as they could, and no one felt very comfortable.

"There it goes again," said Susan presently.

"I saw it that time too," said Peter. "It's still there. It's just gone behind that big tree."

"What is it?" asked Lucy, trying very hard not to sound nervous.

"Whatever it is," said Peter, "it's dodging us. It's something that doesn't want to be seen."

"Let's go home," said Susan. And then, though nobody said it out loud, everyone suddenly realised the same fact that Edmund had whispered to Peter at the end of the last chapter. They were lost.

"What's it like?" said Lucy.

"It's — it's a kind of animal," said Susan; and then, "Look! Look! Quick! There it is."

They all saw it this time, a whiskered furry face which had looked out at them from behind a tree. But this time it didn't immediately draw back. Instead, the animal put its paw against its mouth just as humans put their finger on their lips when they are signalling to you to be quiet. Then it disappeared again. The children all stood holding their breaths.

A moment later the stranger came out from behind the tree, glanced all round as if it were afraid someone was watching, said "Hush," made signs to them to join it in the thicker bit of wood where it was standing, and then once more disappeared.

"I know what it is," said Peter, "it's a beaver. I saw the tail."

“It wants us to go to it,” said Susan, “and it is warning us not to make a noise.”

“I know,” said Peter. “The question is are we to go to it or not? What do you think, Lu?”

“I think it’s a nice beaver,” said Lucy.

“Yes, but how do we *know*?” said Edmund.

“Shan’t we have to risk it?” said Susan. “I mean, it’s no good just standing here and I feel I want some dinner.”

At this moment the Beaver again popped its head out from behind the tree and beckoned earnestly to them.

“Come on,” said Peter, “let’s give it a try. All keep close together. We ought to be a match for one beaver if it turns out to be an enemy.”

So the children all got close together and walked up to the tree and in behind it, and there, sure enough, they found the Beaver; but it still drew back, saying to them in a hoarse throaty whisper, “Further in, come further in. Right in here. We’re not safe in the open!” Only when it had led them into a dark spot where four trees grew so close together that their boughs met and the brown earth and pine needles could be seen underfoot because no snow had been able to fall there, did it begin to talk to them.

“Are you the Sons of Adam and the Daughters of Eve?” it said.

“We’re some of them,” said Peter.

“S-s-s-sh!” said the Beaver, “not so loud please. We’re not safe even here.”

“Why, who are you afraid of?” said Peter. “There’s no one here but ourselves.”

“There are the trees,” said the Beaver. “They’re always listening. Most of them are on our side, but there *are* trees that would betray us to *her*; you know who I mean,” and it nodded its head several times.

“If it comes to talking about sides,” said Edmund, “how do we know you’re a friend?”

“Not meaning to be rude, Mr. Beaver,” added Peter, “but you see, we’re strangers.”

“Quite right, quite right,” said the Beaver. “Here is my token.” With these words it held up to them a little white object. They all looked at it in surprise, till suddenly Lucy said, “Oh, of course. It’s my handkerchief — the one I gave to poor Mr. Tumnus.”

“That’s right,” said the Beaver. “Poor fellow, he got wind of the arrest before it actually happened and handed this over to me. He said that if anything happened to him I must meet you here and take you on to—” Here the Beaver’s voice sank into silence and it gave one or two very mysterious nods. Then signalling to the children to stand as close around it as they possibly could, so that their faces were actually tickled by its whiskers, it added in a low whisper —

“They say Aslan is on the move — perhaps has already landed.”

And now a very curious thing happened. None of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do; but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different. Perhaps it has sometimes happened to you in a dream that someone says something which you don’t understand but in the dream it feels as if it had some enormous meaning — either a terrifying one which turns the whole dream into a nightmare or else a lovely meaning too lovely to put into words, which makes the dream so beautiful that you remember it all your life and are always wishing you could get into that dream again. It was like that now. At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in his inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realise that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer.

“And what about Mr. Tumnus,” said Lucy; “where is he?”

“S-s-s-sh,” said the Beaver, “not here. I must bring you where we can have a real talk and also dinner.”

No one except Edmund felt any difficulty about trusting the Beaver now and everyone, including Edmund, was very glad to hear the word “dinner.” They therefore all hurried along behind their new friend who led them at a surprisingly quick pace, and always in the thickest parts of the forest, for over an hour. Everyone was feeling very tired and very hungry when suddenly the trees began to get thinner in front of them and the ground to fall steeply down hill. A minute later they came out under the open sky (the sun was still shining) and found themselves looking down on a fine sight.

They were standing on the edge of a steep, narrow valley at the bottom of which ran — at least it would have been running if it hadn’t been frozen — a fairly large river. Just below them a dam had been built across this

river; and when they saw it everyone suddenly remembered that of course beavers are always making dams and felt quite sure that Mr. Beaver had made this one. They also noticed that he now had a sort of modest expression on his face — the sort of look people have when you are visiting a garden they've made or reading a story they've written. So it was only common politeness when Susan said, "What a lovely dam!" And Mr. Beaver didn't say "Hush" this time but "Merely a trifle! Merely a trifle! And it isn't really finished!"

Above the dam there was what ought to have been a deep pool but was now of course a level floor of dark green ice. And below the dam, much lower down, was more ice, but instead of being smooth this was all frozen into the foamy and wavy shapes in which the water had been rushing along at the very moment when the frost came. And where the water had been trickling over and spurting through the dam there was now a glittering wall of icicles, as if the side of the dam had been covered all over with flowers and wreaths and festoons of the purest sugar. And out in the middle, and partly on the top of the dam, was a funny little house shaped rather like an enormous bee-hive and from a hole in the roof smoke was going up, so that when you saw it (especially if you were hungry) you at once thought of cooking and became hungrier than you were before.

That was what the others chiefly noticed, but Edmund noticed something else. A little lower down the river there was another small river which came down another small valley to join it. And looking up that valley, Edmund could see two small hills, and he was almost sure they were the two hills which the White Witch had pointed out to him when he parted from her at the lamp-post that other day. And then between them, he thought, must be her palace, only a mile off or less. And he thought about Turkish Delight and about being a King ("And I wonder how Peter will like that?" he asked himself) and horrible ideas came into his head.

"Here we are," said Mr. Beaver, "and it looks as if Mrs. Beaver is expecting us. I'll lead the way. But be careful and don't slip."

The top of the dam was wide enough to walk on, though not (for humans) a very nice place to walk because it was covered with ice, and though the frozen pool was level with it on one side, there was a nasty drop to the lower river on the other. Along this route Mr. Beaver led them in single file right out to the middle where they could look a long way up the

river and a long way down it. And when they had reached the middle they were at the door of the house.

“Here we are, Mrs. Beaver,” said Mr. Beaver, “I’ve found them. Here are the Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve” — and they all went in.

The first thing Lucy noticed as she went in was a burring sound, and the first thing she saw was a kind-looking old she-beaver sitting in the corner with a thread in her mouth working busily at her sewing machine and it was from it that the sound came. She stopped her work and got up as soon as the children came in.

“So you’ve come at last!” she said, holding out both her wrinkled old paws. “At last! To think that ever I should live to see this day! The potatoes are on boiling and the kettle’s singing and I daresay, Mr. Beaver, you’ll get us some fish.”

“That I will,” said Mr. Beaver and he went out of the house (Peter went with him) and across the ice of the deep pool to where he had a little hole in the ice which he kept open every day with his hatchet. They took a pail with them, Mr. Beaver sat down quietly at the edge of the hole (he didn’t seem to mind it’s being so chilly) looked hard into it, then suddenly shot in his paw, and before you could say Jack Robinson had whisked out a beautiful trout. Then he did it all over again until they had a fine catch of fish.

Meanwhile the girls were helping Mrs. Beaver to fill the the kettle and lay the table and cut the bread and put the plates in the oven to heat and draw a huge jug of beer for Mr. Beaver from a barrel which stood in one corner of the house, and to put on the frying pan and get the dripping hot. Lucy thought the Beavers had a very snug little home though it was not at all like Mr. Tumnus’s cave. There were no books or pictures and instead of beds there were bunks, like on board ship, built into the wall. And there were hams and strings of onions hanging from the roof and against the walls were gum boots and oilskins and hatchets and pairs of shears and spades and trowels and things for carrying mortar in and fishing rods and fishing nets and sacks. And the cloth on the table tho’ very clean was very rough.

Just as the frying pan was nicely hissing Peter and Mr. Beaver came in with the fish which Mr. Beaver had already opened with his knife and cleaned out in the open air. You can think how good the new-caught fish smelled while they were frying and how the hungry children longed for them to be done and how very much hungrier still they had become before

Mrs. Beaver said, “Now we’re nearly ready.” Susan drained the potatoes and then put them all back in the empty pot to dry on the side of the range while Lucy was helping Mrs. Beaver to dish up the trout, so that in a very few minutes everyone was drawing up stools (it was all three-legged stools in the Beavers’ house except for Mrs. Beaver’s own special rocking chair beside the fire) and preparing to enjoy themselves. There was a jug of creamy milk for the children (Mr. Beaver stuck to beer) and a great big lump of deep yellow butter in the middle of the table from which everyone took as much as he wanted to go with his potatoes and all the children thought — and I agree with them — that there’s nothing to beat good freshwater fish if you eat it when it has been alive half an hour ago and has come out of the pan half a minute ago. And when they had finished the fish Mrs. Beaver brought unexpectedly out of the oven a great and gloriously sticky marmalade roll, steaming hot, and at the same time moved the kettle on to the fire, so that when they had finished the marmalade roll the tea was made and ready to be poured out. And when each person had got his (or her) cup of tea, each person shoved back his (or her) stool so as to be able to lean against the wall and gave a long sigh of contentment.

“And now,” said Mr. Beaver pushing away his empty beer mug and pulling his cup of tea towards him, “if you’ll just wait till I’ve got my pipe lit up and going nicely — why, now we can get to business. It’s snowing again,” he added, cocking his eye at the window. “That’s all the better, because it means we shan’t have any visitors; and if anyone should have been trying to follow you, why he won’t find any tracks.”

CHAPTER VIII

What Happened after Dinner

"And now," said Lucy, "do please tell us what's happened to Mr. Tumnus."

"Ah, that's bad," said Mr. Beaver shaking his head. "That's a very, very bad business. There's no doubt he was taken off by the police. I got that from a bird who saw it done."

"But where's he been taken to?" asked Lucy.

"Well, they were heading northwards when they were last seen and we all know what that means."

"No, we don't," said Susan. But Mr. Beaver shook his head in a very gloomy fashion.

"I'm afraid it means they were taking him to her house," said Mr. Beaver.

"But what'll they do to him, Mr. Beaver?" gasped Lucy.

"Well," said Mr. Beaver, "you can't exactly say for sure. But there's not many taken in there that ever comes out again. Statues. All full of statues they say it is — in the courtyard and up the stairs and in the hall. People she's turned—" (he paused and shuddered) "turned into stone."

"But, Mr. Beaver," said Lucy, "can't we — I mean we *must* do something to save him. It's too dreadful and it's all on my account."

"I don't doubt you'd save him if you could, dearie," said Mrs. Beaver, "but you've no chance of getting into that House against her will and ever coming out alive."

"Couldn't we have some stratagem?" said Peter. "I mean couldn't we dress up as something, or pretend to be — oh, pedlars or anything — or watch till she was gone out — or — oh, hang it all, there must be *some* way. This Faun saved my sister at his own risk, Mr. Beaver. We can't just leave him to be — to be — to have that done to him."

"It's no good, Son of Adam," said Mr. Beaver, "no good *your* trying, of all people. But now that Aslan is on the move—"

"Oh, yes! Tell us about Aslan!" said several voices at once; for once again that strange feeling — like the first signs of spring, like good news, had come over them.

"Who is Aslan?" asked Susan.

“Aslan?” said Mr. Beaver, “Why don’t you know? He’s the King. He’s the Lord of the whole wood, but not often here, you understand. Never in my time or my father’s time. But the word has reached us that he has come back. He is in Narnia at this moment. He’ll settle the White Queen all right. It is he, not you, that will save Mr. Tumnus.”

“She won’t turn him into stone too?” said Edmund.

“Lord love you, Son of Adam, what a simple thing to say!” answered Mr. Beaver with a great laugh. “Turn *him* into stone? If she can stand on her two feet and look him in the face it’ll be the most she can do and more than I expect of her. No, no. He’ll put all to rights as it says in an old rhyme in these parts: —

Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.

You’ll understand when you see him.”

“But shall we see him?” asked Susan.

“Why, Daughter of Eve, that’s what I brought you here for. I’m to lead you where you shall meet him,” said Mr. Beaver.

“Is — is he a man?” asked Lucy.

“Aslan a man!” said Mr. Beaver sternly. “Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Don’t you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion — *the* Lion, the great Lion.”

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he — quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver, “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver. “Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

“I’m longing to see him,” said Peter, “even if I do feel frightened when it comes to the point.”

“That’s right, Son of Adam,” said Mr. Beaver bringing his paw down on the table with a crash that made all the cups and saucers rattle. “And so you shall. Word has been sent that you *are* to meet him, to-morrow if you can, at the Stone Table.”

“Where’s that?” said Lucy.

“I’ll show you,” said Mr. Beaver. “It’s down the river, a good step from here. I’ll take you to it!”

“But meanwhile what about poor Mr. Tumnus?” said Lucy.

“The quickest way you can help him is by going to meet Aslan,” said Mr. Beaver, “once he’s with us, then we can begin doing things. Not that we don’t need you too. For that’s another of the old rhymes: —

When Adam’s flesh and Adam’s bone
Sits at Cair Paravel in throne,
The evil time will be over and done.

So things must be drawing near their end now he’s come and you’ve come. We’ve heard of Aslan coming into these parts before — long ago, nobody can say when. But there’s never been any of your race here before.”

“That’s what I don’t understand, Mr. Beaver,” said Peter, “I mean isn’t the Witch herself human?”

“She’d like us to believe it,” said Mr. Beaver, “and it’s on that that she bases her claim to be Queen. But she’s no Daughter of Eve. She comes of your father Adam’s—” (here Mr. Beaver bowed) “your father Adam’s first wife, her they called Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn. That’s what she comes from on one side. And on the other she comes of the giants. No, no, there isn’t a drop of real Human blood in the Witch.”

“That’s why she’s bad all through, Mr. Beaver,” said Mrs. Beaver.

“True enough, Mrs. Beaver,” replied he, “there may be two views about Humans (meaning no offence to the present company). But there’s no two views about things that look like Humans and aren’t.”

“I’ve known good dwarfs,” said Mrs. Beaver.

“So’ve I, now you come to speak of it,” said her husband, “but precious few, and they were the ones least like men. But in general, take my advice, when you meet anything that’s going to be Human and isn’t yet, or used to be Human once and isn’t now, or ought to be Human and isn’t, you keep your eyes on it and feel for your hatchet. And that’s why the Witch is

always on the lookout for any Humans in Narnia. She's been watching for you this many a year, and if she knew there were four of you she'd be more dangerous still."

"What's that to do with it?" asked Peter.

"Because of another prophecy," said Mr. Beaver. "Down at Cair Paravel — that's the castle on the sea coast down at the mouth of this river which ought to be the capital of the whole country if all was as it should be — down at Cair Paravel there are four thrones and it's a saying in Narnia time out of mind that when two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve sit in those four thrones, then it will be the end not only of the White Witch's reign but of her life, and that is why we had to be so cautious as we came along, for if she knew about you four, your lives wouldn't be worth a shake of my whiskers!"

All the children had been attending so hard to what Mr. Beaver was telling them that they had noticed nothing else for a long time. Then during the moment of silence that followed his last remark, Lucy suddenly said:

"I say — where's Edmund?"

There was a dreadful pause, and then everyone began asking "Who saw him last? How long has he been missing? Is he outside?" And then all rushed to the door and looked out. The snow was falling thickly and steadily, the green ice of the pool had vanished under a thick white blanket, and from where the little house stood in the centre of the dam you could hardly see either bank. Out they went, plunging well over their ankles into the soft new snow, and went round the house in every direction. "Edmund! Edmund!" they called till they were hoarse. But the silently falling snow seemed to muffle their voices and there was not even an echo in answer.

"How perfectly dreadful!" said Susan as they at last came back in despair. "Oh, how I wish we'd never come."

"What on earth are we to do, Mr. Beaver?" said Peter.

"Do?" said Mr. Beaver who was already putting on his snow boots, "do? We must be off at once. We haven't a moment to spare!"

"We'd better divide into four search parties," said Peter, "and all go in different directions. Whoever finds him must come back here at once and __"

"Search parties, Son of Adam?" said Mr. Beaver; "what for?"

"Why, to look for Edmund of course!"

"There's no point in looking for him," said Mr. Beaver.

“What do you mean?” said Susan, “he can’t be far away yet. And we’ve got to find him. What do you mean when you say there’s no use looking for him?”

“The reason there’s no use looking,” said Mr. Beaver, “is that we know already where he’s gone!” Everyone stared in amazement. “Don’t you understand?” said Mr. Beaver. “He’s gone to *her*, to the White Witch. He has betrayed us all.”

“Oh surely — oh really!” said Susan, “he can’t have done that.”

“Can’t he?” said Mr. Beaver looking very hard at the three children, and everything they wanted to say died on their lips for each felt suddenly quite certain inside that this was exactly what Edmund had done.

“But will he know the way?” said Peter.

“Has he been in this country before?” asked Mr. Beaver, “has he ever been here alone?”

“Yes,” said Lucy almost in a whisper, “I’m afraid he has.”

“And did he tell you what he’d done or who he’d met?”

“Well, no, he didn’t,” said Peter.

“Then mark my words,” said Mr. Beaver, “he has already met the White Witch and joined her side, and been told where she lives. I didn’t like to mention it before (he being your brother and all) but the moment I set eyes on that brother of yours I said to myself ‘Treacherous.’ He had the look of one who has been with the Witch and eaten her food. You can always tell them if you’ve lived long in Narnia, something about their eyes.”

“All the same,” said Peter in a rather choking sort of voice, “we’ll still have to go and look for him. He is our brother after all, even if he is rather a little beast, and he’s only a kid.”

“Go to the Witch’s house?” said Mrs. Beaver. “Don’t you see that the only chance of saving either him or yourselves is to keep away from her?”

“How do you mean?” said Lucy.

“Why all she wants is to get all four of you (she’s thinking all the time of those four thrones at Cair Paravel). Once you were all four inside her house her job would be done — and there’d be four new statues in her collection before you’d had time to speak. But she’ll keep him alive as long as he’s the only one she’s got, because she’ll want to use him as a decoy; as bait to catch the rest of you with.”

“Oh, can *no* one help us?” wailed Lucy.

“Only Aslan,” said Mr. Beaver, “we must go on and meet him. That’s our only chance now.”

“It seems to me, my dears,” said Mrs. Beaver, “that it is very important to know just *when* he slipped away. How much he can tell her depends on how much he heard. For instance, had we started talking of Aslan before he left? If not, then we may do very well, for she won’t know that Aslan has come to Narnia, or that we are meeting him and will be quite off her guard as far as *that* is concerned.”

“I don’t remember his being here when we were talking about Aslan—” began Peter, but Lucy interrupted him.

“Oh yes, he was,” she said miserably; “don’t you remember, it was he who asked whether the Witch couldn’t turn Aslan into stone too?”

“So he did, by Jove,” said Peter, “just the sort of thing he would say, too!”

“Worse and worse,” said Mr. Beaver, “and the next thing is this. Was he still here when I told you that the place for meeting Aslan was the Stone Table?”

And of course no one knew the answer to this question.

“Because, if he was,” continued Mr. Beaver, “then she’ll simply sledge down in that direction and get between us and the Stone Table and catch us on our way down. In fact we shall be cut off from Aslan.”

“But that isn’t what she’ll do first,” said Mrs. Beaver, “not if I know her. The moment that Edmund tells her that we’re all here she’ll set out to catch us this very night, and if he’s been gone about half an hour, she’ll be here in about another twenty minutes.”

“You’re right, Mrs. Beaver,” said her husband, “we must all get away from here. There’s not a moment to lose.”

CHAPTER IX

In the Witch's House

And now of course you want to know what had happened to Edmund. He had eaten his share of the dinner, but he hadn't really enjoyed it because he was thinking all the time about Turkish Delight — and there's nothing that spoils the taste of good ordinary food half so much as the memory of bad magic food. And he had heard the conversation and hadn't enjoyed it much either, because he kept on thinking that the others were taking no notice of him and trying to give him the cold shoulder. They weren't, but he imagined it. And then he had listened until Mr. Beaver told them about Aslan and until he had heard the whole arrangement for meeting Aslan at the Stone Table. It was then that he began very quietly to edge himself under the curtain which hung over the door. For the mention of Aslan gave him a mysterious and horrible feeling just as it gave the others a mysterious and lovely feeling.

Just as Mr. Beaver had been repeating the rhyme about *Adam's flesh and Adam's bone* Edmund had been very quietly turning the door handle; and just before Mr. Beaver had begun telling them that the White Witch wasn't really human at all but half a Jinn and half a giantess, Edmund had got outside into the snow and cautiously closed the door behind him.

You mustn't think that even now Edmund was quite so bad that he actually wanted his brother and sisters to be turned into stone. He did want Turkish Delight and to be a Prince (and later a King) and to pay Peter out for calling him a beast. As for what the Witch would do with the others, he didn't want her to be particularly nice to them — certainly not to put them on the same level as himself — but he managed to believe, or to pretend he believed, that she wouldn't do anything very bad to them, "Because," he said to himself, "all these people who say nasty things about her are her enemies and probably half of it isn't true. She was jolly nice to me, anyway, much nicer than they are. I expect she is the rightful Queen really. Anyway, she'll be better than that awful Aslan!" At least, that was the excuse he made in his own mind for what he was doing. It wasn't a very good excuse, however, for deep down inside him he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel.

The first thing he realised when he got outside and found the snow falling all around him, was that he had left his coat behind in the Beavers' house. And of course there was no chance of going back to get it now. The next thing he realised was that the daylight was almost gone, for it had been nearly three o'clock when they sat down to dinner and the winter days were short. He hadn't reckoned on this; but he had to make the best of it. So he turned up his collar and shuffled across the top of the dam (luckily it wasn't so slippery since the snow had fallen) to the far side of the river.

It was pretty bad when he reached the far side. It was growing darker every minute and what with that and the snowflakes swirling all round him he could hardly see three feet ahead. And then too there was no road. He kept slipping into deep drifts of snow, and skidding on frozen puddles, and tripping over fallen tree-trunks, and sliding down steep banks, and barking his shins against rocks, till he was wet and cold and bruised all over. The silence and the loneliness were dreadful. In fact I really think he might have given up the whole plan and gone back and owned up and made friends with the others, if he hadn't happened to say to himself, "When I'm King of Narnia the first thing I shall do will be to make some decent roads." And of course that set him off thinking about being a King and all the other things he would do and this cheered him up a good deal. He had just settled in his mind what sort of palace he would have and how many cars and all about his private cinema and where the principal railways would run and what laws he would make against beavers and dams and was putting the finishing touches to some schemes for keeping Peter in his place, when the weather changed. First the snow stopped. Then a wind sprang up and it became freezing cold. Finally, the clouds rolled away and the moon came out. It was a full moon and, shining on all that snow, it made everything almost as bright as day — only the shadows were rather confusing.

He would never have found his way if the moon hadn't come out by the time he got to the other river — you remember he had seen (when they first arrived at the Beavers') a smaller river flowing into the great one lower down. He now reached this and turned to follow it up. But the little valley down which it came was much steeper and rockier than the one he had just left and much overgrown with bushes, so that he could not have managed it at all in the dark. Even as it was, he got wet through for he had to stoop to go under branches and great loads of snow came sliding off on to his back.

And every time this happened he thought more and more how he hated Peter — just as if all this had been Peter's fault.

But at last he came to a part where it was more level and the valley opened out. And there, on the other side of the river, quite close to him, in the middle of a little plain between two hills, he saw what must be the White Witch's house. And the moon was shining brighter than ever. The house was really a small castle. It seemed to be all towers; little towers with long pointed spires on them, sharp as needles. They looked like huge dunce's caps or sorcerer's caps. And they shone in the moonlight and their long shadows looked strange on the snow! Edmund began to be afraid of the house.

But it was too late to think of turning back now. He crossed the river on the ice and walked up to the house. There was nothing stirring; not the slightest sound anywhere. Even his own feet made no noise on the deep newly fallen snow. He walked on and on, past corner after corner of the house, and past turret after turret to find the door. He had to go right round to the far side before he found it. It was a huge arch but the great iron gates stood wide open.

Edmund crept up to the arch and looked inside into the courtyard, and there he saw a sight that nearly made his heart stop beating. Just inside the gate, with the moonlight shining on it, stood an enormous lion crouched as if it was ready to spring. And Edmund stood in the shadow of the arch, afraid to go on and afraid to go back, with his knees knocking together. He stood there so long that his teeth would have been chattering with cold even if they had not been chattering with fear. How long this really lasted I don't know, but it seemed to Edmund to last for hours.

Then at last he began to wonder why the lion was standing so still — for it hadn't moved one inch since he first set eyes on it. Edmund now ventured a little nearer, still keeping in the shadow of the arch as much as he could. He now saw from the way the lion was standing that it couldn't have been looking at him at all. ("But supposing it turns its head?" thought Edmund.) In fact it was staring at something else — namely a little dwarf who stood with his back to it about four feet away. "Aha!" thought Edmund. "When it springs at the dwarf then will be my chance to escape." But still the lion never moved, nor did the dwarf. And now at last Edmund remembered what the others had said about the White Witch turning people into stone. Perhaps this was only a stone lion. And as soon as he had thought of that he

noticed that the lion's back and the top of its head were covered with snow. Of course it must be only a statue! No living animal would have let itself get covered with snow. Then very slowly and with his heart beating as if it would burst, Edmund ventured to go up to the lion. Even now he hardly dared to touch it, but at last he put out his hand, very quickly, and did. It was cold stone. He had been frightened of a mere statue!

The relief which Edmund felt was so great that in spite of the cold he suddenly got warm all over right down to his toes, and at the same time there came into his head what seemed a perfectly lovely idea. "Probably," he thought, "this is the great Lion Aslan that they were all talking about. She's caught him already and turned him into stone. So *that's* the end of all their fine ideas about him! Pooh! Who's afraid of Aslan?"

And he stood there gloating over the stone lion, and presently he did something very silly and childish. He took a stump of lead pencil out of his pocket and scribbled a moustache on the lion's upper lip and then a pair of spectacles on its eyes. Then he said, "Yah! Silly old Aslan! How do you like being a stone? You thought yourself mighty fine, didn't you?" But in spite of the scribbles on it the face of the great stone beast still looked so terrible, and sad, and noble, staring up in the moonlight that Edmund didn't really get any fun out of jeering at it. He turned away and began to cross the courtyard.

As he got into the middle of it he saw that there were dozens of statues all about — standing here and there rather as the pieces stand on a chess board when it is half way through the game. There were stone satyrs, and stone wolves, and bears and foxes and cat-a-mountains of stone. There were lovely stone shapes that looked like women but who were really the spirits of trees. There was the great shape of a centaur and a winged horse and a long lithe creature that Edmund took to be a dragon. They all looked so strange standing there perfectly lifelike and also perfectly still, in the bright cold moonlight, that it was eerie work crossing the courtyard. Right in the very middle stood a huge shape like a man, but as tall as a tree, with a fierce face and a shaggy beard and a great club in its right hand. Even though he knew that it was only a stone giant and not a live one, Edmund did not like going past it.

He now saw that there was a dim light showing from a doorway on the far side of the courtyard. He went to it, there was a flight of stone steps

going up to an open door. Edmund went up them. Across the threshold lay a great wolf:

"It's all right, it's all right," he kept saying to himself, "it's only a stone wolf. It can't hurt me," and he raised his leg to step over it. Instantly the huge creature rose, with all the hair bristling along its back, opened a great, red mouth and said in a growling voice,

"Who's there? Who's there? Stand still, stranger, and tell me who you are."

"If you please, Sir," said Edmund, trembling so that he could hardly speak, "my name is Edmund, and I'm the Son of Adam that Her Majesty met in the wood the other day and I've come to bring her the news that my brother and sisters are now in Narnia — quite close, in the Beavers' house. She — she wanted to see them."

"I will tell Her Majesty," said the Wolf. "Meanwhile, stand still on the threshold, as you value your life." Then it vanished into the house.

Edmund stood and waited, his fingers aching with cold and his heart pounding in his chest, and presently the grey Wolf, Fenris Ulf, the Chief of the Witch's Secret Police, came bounding back and said, "Come in! Come in! Fortunate favourite of the Queen — or else not so fortunate."

And Edmund went in, taking great care not to tread on the Wolf's paws.

He found himself in a long gloomy hall with many pillars, full, as the courtyard had been, of statues. The one nearest the door was a little Faun with a very sad expression on its face, and Edmund couldn't help wondering if this might be Lucy's friend. The only light came from a single lamp and close behind this sat the White Witch.

"I'm come, your Majesty," said Edmund rushing eagerly forward.

"How dare you come alone?" said the Witch in a terrible voice. "Did I not tell you to bring the others with you?"

"Please, your Majesty," said Edmund, "I've done the best I can. I've brought them quite close. They're in the little house on top of the dam just up the river — with Mr. and Mrs. Beaver."

A slow cruel smile came over the Witch's face.

"Is this all your news?" she asked.

"No, your Majesty," said Edmund, and proceeded to tell her all he had heard before leaving the Beavers' house.

"What! Aslan?" cried the Queen, "Aslan! Is this true? If I find you have lied to me—"

“Please, I’m only repeating what they said,” stammered Edmund.

But the Queen, who was no longer attending to him, clapped her hands. Instantly the same dwarf whom Edmund had seen with her before appeared.

“Make ready our sledge,” ordered the Witch, “and use the harness without bells.”

CHAPTER X

The Spell Begins to Break

Now we must go back to Mr. and Mrs. Beaver and the three other children. As soon as Mr. Beaver said “There’s no time to lose” everyone began bundling themselves into coats, except Mrs. Beaver who started picking up sacks and laying them on the table and said: “Now, Mr. Beaver, just reach down that ham. And here’s a packet of tea, and there’s sugar, and some matches. And if someone will get two or three loaves out of the crock over there in the corner.”

“What are you doing, Mrs. Beaver?” exclaimed Susan.

“Packing a load for each of us, dearie,” said Mrs. Beaver very coolly. “You didn’t think we’d set out on a journey with nothing to eat, did you?”

“But we haven’t time!” said Susan, buttoning the collar of her coat. “She may be here any minute.”

“That’s what I say,” chimed in Mr. Beaver.

“Get along with you all,” said his wife. “Think it over, Mr. Beaver. She can’t be here for a quarter of an hour at least.”

“But don’t we want as big a start as we can possibly get,” said Peter, “if we’re to reach the Stone Table before her?”

“You’ve got to remember *that*, Mrs. Beaver,” said Susan. “As soon as she has looked in here and finds we’re gone she’ll be off at top speed.”

“That she will,” said Mrs. Beaver. “But we can’t get there before her whatever we do, for she’ll be on a sledge and we’ll be walking.”

“Then — have we no hope?” said Susan.

“Now don’t you get fussing, there’s a dear,” said Mrs. Beaver, “but just get half a dozen clean handkerchiefs out of that drawer. ‘Course we’ve got a hope. We can’t get there *before* her but we can keep under cover and go by ways she won’t expect and perhaps we’ll get through.”

“That’s true enough, Mrs. Beaver,” said her husband. “But it’s time we were out of this.”

“And don’t you start fussing either, Mr. Beaver,” said his wife. “There. That’s better. There’s four loads and the smallest for the smallest of us: that’s you, my dear,” she added looking at Lucy.

“Oh, do please come on,” said Lucy.

“Well, I’m nearly ready now,” answered Mrs. Beaver at last allowing her husband to help her into her snow boots. “I suppose the sewing machine’s too heavy to bring?”

“Yes. It *is*,” said Mr. Beaver. “A great deal too heavy. And you don’t think you’ll be able to use it while we’re on the run, I suppose?”

“I can’t abide the thought of that Witch fiddling with it,” said Mrs. Beaver, “and breaking it or stealing it, as likely as not.”

“Oh, please, please, please, do hurry!” said the three children. And so at last they all got outside and Mr. Beaver locked the door (“It’ll delay her a bit,” he said) and they set off, all carrying their loads over their shoulders.

The snow had stopped and the moon had come out when they began their journey. They went in single file — first Mr. Beaver, then Lucy, then Peter, then Susan, and Mrs. Beaver last of all. Mr. Beaver led them across the dam and onto the right bank of the river and then along a very rough sort of path among the trees right down by the river-bank. The sides of the valley, shining in the moonlight, towered up far above them on either hand. “Best keep down here as much as possible,” he said. “She’ll have to keep to the top, for you couldn’t bring a sledge down here.”

It would have been a pretty enough scene to look at it through a window from a comfortable armchair; and even as things were, Lucy enjoyed it at first. But as they went on walking and walking — and walking — and as the sack she was carrying felt heavier and heavier, she began to wonder how she was going to keep up at all. And she stopped looking at the dazzling brightness of the frozen river with all its waterfalls of ice and at the white masses of the tree-tops and the great glaring moon and the countless stars and could only watch the little short legs of Mr. Beaver going pad-pad-pad-pad through the snow in front of her as if they were never going to stop. Then the moon disappeared and the snow began to fall once more. And at last Lucy was so tired that she was almost asleep and walking at the same time when suddenly she found that Mr. Beaver had turned away from the river bank to the right and was leading them steeply uphill into the very thickest bushes. And then as she came fully awake she found that Mr. Beaver was just vanishing into a little hole in the bank which had been almost hidden under the bushes until you were quite on top of it. In fact, by the time she realised what was happening, only his short flat tail was showing.

Lucy immediately stooped down and crawled in after him. Then she heard noises of scrambling and puffing and panting behind her and in a moment all five of them were inside.

“Wherever is this?” said Peter’s voice, sounding tired and pale in the darkness. (I hope you know what I mean by a voice sounding pale.)

“It’s an old hiding-place for beavers in bad times,” said Mr. Beaver, “and a great secret. It’s not much of a place but we must get a few hours’ sleep.”

“If you hadn’t all been in such a plaguey fuss when we were starting, I’d have brought some pillows,” said Mrs. Beaver.

It wasn’t nearly such a nice cave as Mr. Tumnus’s, Lucy thought — just a hole in the ground but dry and earthy. It was very small so that when they all lay down they were all a bundle of fur and clothes together, and what with that and being warmed up by their long walk they were really rather snug. If only the floor of the cave had been a little smoother! Then Mrs. Beaver handed round in the dark a little flask out of which everyone drank something — it made one cough and splutter a little and stung the throat but it also made you feel deliciously warm after you’d swallowed it — and everyone went straight to sleep.

It seemed to Lucy only the next minute (though really it was hours and hours later) when she woke up feeling a little cold and dreadfully stiff and thinking how she would like a hot bath. Then she felt a set of long whiskers tickling her cheek and saw the cold daylight coming in through the mouth of the cave. But immediately after that she was very wide awake indeed, and so was everyone else. In fact they were all sitting up with their mouths and eyes wide open, listening to a sound which was the very sound they’d all been thinking of (and sometimes imagining they heard) during their walk last night. It was a sound of jingling bells.

Mr. Beaver was out of the cave like a flash the moment he heard it. Perhaps you think, as Lucy thought for a moment, that this was a very silly thing for him to do? But it was really a very sensible one. He knew he could scramble to the top of the bank among bushes and brambles without being seen; and he wanted above all things to see which way the Witch’s sledge went. The others all sat in the cave waiting and wondering. They waited nearly five minutes. Then they heard something that frightened them very much. They heard voices. “Oh,” thought Lucy, “he’s been seen. She’s caught him!”

Great was their surprise when, a little later, they heard Mr. Beaver's voice calling to them from just outside the cave.

"It's all right," he was shouting. "Come out, Mrs. Beaver. Come out, Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve. It's all right! It isn't *her*!" This was bad grammar of course, but that is how beavers talk when they are excited; I mean, in Narnia — in our world they usually don't talk at all.

So Mrs. Beaver and the children came bundling out of the cave, all blinking in the daylight, and with earth all over them, and looking very frowsty and unbrushed and uncombed and with the sleep in their eyes.

"Come on!" cried Mr. Beaver, who was almost dancing with delight. "Come and see! This is a nasty knock for the Witch! It looks as if her power was already crumbling."

"What *do* you mean, Mr. Beaver?" panted Peter as they all scrambled up the steep bank of the valley together.

"Didn't I tell you," answered Mr. Beaver, "that she'd made it always winter and never Christmas? Didn't I tell you? Well, just come and see!"

And then they were all at the top and did see.

It *was* a sledge, and it *was* reindeer with bells on their harness. But they were far bigger than the Witch's reindeer, and they were not white but brown. And on the sledge sat a person whom everyone knew the moment they set eyes on him. He was a huge man in a bright red robe (bright as holly-berries) with a hood that had fur inside it and a great white beard that fell like a foamy waterfall over his chest. Everyone knew him because, though you see people of his sort only in Narnia, you see pictures of them and hear them talked about even in our world — the world on this side of the wardrobe door. But when you really see them in Narnia it is rather different. Some of the pictures of Father Christmas in our world make him look only funny and jolly. But now that the children actually stood looking at him they didn't find it quite like that. He was so big, and so glad, and so real, that they all became quite still. They felt very glad, but also solemn.

"I've come at last," said he. "She has kept me out for a long time, but I have got in at last. Aslan is on the move. The Witch's magic is weakening."

And Lucy felt running through her that deep shiver of gladness which you only get if you are being solemn and still.

"And now," said Father Christmas, "for your presents. There is a new and better sewing machine for you, Mrs. Beaver. I will drop it in your house as I pass."

“If you please, sir,” said Mrs. Beaver, making a curtsey. “It’s locked up.”

“Locks and bolts make no difference to me,” said Father Christmas. “And as for you, Mr. Beaver, when you get home you will find your dam finished and mended and all the leaks stopped and a new sluice gate fitted.”

Mr. Beaver was so pleased that he opened his mouth very wide and then found he couldn’t say anything at all.

“Peter, Adam’s Son,” said Father Christmas.

“Here, Sir,” said Peter.

“These are your presents,” was the answer, “and they are tools not toys. The time to use them is perhaps near at hand. Bear them well.” With these words he handed to Peter a shield and a sword. The shield was the colour of silver and across it there ramped a red lion, as bright as a ripe strawberry at the moment when you pick it. The hilt of the sword was of gold and it had a sheath and a sword belt and everything it needed, and it was just the right size and weight for Peter to use. Peter was silent and solemn as he received these gifts for he felt they were a very serious kind of present.

“Susan, Eve’s Daughter,” said Father Christmas. “These are for you,” and he handed her a bow and a quiver full of arrows and a little ivory horn. “You must use the bow only in great need,” he said, “for I do not mean you to fight in the battle. It does not easily miss. And when you put this horn to your lips and blow it, then, wherever you are, I think help of some kind will come to you.”

Last of all he said, “Lucy, Eve’s Daughter,” and Lucy came forward. He gave her a little bottle of what looked like glass (but people said afterwards that it was made of diamond) and a small dagger. “In this bottle,” he said, “there is a cordial made of the juice of one of the fire-flowers that grow in the mountains of the sun. If you or any of your friends are hurt, a few drops of this will restore you. And the dagger is to defend yourself at great need. For you also are not to be in the battle.”

“Why, Sir,” said Lucy. “I think — I don’t know — but I think I could be brave enough.”

“That is not the point,” he said. “But battles are ugly when women fight. And now” — here he suddenly looked less grave— “here is something for the moment for you all!” and he brought out (I suppose from the big bag at his back, but nobody quite saw him do it) a large tray containing five cups and saucers, a bowl of lump sugar, a jug of cream, and a great big teapot all sizzling and piping hot. Then he cried out “A Merry Christmas! Long live

the true King!” and cracked his whip and he and the reindeer and the sledge and all were out of sight before anyone realised that they had started.

Peter had just drawn his sword out of its sheath and was showing it to Mr. Beaver when Mrs. Beaver said:

“Now then, now then! Don’t stand talking there till the tea’s got cold. Just like men. Come and help to carry the tray down and we’ll have breakfast. What a mercy I thought of bringing the bread-knife.”

So down the steep bank they went and back to the cave, and Mr. Beaver cut some of the bread and ham into sandwiches and Mrs. Beaver poured out the tea and everyone enjoyed himself. But long before they had finished enjoying themselves Mr. Beaver said, “Time to be moving on now.”

CHAPTER XI

Aslan Is Nearer

Edmund meanwhile had been having a most disappointing time. When the Dwarf had gone to get the sledge ready he expected that the Witch would start being nice to him, as she had been at their last meeting. But she said nothing at all. And when at last Edmund plucked up his courage to say, "Please, your Majesty, could I have some Turkish Delight? You — you — said—" she answered, "Silence, fool!" Then she appeared to change her mind and said, as if to herself, "And yet it will not do to have the brat fainting on the way," and once more clapped her hands. Another dwarf appeared. "Bring the human creature food and drink," she said. The Dwarf went away and presently returned bringing an iron bowl with some water in it and an iron plate with a hunk of dry bread on it. He grinned in a repulsive manner as he set them down the floor beside Edmund and said:

"Turkish Delight for the little Prince. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Take it away," said Edmund sulkily. "I don't want dry bread." But the Witch suddenly turned on him with such a terrible expression on her face that he apologised and began to nibble at the bread, though it was so stale he could hardly get it down.

"You may be glad enough of it before you taste bread again," said the Witch.

While he was still chewing away the first dwarf came back and announced that the sledge was ready. The White Witch rose and went out, ordering Edmund to go with her. The snow was again falling as they came into the courtyard but she took no notice of that and made Edmund sit beside her on the sledge. But before they drove off she called Fenris Ulf and he came bounding like an enormous dog to the side of the sledge.

"Take with you the swiftest of your wolves and go at once to the house of the Beavers," said the Witch, "and kill whatever you find there. If they are already gone, then make all speed to the Stone Table, but do not be seen. Wait for me there in hiding. I meanwhile must go many miles to the West before I find a place where I can drive across the river. You may overtake these humans before they reach the Stone Table. You will know what to do if you find them!"

“I hear and obey, O Queen,” growled the Wolf; and immediately he shot away into the snow and darkness, as quickly as a horse can gallop. In a few minutes he had called another wolf and was with him down on the dam and sniffing at the Beavers’ house. But of course they found it empty. It would have been a dreadful thing for the Beavers and the children if the night had remained fine, for the wolves would then have been able to follow their trail — and ten to one would have overtaken them before they had got to the cave. But now that the snow had begun again the scent was cold and even the footprints were covered up.

Meanwhile the Dwarf whipped up the reindeer and the Witch and Edmund drove out under the archway and on and away into the darkness and the cold. This was a terrible journey for Edmund who had no coat. Before they had been going a quarter of ah hour all the front of him was covered with snow — he soon stopped trying to shake it off because, as quickly as he did that, a new lot gathered, and he was so tired. Soon he was wet to the skin. And oh, how miserable he was. It didn’t look now as if the Witch intended to make him a King! All the things he had said to make himself believe that she was good and kind and that her side was really the right side sounded to him silly now. He would have given anything to meet the others at this moment — even Peter! The only way to comfort himself now was to try to believe that the whole thing was a dream and that he might wake up at any moment. And as they went on, hour after hour, it did come to seem like a dream.

This lasted longer than I could describe even if I wrote pages and pages about it. But I will skip on to the time when the snow had stopped and the morning had come and they were racing along in the daylight. And still they went on and on, with no sound but the everlasting swish of the snow and the creaking of the reindeer’s harness. And then at last the Witch said, “What have we here? Stop!” and they did.

How Edmund hoped she was going to say something about breakfast! But she had stopped for quite a different reason. A little way off at the foot of a tree sat a merry party, a squirrel and his wife with their children and two satyrs and a dwarf and an old dog-fox, all on stools round a table. Edmund couldn’t quite see what they were eating, but it smelled lovely and there seemed to be decorations of holly and he wasn’t at all sure that he didn’t see something like a plum pudding. At the moment when the sledge stopped, the Fox, who was obviously the oldest person present, had just

risen to its feet, holding a glass in its right paw as if it was going to say something. But when the whole party saw the sledge stopping and who was in it, all the gaiety went out of their faces. The father squirrel stopped eating with his fork half-way to his mouth and one of the satyrs stopped with its fork actually in its mouth, and the baby squirrels squealed with terror.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the Witch Queen. Nobody answered.

"Speak, vermin!" she said again. "Or do you want my dwarf to find you a tongue with his whip? What is the meaning of all this gluttony, this waste, this self indulgence? Where did you get all these things?"

"Please, your Majesty," said the Fox, "we were given them. And if I might make so bold as to drink your Majesty's very good health—"

"Who gave them to you?" said the Witch.

"F-F-F-Father Christmas," stammered the Fox.

"What?" roared the Witch, springing from the sledge and taking a few strides nearer to the terrified animals. "He has not been here! He cannot have been here! How dare you — but no. Say you have been lying and you shall even now be forgiven."

At that moment one of the young squirrels lost its head completely.

"He has — he has — he has!" it squeaked beating its little spoon on the table. Edmund saw the Witch bite her lips so that a drop of blood appeared on her white cheek. Then she raised her wand. "Oh don't, don't, please don't," shouted Edmund, but even while he was shouting she had waved her wand and instantly where the merry party had been there were only statues of creatures (one with its stone fork fixed forever half-way to its stone mouth) seated round a stone table on which there were stone plates and a stone plum pudding.

"As for you," said the Witch, giving Edmund a stunning blow on the face as she re-mounted the sledge, "let that teach you to ask favour for spies and traitors. Drive on!" And Edmund for the first time in this story felt sorry for someone besides himself. It seemed so pitiful to think of those little stone figures sitting there all the silent days and all the dark nights, year after year, till the moss grew on them and at last even their faces crumbled away.

Now they were steadily racing on again. And soon Edmund noticed that the snow which splashed against them as they rushed through it was much wetter than it had been all last night. At the same time he noticed that he

was feeling much less cold. It was also becoming foggy. In fact every minute it grew both foggier and warmer. And the sledge was not running nearly as well as it had been running up till now. At first he thought this was because the reindeer were tired, but soon he saw that that couldn't be the real reason. The sledge jerked, and skidded, and kept on jolting as if it had struck against stones. And however the Dwarf whipped the poor reindeer the sledge went slower and slower. There also seemed to be a curious noise all round them but the noise of their driving and jolting and the Dwarf's shouting at the reindeer prevented Edmund from hearing what it was, until suddenly the sledge stuck so fast that it wouldn't go on at all. When that happened there was a moment's silence. And in that silence Edmund could at last listen to the other noise properly. A strange, sweet, rustling, chattering noise — and yet not so strange, for he knew he'd heard it before — if only he could remember where! Then all at once he did remember. It was the noise of running water. All round them, though out of sight, there were streams chattering, murmuring, bubbling, splashing and even (in the distance) roaring. And his heart gave a great leap (though he hardly knew why) when he realised that the frost was over. And much nearer there was a drip-drip-drip from the branches of all the trees. And then, as he looked at one tree he saw a great load of snow slide off it and for the first time since he had entered Narnia he saw the dark green of a fir tree. But he hadn't time to listen or watch any longer for the Witch said:

"Don't sit staring, fool! Get out and help."

And of course Edmund had to obey. He stepped out into the snow — but it was really only slush by now — and began helping the Dwarf to get the sledge out of the muddy hole it had got into. They got it out in the end, and by being very cruel to the reindeer the Dwarf managed to get it on the move again, and they drove a little further. And now the snow was really melting in earnest and patches of green grass were beginning to appear in every direction. Unless you have looked at a world of snow as long as Edmund had been looking at it, you will hardly be able to imagine what a relief those green patches were after the endless white. Then the sledge stopped again.

"It's no good, your Majesty," said the Dwarf. "We can't sledge in this thaw."

"Then we must walk," said the Witch.

"We shall never overtake them walking," growled the dwarf. "Not with the start they've got."

“Are you my councillor or my slave?” said the Witch. “Do as you’re told. Tie the hands of the human creature behind it and keep hold of the end of the rope. And take your whip. And cut the harness of the reindeer; they’ll find their own way home.”

The Dwarf obeyed, and in a few minutes Edmund found himself being forced to walk as fast as he could with his hands tied behind him. He kept on slipping in the slush and mud and wet grass, and every time he slipped the Dwarf gave him a curse and sometimes a flick with the whip. The Witch walked behind the dwarf and kept on saying, “Faster! Faster!”

Every moment the patches of green grew bigger and the patches of snow grew smaller. Every moment more and more of the trees shook off their robes of snow. Soon, wherever you looked, instead of white shapes you saw the dark green of firs or the black prickly branches of bare oaks and beeches and elms. Then the mist turned from white to gold and presently cleared away altogether. Shafts of delicious sunlight struck down onto the forest floor and overhead you could see a blue sky between the tree-tops.

Soon there were more wonderful things happening. Coming suddenly round a corner into a glade of silver birch trees Edmund saw the ground covered in all directions with little yellow flowers — celandines. The noise of water grew louder. Presently they actually crossed a stream. Beyond it they found snowdrops growing.

“Mind your own business!” said the Dwarf when he saw that Edmund had turned his head to look at them; and he gave the rope a vicious jerk.

But of course this didn’t prevent Edmund from seeing. Only five minutes later he noticed a dozen crocuses growing round the foot of an old tree — gold and purple and white. Then came a sound even more delicious than the sound of the water. Close beside the path they were following a bird suddenly chirped from the branch of a tree. It was answered by the chuckle of another bird a little further off. And then, as if that had been a signal, there was chattering and chirruping in every direction, and then a moment of full song, and within five minutes the whole wood was ringing with birds’ music, and wherever Edmund’s eyes turned he saw birds alighting on branches, or sailing overhead or having their little quarrels.

“Faster! Faster!” said the Witch.

There was no trace of the fog now. The sky became bluer and bluer and now there were white clouds hurrying across it from time to time. In the wide glades there were primroses. A light breeze sprang up which scattered

drops of moisture from the swaying branches and carried cool, delicious scents against the faces of the travellers. The trees began to come fully alive. The larches and birches were covered with green, the laburnums with gold. Soon the beech trees had put forth their delicate, transparent leaves. As the travellers walked under them the light also became green. A bee buzzed across their path.

“This is no thaw,” said the Dwarf, suddenly stopping. “This is *spring*. What are we to do? Your winter has been destroyed, I tell you! This is Aslan’s doing.”

“If either of you mention that name again,” said the Witch, “he shall instantly be killed.”

CHAPTER XII

Peter's First Battle

While the Dwarf and the White Witch were saying this, miles away the Beaver and the children were walking on hour after hour into what seemed a delicious dream. Long ago they had left the coats behind them. And by now they had even stopped saying to one another, "Look! There's a kingfisher!" or "I say, bluebells!" or "What was that lovely smell?" or "Just listen to that thrush!" They walked on in silence drinking it all in, passing through patches of warm sunlight into cool, green thickets and out again into wide mossy glades where tall elms raised the leafy roof far overhead, and then into dense masses of flowering currant and among hawthorn bushes where the sweet smell was almost overpowering.

They had been just as surprised as Edmund when they saw the winter vanishing and the whole wood passing in a few hours or so from January to May. They hadn't even known for certain (as the Witch did) that this was what would happen when Aslan came to Narnia. But they all knew that it was her spells which had produced the endless winter; and therefore they all knew when this magic spring began that something had gone wrong, and badly wrong, with the Witch's schemes. And after the thaw had been going on for some time they all realised that the Witch would no longer be able to use her sledge. After that they didn't hurry so much and they allowed themselves more rests and longer ones. They were pretty tired by now of course; but not what I'd call bitterly tired — only slow and feeling very dreamy and quiet inside as one does when one is coming to the end of a long day in the open. Susan had a slight blister on one heel.

They had left the course of the big river some time ago; for one had to turn a little to the right (that meant a little to the South) to reach the place of the Stone Table. Even if this had not been their way, they couldn't have kept to the river valley once the thaw began, for with all that melting snow the river was soon in flood — a wonderful, roaring, thundering yellow flood — and their path would have been under water.

And now the sun got low and the light got redder and the shadows got longer and the flowers began to think about closing.

“Not long now,” said Mr. Beaver, and began leading them uphill across some very deep, springy moss (it felt nice under their tired feet) in a place where only tall trees grew, very wide apart. The climb, coming at the end of the long day, made them all pant and blow. And just as Lucy was wondering whether she could really get to the top without another long rest, suddenly they *were* at the top. And this is what they saw.

They were on a green open space from which you could look down on the forest spreading as far as one could see in every direction — except right ahead. There, far to the East, was something twinkling and moving. “By gum!” whispered Peter to Susan. “The sea!” In the very middle of this open hilltop was the Stone Table. It was a great grim slab of grey stone supported on four upright stones. It looked very old; and it was cut all over with strange lines and figures that might be the letters of an unknown language. They gave you a curious feeling when you looked at them. The next thing they saw was a pavilion pitched on one side of the open place. A wonderful pavilion it was — and especially now when the light of the setting sun fell upon it — with sides of what looked like yellow silk and cords of crimson and tent-pegs of ivory; and high above it on a pole a banner, which bore a red rampant lion, fluttered in the breeze which was blowing in their faces from the far-off sea. While they were looking at this they heard a sound of music on their right; and turning in that direction they saw what they had come to see.

Aslan stood in the centre of a crowd of creatures who had grouped themselves around him in the shape of a half-moon. There were Tree-Women there and Well-Women (Dryads and Naiads as they used to be called in our world) who had stringed instruments; it was they who had made the music. There were four great centaurs. The horse part of them was like huge English farm horses, and the man part was like stern but beautiful giants. There was also a unicorn, and a bull with the head of a man, and a pelican, and an eagle, and a great dog. And next to Aslan stood two leopards of whom one carried his crown and the other his standard.

But as for Aslan himself, the Beavers and the children didn’t know what to do or say when they saw him. People who have not been in Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time. If the children had ever thought so, they were cured of it now. For when they tried to look at Aslan’s face they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane

and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; and then they found they couldn't look at him and went all trembly.

"Go on," whispered Mr. Beaver.

"No," whispered Peter, "you first."

"No, Sons of Adam before animals," whispered Mr. Beaver back again.

"Susan," whispered Peter, "what about you? Ladies first."

"No, you're the eldest," whispered Susan. And of course the longer they went on doing this the more awkward they felt. Then at last Peter realised that it was up to him. He drew his sword and raised it to the salute and hastily saying to the others "Come on. Pull yourselves together," he advanced to the Lion and said:

"We have come — Aslan."

"Welcome, Peter, Son of Adam," said Aslan. "Welcome, Susan and Lucy, Daughters of Eve. Welcome He-Beaver and She-Beaver."

His voice was deep and rich and somehow took the fidgets out of them. They now felt glad and quiet and it didn't seem awkward to them to stand and say nothing.

"But where is the fourth?" asked Aslan.

"He has tried to betray them and joined the White Witch, O Aslan," said Mr. Beaver. And then something made Peter say:

"That was partly my fault, Aslan. I was angry with him and I think that helped him to go wrong."

And Aslan said nothing either to excuse Peter or to blame him but merely stood looking at him with his great golden eyes. And it seemed to all of them that there was nothing to be said.

"Please — Aslan," said Lucy, "can anything be done to save Edmund?"

"All shall be done," said Aslan. "But it may be harder than you think." And then he was silent again for some time. Up to that moment Lucy had been thinking how royal and strong and peaceful his face looked; now it suddenly came into her head that he looked sad as well. But next minute that expression was quite gone. The Lion shook his mane and clapped his paws together ("Terrible paws," thought Lucy, "If he didn't know how to velvet them!") and said:

"Meanwhile, let the feast be prepared. Ladies, take these Daughters of Eve to the pavilion and minister to them."

When the girls had gone Aslan laid his paw — and though it was velveted it was very heavy — on Peter's shoulder and said, "Come, Son of

Adam, and I will show you a far-off sight of the castle where you are to be King."

And Peter with his sword still drawn in his hand went with the Lion to the eastern edge of the hill-top. There a beautiful sight met their eyes. The sun was setting behind their backs. That meant that the whole country below them lay in the evening light — forest and hills and valleys and, winding away like a silver snake, the lower part of the great river. And beyond all this, miles away, was the sea, and beyond the sea the sky, full of clouds which were just turning rose colour with the reflection of the sunset. But just where the land of Narnia met the sea — in fact, at the mouth of the great river — there was something on a little hill, shining. It was shining because it was a castle and of course the sunlight was reflected from all the windows which looked towards Peter and the sunset; but to Peter it looked like a great star resting on the seashore.

"That, O Man," said Aslan, "is Cair Paravel of the four thrones, in one of which you must sit as King. I show it to you because you are the first-born and you will be High King over all the rest."

And once more Peter said nothing, for at that moment a strange noise woke the silence suddenly. It was like a bugle, but richer.

"It is your sister's horn," said Aslan to Peter in a low voice; so low as to be almost a purr, if it is not disrespectful to think of a lion purring.

For a moment Peter did not understand. Then, when he saw all the other creatures start forward and heard Aslan say with a wave of his paw, "Back! Let the Prince win his spurs," he did understand, and set off running as hard as he could to the pavilion. And there he saw a dreadful sight.

The Naiads and Dryads were scattering in every direction. Lucy was running towards him as fast as her short legs would carry her and her face was as white as paper. Then he saw Susan make a dash for a tree, and swing herself up, followed by a huge grey beast. At first Peter thought it was a bear. Then he saw that it looked like an Alsatian, though it was far too big to be a dog. Then he realised that it was a wolf — a wolf standing on its hind legs, with its front paws against the tree-trunk snapping and snarling. All the hair on its back stood up on end. Susan had not been able to get higher than the second big branch. One of her legs hung down so that her foot was only an inch or two above the snapping teeth. Peter wondered why she did not get higher or at least take a better grip; then he realised that she was just going to faint and that if she fainted she would fall off.

Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick. But that made no difference to what he had to do. He rushed straight up to the monster and aimed a slash of his sword at its side. That stroke never reached the Wolf. Quick as lightning it turned round, its eyes flaming, and its mouth wide open in a howl of anger. If it had not been so angry that it simply had to howl it would have got him by the throat at once. As it was — though all this happened too quickly for Peter to think at all — he had just time to duck down and plunge his sword, as hard as he could, between the brute's forelegs into its heart. Then came a horrible, confused moment like something in a nightmare. He was tugging and pulling and the Wolf seemed neither alive nor dead, and its bared teeth knocked against his forehead, and everything was blood and heat and hair. A moment later he found that the monster lay dead and he had drawn his sword out of it and was straightening his back and rubbing the sweat off his face and out of his eyes. He felt tired all over.

Then, after a bit, Susan came down the tree. She and Peter felt pretty shaky when they met and I won't say there wasn't kissing and crying on both sides. But in Narnia no one thinks any the worse of you for that.

"Quick! Quick!" shouted the voice of Aslan, "Centaurs! Eagles! I see another wolf in the thickets. There — behind you. He has just darted away. After him, all of you! He will be going to his mistress. Now is your chance to find the Witch and rescue the fourth Son of Adam." And instantly with a thunder of hoofs and a beating of wings a dozen or so of the swiftest creatures disappeared into the gathering darkness.

Peter, still out of breath, turned and saw Aslan close at hand.

"You have forgotten to clean your sword," said Aslan.

It was true. Peter blushed when he looked at the bright blade and saw it all smeared with the Wolf's hair and blood. He stooped down and wiped it quite clean on the grass, and then wiped it quite dry on his coat.

"Hand it to me and kneel, Son of Adam," said Aslan. And when Peter had done so he struck him with the flat of the blade and said, "Rise up, Sir Peter Fenris-Bane. And, whatever happens, never forget to wipe your sword."

CHAPTER XIII

Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time

Now we must go back to Edmund. When he had been made to walk far further than he had ever known that anybody *could* walk, the Witch at last halted in a dark valley all overshadowed with fir trees and yew trees. Edmund simply sank down and lay on his face, doing nothing at all and not even caring what was going to happen next provided they would let him lie still. He was too tired even to notice how hungry and thirsty he was. The Witch and the Dwarf were talking close beside him in low tones.

"No," said the Dwarf, "it is no use now, O Queen. They must have reached the Stone Table by now."

"Perhaps the Wolf will smell us out and bring us news," said the Witch.

"It cannot be good news if he does," said the Dwarf.

"Four thrones in Cair Paravel," said the Witch. "How if only three were filled? That would not fulfil the prophecy."

"What difference would that make now that *he* is here?" said the Dwarf. He did not dare, even now, to mention the name of Aslan to his mistress.

"He may not stay long. And then — we would fall upon the three at Cair."

"Yet it might be better," said the Dwarf, "to keep this one" (here he kicked Edmund) "for bargaining with."

"Yes! And have him rescued," said the Witch scornfully.

"Then," said the Dwarf, "we had better do what we have to do at once."

"I would like to have done it on the Stone Table itself," said the Witch. "That is the proper place. That is where it has always been done before."

"It will be a long time now before the Stone Table can again be put to its proper use," said the Dwarf.

"True," said the Witch; and then, "Well, I will begin."

At that moment with a rush and a snarl a Wolf rushed up to them.

"I have seen them. They are all at the Stone Table, with *him*. They have killed my captain, Fenris Ulf. I was hidden in the thickets and saw it all. One of the Sons of Adam killed him. Fly! Fly!"

"No," said the Witch. "There need be no flying. Go quickly. Summon all our people to meet me here as speedily as they can. Call out the giants and

the werewolves and the spirits of those trees who are on our side. Call the Ghouls, and the Boggles, the Ogres and the Minotaurs. Call the Cruels, the Hags, the Spectres, and the people of the Toadstools. We will fight. What? Have I not still my wand? Will not their ranks turn into stone even as they come on? Be off quickly, I have a little thing to finish here while you are away."

The great brute bowed its head, turned, and galloped away.

"Now!" said she, "we have no table — let me see. We had better put it against the trunk of a tree."

Edmund found himself being roughly forced to his feet. Then the Dwarf set him with his back against a tree and bound him fast. He saw the Witch take off her outer mantle. Her arms were bare underneath it and terribly white. Because they were so very white he could not see much else, it was so dark in this valley under the dark trees.

"Prepare the victim," said the Witch. And the Dwarf undid Edmund's collar and folded back his shirt at the neck. Then he took Edmund's hair and pulled his head back so that he had to raise his chin. After that Edmund heard a strange noise — whizz — whizz — whizz. For a moment he couldn't think what it was. Then he realised. It was the sound of a knife being sharpened!

At that very moment he heard loud shouts from every direction — a drumming of hoofs and a beating of wings — a scream from the Witch — confusion all round him. And then he found he was being untied. Strong arms were round him and he heard big, kind voices saying things like "Let him lie down — give him some wine — drink this — steady now — you'll be all right in a minute."

Then he heard the voices of people who were talking not to him but to one another. And they were saying things like "Who's got the Witch? — I thought you had her — I didn't see her after I knocked the knife out of her hand — I was after the Dwarf — Do you mean to say she's escaped? — A chap can't mind everything at once — What's that? Oh sorry it's only an old stump!" But just at this point Edmund went off in a dead faint.

Presently the centaurs and unicorns and deer and birds (they were of course the rescue party which Aslan had sent in the last chapter) all set off to go back to the Stone Table, carrying Edmund with them. But if they could have seen what happened in that valley after they had gone, I think they might have been surprised.

It was perfectly still and presently the moon grew bright, if you had been there you would have seen the moonlight shining on an old tree-stump and on a fair sized boulder. But if you had gone on looking you would gradually have begun to think there was something odd about both the stump and the boulder. And next you would have thought that the stump did look really remarkably like a little fat man crouching on the ground. And if you had watched long enough you would have seen the stump walk across to the boulder and the boulder sit up and begin talking to the stump; for in reality the stump and the boulder were simply the Witch and the Dwarf. For it was part of her magic that she could make things look like what they weren't, and she had the presence of mind to do so at the very moment when the knife was knocked out of her hand. She had kept hold of her wand also, so it had been kept safe, too.

When the other children woke up next morning (they had been sleeping on piles of cushions in the pavilion) the first thing they heard — from Mrs. Beaver — was that their brother had been rescued and brought into camp late last night; and was at that moment with Aslan. As soon as they had breakfasted they all went out, and there they saw Aslan and Edmund walking together in the dewy grass, apart from the rest of the court. There is no need to tell you (and no one ever heard) what Aslan was saying but it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot. As the others drew nearer Aslan turned to meet them bringing Edmund with him.

"Here is your brother," he said, "and — there is no need to talk to him about what is past."

Edmund shook hands with each of the others and said to each of them in turn, "I'm sorry," and everyone said "That's all right." And then everyone wanted very hard to say something which would make it quite clear that they were all friends with him again — something ordinary and natural — and of course no one could think of anything in the world to say. But before they had time to feel really awkward one of the leopards approached Aslan and said:

"Sire, there is a messenger from the enemy who craves audience."

"Let him approach," said Aslan.

The leopard went away and soon returned leading the Witch's Dwarf.

"What is your message, Son of Earth?" asked Aslan.

"The Queen of Narnia and Empress of the Lone Islands desires a safe conduct to come and speak with you," said the Dwarf, "on a matter which is

as much to your advantage as to hers."

"Queen of Narnia, indeed!" said Mr. Beaver. "Of all the cheek—"

"Peace, Beaver," said Aslan. "All names will soon be restored to their proper owners. In the meantime we will not dispute about noises. Tell your mistress, Son of Earth, that I grant her safe conduct on condition that she leaves her wand behind her at that great oak."

This was agreed to and two leopards went back with the Dwarf to see that the conditions were properly carried out. "But supposing she turns the two leopards into stone?" whispered Lucy to Peter. I think the same idea had occurred to the leopards themselves; at any rate, as they walked off their fur was all standing up on their backs and their tails were bristling — like a cat's when it sees a strange dog.

"It'll be all right," whispered Peter in reply. "He wouldn't send them if it weren't."

A few minutes later the Witch herself walked out on to the top of the hill and came straight across and stood before Aslan. The three children, who had not seen her before, felt shudders running down their backs at the sight of her face; and there were low growls among all the animals present. Though it was bright sunshine everyone felt suddenly cold. The only two people present who seemed to be quite at their ease were Aslan and the Witch herself. It was the oddest thing to see those two faces — the golden face and the dead-white face — so close together. Not that the Witch looked Aslan exactly in his eyes; Mrs. Beaver particularly noticed this.

"You have a traitor there, Aslan," said the Witch. Of course everyone present knew that she meant Edmund. But Edmund had got past thinking about himself after all he'd been through and after the talk he'd had that morning. He just went on looking at Aslan. It didn't seem to matter what the Witch said.

"Well," said Aslan. "His offence was not against you."

"Have you forgotten the Deep Magic?" asked the Witch.

"Let us say I have forgotten it," answered Aslan gravely. "Tell us of this Deep Magic."

"Tell you?" said the Witch, her voice growing suddenly shriller. "Tell you what is written on that very Table of Stone which stands beside us? Tell you what is written in letters deep as a spear is long on the trunk of the World Ash Tree? Tell you what is engraved on the sceptre of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea? You at least know the magic which the Emperor put into

Narnia at the very beginning. You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to a kill."

"Oh," said Mr. Beaver. "So *that's* how you came to imagine yourself a Queen — because you were the Emperor's hangman. I see."

"Peace, Beaver," said Aslan, with a very low growl.

"And so," continued the Witch, "that human creature is mine. His life is forfeit to me. His blood is my property."

"Come and take it then," said the Bull with the man's head in a great bellowing voice.

"Fool," said the Witch with a savage smile that was almost a snarl, "do you really think your master can rob me of my rights by mere force? He knows the Deep Magic better than that. He knows that unless I have blood as the Law says all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water."

"It is very true," said Aslan; "I do not deny it."

"Oh, Aslan!" whispered Susan in the Lion's ear, "can't we — I mean, you won't, will you? Can't we do something about the Deep Magic? Isn't there something you can work against it?"

"Work against the Emperor's magic?" said Aslan turning to her with something like a frown on his face. And nobody ever made that suggestion to him again.

Edmund was on the other side of Aslan, looking all the time at Aslan's face. He felt a choking feeling and wondered if he ought to say something; but a moment later he felt that he was not expected to do anything except to wait, and do what he was told.

"Fall back, all of you," said Aslan, "and I will talk to the Witch alone."

They all obeyed. It was a terrible time this — waiting and wondering while the Lion and the Witch talked earnestly together in low voices. Lucy said, "Oh, Edmund!" and began to cry. Peter stood with his back to the others looking out at the distant sea. The Beavers stood holding each other's paws with their heads bowed. The centaurs stamped uneasily with their hoofs. But everyone became perfectly still in the end, so that you noticed even small sounds like a bumble bee flying past, or the birds in the forest down below them, or the wind rustling the leaves. And still the talk between Aslan and the White Witch went on.

At last they heard Aslan's voice. "You can all come back," he said. "I have settled the matter. She has renounced the claim on your brother's blood." And all over the hill there was a noise as if everyone had been

holding his breath and had now begun breathing again, and then a murmur of talk. They began to come back to Aslan's throne.

The Witch was just turning away with a look of fierce joy on her face when she stopped and said,

"But how do I know this promise will be kept?"

"Wow!" roared Aslan half rising from his throne; and his great mouth opened wider and wider and the roar grew louder and louder, and the Witch, after staring for a moment with her lips wide apart, picked up her skirts and fairly ran for her life.

CHAPTER XIV

The Triumph of the Witch

As soon as the Witch had gone Aslan said, “We must move from this place at once, it will be wanted for other purposes. We shall encamp to-night at the Fords of Beruna.”

Of course everyone was dying to ask him how he had arranged matters with the Witch; but his face was stern and everyone’s ears were still ringing with the sound of his roar and so nobody dared.

After a meal, which was taken in the open air on the hill-top (for the sun had got strong by now and dried the grass) they were busy for a while taking the pavilion down and packing things up. Before two o’clock they were on the march and set off in a North-Westerly direction, walking at an easy pace for they had not far to go.

During the first part of the journey Aslan explained to Peter his plan of campaign. “As soon as she has finished her business in these parts,” he said, “the Witch and her crew will almost certainly fall back to her house and prepare for a siege. You may or may not be able to cut her off and prevent her from reaching it.” He then went on to outline two plans of battle — one for fighting the Witch and her people in the wood and another for assaulting her castle. And all the time he was advising Peter how to conduct the operations, saying things like, “You must put your centaurs in such and such a place” or “You must post scouts to see that she doesn’t do so-and-so,” till at last Peter said,

“But you will be there yourself, Aslan.”

“I can give you no promise of that,” answered the Lion. And he continued giving Peter his instructions.

For the last part of the journey it was Susan and Lucy who saw most of him. He did not talk very much and seemed to them to be sad.

It was still afternoon when they came down to a place where the river valley had widened out and the river was broad and shallow. This was the Fords of Beruna and Aslan gave orders to halt on this side of the water. But Peter said,

“Wouldn’t it be better to camp on the far side — for fear she should try a night attack or anything?”

Aslan who seemed to have been thinking about something else roused himself with a shake of his magnificent mane and said, “Eh? What’s that?” Peter said it all over again.

“No,” said Aslan in a dull voice, as if it didn’t matter. “No. She will not make an attack to-night.” And then he sighed deeply. But presently he added, “All the same it was well thought of. That is how a soldier ought to think. But it doesn’t really matter.” So they proceeded to pitch their camp.

Aslan’s mood affected everyone that evening. Peter was feeling uncomfortable too at the idea of fighting the battle on his own; the news that Aslan might not be there had come as a great shock to him. Supper that evening was a quiet meal. Everyone felt how different it had been last night or even that morning. It was as if the good times, having just begun, were already drawing to their end.

This feeling affected Susan so much that she couldn’t get to sleep when she went to bed. And after she had lain counting sheep and turning over and over she heard Lucy give a long sigh and turn over just beside her in the darkness.

“Can’t you get to sleep either?” said Susan.

“No,” said Lucy. “I thought you were asleep. I say, Susan?”

“What?”

“I’ve a most horrible feeling — as if something were hanging over us.”

“Have you? Because, as a matter of fact, so have I.”

“Something about Aslan,” said Lucy. “Either some dreadful thing that is going to happen to him, or something dreadful that he’s going to do.”

“There’s been something wrong with him all afternoon,” said Susan. “Lucy! What was that he said about not being with us at the battle? You don’t think he could be stealing away and leaving us to-night, do you?”

“Where is he now?” said Lucy. “Is he here in the pavilion?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Susan! Let’s go outside and have a look round. We might see him.”

“All right. Let’s,” said Susan, “we might just as well be doing that as lying awake here.”

Very quietly the two girls groped their way among the other sleepers and crept out of the tent. The moonlight was bright and everything was quite still except for the noise of the river chattering over the stones. Then Susan suddenly caught Lucy’s arm and said, “Look!” On the far side of the camping ground, just where the trees began, they saw the Lion slowly

walking away from them into the wood. Without a word they both followed him.

He led them up the steep slope out of the river valley and then slightly to the left — apparently by the very same route which they had used that afternoon in coming from the Hill of the Stone Table. On and on he led them, into dark shadows and out into pale moonlight, getting their feet wet with the heavy dew. He looked somehow different from the Aslan they knew. His tail and his head hung low and he walked slowly as if he were very, very tired. Then, when they were crossing a wide open place where there were no shadows for them to hide in, he stopped and looked round. It was no good trying to run away so they came towards him. When they were closer he said,

"Oh, children, children, why are you following me?"

"We couldn't sleep," said Lucy — and then felt sure that she need say no more and that Aslan knew all they had been thinking.

"Please, may we come with you — wherever you're going?" said Susan.

"Well—" said Aslan and seemed to be thinking. Then he said, "I should be glad of company to-night. Yes, you may come, if you will promise to stop when I tell you, and after that leave me to go on alone."

"Oh, thank you, thank you. And we will," said the two girls.

Forward they went again and one of the girls walked on each side of the Lion. But how slowly he walked! And his great, royal head drooped so that his nose nearly touched the grass. Presently he stumbled and gave a low moan.

"Aslan! Dear Aslan!" said Lucy, "what is wrong? Can't you tell us?"

"Are you ill, dear Aslan?" asked Susan.

"No," said Aslan. "I am sad and lonely. Lay your hands on my mane so that I can feel you are there and let us walk like that."

And so the girls did what they would never have dared to do without his permission but what they had longed to do ever since they first saw him — buried their cold hands in the beautiful sea of fur and stroked it and, so doing, walked with him. And presently they saw that they were going with him up the slope of the hill on which the Stone Table stood. They went up at the side where the trees came furthest up, and when they got to the last tree (it was one that had some bushes about it) Aslan stopped and said,

"Oh, children, children. Here you must stop. And whatever happens, do not let yourselves be seen. Farewell."

And both the girls cried bitterly (though they hardly knew why) and clung to the Lion and kissed his mane and his nose and his paws and his great, sad eyes. Then he turned from them and walked out onto the top of the hill. And Lucy and Susan, crouching in the bushes, looked after him and this is what they saw.

A great crowd of people were standing all round the Stone Table and though the moon was shining many of them carried torches which burned with evil-looking red flames and black smoke. But such people! Ogres with monstrous teeth, and wolves, and bull-headed men; spirits of evil trees and poisonous plants; and other creatures whom I won't describe because if I did the grown-ups would probably not let you read this book — Cruels and Hags and Incubuses, Wraiths, Horrors, Efreets, Sprites, Orknies, Wooses, and Ettins. In fact here were all those who were on the Witch's side and whom the Wolf had summoned at her command. And right in the middle, standing by the Table, was the Witch herself.

A howl and a gibber of dismay went up from the creatures when they first saw the great Lion pacing towards them, and for a moment the Witch herself seemed to be struck with fear. Then she recovered herself and gave a wild, fierce laugh.

"The fool!" she cried. "The fool has come. Bind him fast."

Lucy and Susan held their breaths waiting for Aslan's roar and his spring upon his enemies. But it never came. Four hags, grinning and leering, yet also (at first) hanging back and half afraid of what they had to do, had approached him. "Bind him, I say!" repeated the White Witch. The hags made a dart at him and shrieked with triumph when they found that he made no resistance at all. Then others — evil dwarfs and apes — rushed in to help them and between them they rolled the huge Lion round on his back and tied all his four paws together, shouting and cheering as if they had done something brave, though, had the Lion chosen, one of those paws could have been the death of them all. But he made no noise, even when the enemies, straining and tugging, pulled the cords so tight that they cut into his flesh. Then they began to drag him towards the Stone Table.

"Stop!" said the Witch. "Let him first be shaved."

Another roar of mean laughter went up from her followers as an ogre with a pair of shears came forward and squatted down by Aslan's head. Snip-snip-snip went the shears and masses of curling gold began to fall to the ground. Then the ogre stood back and the children, watching from their

hiding-place, could see the face of Aslan looking all small and different without its mane. The enemies also saw the difference.

"Why, he's only a great cat after all!" cried one.

"Is *that* what we were afraid of?" said another.

And they surged round Aslan jeering at him, saying things like "Puss, Puss! Poor Pussy," and "How many mice have you caught to-day, Cat?" and "Would you like a saucer of milk, Pussums?"

"Oh how *can* they?" said Lucy, tears streaming down her cheeks. "The brutes, the brutes!" for now that the first shock was over the shorn face of Aslan looked to her braver, and more beautiful, and more patient than ever.

"Muzzle him!" said the Witch. And even now, as they worked about his face putting on the muzzle, one bite from his jaws would have cost two or three of them their hands. But he never moved. And this seemed to enrage all that rabble. Everyone was at him now. Those who had been afraid to come near him even after he was bound began to find their courage, and for a few minutes the two girls could not even see him — so thickly was he surrounded by the whole crowd of creatures kicking him, hitting him, spitting on him, jeering at him.

At last the rabble had had enough of this. They began to drag the bound and muzzled Lion to the Stone Table, some pulling and some pushing. He was so huge that even when they got him there it took all their efforts to hoist him onto the surface of it. Then there was more tying and tightening of cords.

"The cowards! The cowards!" sobbed Susan. "Are they *still* afraid of him, even now?"

When once Aslan had been tied (and tied so that he was really a mass of cords) on the flat stone, a hush fell on the crowd. Four Hags, holding four torches, stood at the corners of the Table. The Witch bared her arms as she had bared them the previous night when it had been Edmund instead of Aslan. Then she began to whet her knife. It looked to the children, when the gleam of the torchlight fell on it, as if the knife were made of stone not of steel and it was of a strange and evil shape.

At last she drew near. She stood by Aslan's head. Her face was working and twitching with passion, but his looked up at the sky, still quiet, neither angry nor afraid, but a little sad. Then, just before she gave the blow, she stooped down and said in a quivering voice,

“And now, who has won? Fool, did you think that by all this you would save the human traitor? Now I will kill you instead of him as our pact was and so the Deep Magic will be appeased. But when you are dead what will prevent me from killing him as well? And who will take him out of my hand *then*? Understand that you have given me Narnia forever, you have lost your own life and you have not saved his. In that knowledge, despair and die.”

The children did not see the actual moment of the killing. They couldn’t bear to look and had covered their eyes.

CHAPTER XV

Deeper Magic from before *the Dawn of Time*

While the two girls still crouched in the bushes with their hands over their faces, they heard the voice of the Witch calling out.

"Now! Follow me all and we will set about what remains of this war! It will not take us long to crush the human vermin and the traitors now that the great Fool, the great Cat, lies dead."

At this moment the children were for a few seconds in very great danger. For with wild cries and a noise of skirling pipes and shrill horns blowing, the whole of that vile rabble came sweeping off the hill-top and down the slope right past their hiding-place. They felt the Spectres go by them like a cold wind and they felt the ground shake beneath them under the galloping feet of the Minotaurs; and overhead there went a flurry of foul wings and a blackness of vultures and giant bats. At any other time they would have trembled with fear; but now the sadness and shame and horror of Aslan's death so filled their minds that they hardly thought of it.

As soon as the wood was silent again Susan and Lucy crept out into the open hill-top. The moon was getting low and thin clouds were passing across her, but still they could see the shape of the great Lion lying dead in his bonds. And down they both knelt in the wet grass and kissed his cold face and stroked his beautiful fur — what was left of it — and cried till they could cry no more. And then they looked at each other and held each other's hands for mere loneliness and cried again; and then again were silent. At last Lucy said,

"I can't bear the look of that horrible muzzle. I wonder could we take it off?"

So they tried. And after a lot of working at it (for their fingers were cold and it was now the darkest part of the night) they succeeded. And when they saw his face without it they burst out crying again and kissed it and fondled it and wiped away the blood and the foam as well as they could. And it was all more lonely and hopeless and horrid than I know how to describe.

"I wonder could we untie him as well?" said Susan presently. But the enemies, out of pure spitefulness had drawn the cords so tight that the girls

could make nothing of the knots.

I hope no one who reads this book has been quite as miserable as Susan and Lucy were that night; but if you have been — if you've been up all night and cried till you have no more tears left in you — you will know that there comes in the end a sort of quietness. You feel as if nothing was ever going to happen again. At any rate that was how it felt to these two. Hours and hours seemed to go by in this dead calm, and they hardly noticed that they were getting colder and colder. But at last Lucy noticed two other things. One was that the sky on the East side of the hill was a little less dark than it had been an hour ago. The other was some tiny movement going on in the grass at her feet. At first she took no interest in this. What did it matter? Nothing mattered now! But at last she saw that whatever-it-was had begun to move up the upright stones of the Stone Table. And now whatever-they-were were moving about on Aslan's body. She peered closer. They were little grey things.

"Ugh!" said Susan from the other side of the Table. "How beastly! There are horrid little mice crawling over him. Go away, you little beasts." And she raised her hand to frighten them away.

"Wait!" said Lucy who had been looking at them more closely still. "Can you see what they're doing?"

Both girls bent down and stared.

"I do believe!" said Susan. "But how queer. They're nibbling away at the cords!"

"That's what I thought," said Lucy. "I think they're friendly mice. Poor little things — they don't realise he's dead. They think it'll do some good untying him."

It was quite definitely lighter by now. Each of the girls noticed for the first time the white face of the other. They could see the mice nibbling away; dozens and dozens, even hundreds, of little field mice. And at last, one by one, the ropes were all gnawed through.

The sky in the East was whitish by now and the stars were getting fainter — all except one very big one low down on the Eastern horizon. They felt colder than they had been all night. The mice crept away again.

The girls cleared away the remains of the gnawed ropes. Aslan looked more like himself without them. Every moment his dead face looked nobler, as the light grew and they could see it better.

In the wood behind them a bird gave a chuckling sound. It had been so still for hours and hours that it startled them. Then another bird answered it. Soon there were birds singing all over the place.

It was quite definitely early morning now, not late night.

“I’m so cold,” said Lucy.

“So am I,” said Susan. “Let’s walk about a bit.”

They walked to the Eastern edge of the hill and looked down. The one big star had almost disappeared. The country all looked dark grey, but beyond, at the very end of the world, the sea showed pale. The sky began to turn red. They walked to and fro more times than they could count between the dead Aslan and the Eastern ridge, trying to keep warm; and oh, how tired their legs felt. Then at last, as they stood for a moment looking out towards the sea and Cair Paravel (which they could now just make out) the red turned to gold along the line where the sea and the sky met and very slowly up came the edge of the sun. At that moment they heard from behind them a loud noise — a great cracking, deafening noise as if a giant had broken a giant’s plate.

“What’s that?” said Lucy, clutching Susan’s arm.

“I — I feel afraid to turn round,” said Susan; “something awful is happening.”

“They’re doing something worse to *him*,” said Lucy. “Come on!” And she turned, pulling Susan round with her.

The rising of the sun had made everything look so different — all the colours and shadows were changed — that for a moment they didn’t see the important thing. Then they did. The Stone Table was broken into two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end to end; and there was no Aslan.

“Oh, oh, oh!” cried the two girls rushing back to the Table.

“Oh, it’s *too* bad,” sobbed Lucy; “they might have left the body alone.”

“Who’s done it?” cried Susan. “What does it mean? Is it more magic?”

“Yes!” said a great voice behind their backs. “It is more magic.” They looked round. There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane (for it had apparently grown again) stood Aslan himself.

“Oh, Aslan!” cried both the children, staring up at him, almost as much frightened as they were glad.

“Aren’t you dead then, dear Aslan?” said Lucy.

“Not now,” said Aslan.

“You’re not — not a — ?” asked Susan in a shaky voice. She couldn’t bring herself to say the word *ghost*.

Aslan stooped his golden head and licked her forehead. The warmth of his breath and a rich sort of smell that seemed to hang about his hair came all over her.

“Do I look it?” he said.

“Oh, you’re real, you’re real! Oh, Aslan!” cried Lucy and both girls flung themselves upon him and covered him with kisses.

“But what does it all mean?” asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer.

“It means,” said Aslan, “that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards. And now —

“Oh yes. Now?” said Lucy jumping up and clapping her hands.

“Oh, children,” said the Lion, “I feel my strength coming back to me. Oh, children, catch me if you can!” He stood for a second, his eyes very bright, his limbs quivering, lashing himself with his tail. Then he made a leap high over their heads and landed on the other side of the Table. Laughing, though she didn’t know why, Lucy scrambled over it to reach him. Aslan leaped again. A mad chase began. Round and round the hill-top he led them, now hopelessly out of their reach, now letting them almost catch his tail, now diving between them, now tossing them in the air with his huge and beautifully velveted paws and catching them again, and now stopping unexpectedly so that all three of them rolled over together in a happy laughing heap of fur and arms and legs. It was such a romp as no one has ever had except in Narnia; and whether it was more like playing with a thunderstorm or playing with a kitten Lucy could never make up her mind. And the funny thing was that when all three finally lay together panting in the sun the girls no longer felt in the least tired or hungry or thirsty.

“And now,” said Aslan presently, “to business. I feel I am going to roar. You had better put your fingers in your ears.”

And they did. And Aslan stood up and when he opened his mouth to roar his face became so terrible that they did not dare to look at it. And they saw all the trees in front of him bend before the blast of his roaring as grass bends in a meadow before the wind. Then he said,

“We have a long journey to go. You must ride on me.” And he crouched down and the children climbed onto his warm, golden back and Susan sat first holding on tightly to his mane and Lucy sat behind holding on tightly to Susan. And with a great heave he rose underneath them and then shot off, faster than any horse could go, downhill and into the thick of the forest.

That ride was perhaps the most wonderful thing that happened to them in Narnia. Have you ever had a gallop on a horse? Think of that; and then take away the heavy noise of the hoofs and the jingle of the harness and imagine instead the almost noiseless padding of the great paws. Then imagine instead of the black or grey or chestnut back of the horse the soft roughness of golden fur, and the mane flying back in the wind. And then imagine you are going about twice as fast as the fastest racehorse. But this is a mount that doesn’t need to be guided and never grows tired. He rushes on and on, never missing his footing, never hesitating, threading his way with perfect skill between tree-trunks, jumping over bush and briar and the smaller streams, wading the larger, swimming the largest of all. And you are riding not on a road nor in a park nor even on the downs but right across Narnia, in spring, down solemn avenues of beech and across sunny glades of oak, through wild orchards of snow-white cherry trees, past roaring waterfalls and mossy rocks and echoing caverns, up windy slopes alight with gorse bushes and across the shoulders of heathery mountains and along giddy ridges and down, down, down again into wild valleys and out into acres of blue flowers.

It was nearly mid-day when they found themselves looking down a steep hillside at a castle — a little toy castle it looked from where they stood — which seemed to be all pointed towers. But the Lion was rushing down at such a speed that it grew larger every moment and before they had time even to ask themselves what it was they were already on a level with it. And now it no longer looked like a toy castle but rose frowning in front of them. No face looked over the battlements and the gates were fast shut. And Aslan, not at all slacking his pace, rushed straight as a bullet towards it.

“The Witch’s home!” he cried. “Now, children, hold tight.”

Next moment the whole world seemed to turn upside down, and the children felt as if they had left their insides behind them; for the Lion had gathered himself together for a greater leap than any he had yet made and jumped — or you may call it flying rather than jumping — right over the castle wall. The two girls, breathless but unhurt, found themselves tumbling off his back in the middle of a wide stone courtyard full of statues.

CHAPTER XVI

What Happened about the Statues

"What an extraordinary place!" cried Lucy. "All those stone animals — and people too! It's — it's like a museum."

"Hush," said Susan, "Aslan's doing something."

He was indeed. He had bounded up to the stone lion and breathed on him. Then without waiting a moment he whisked round — almost as if he had been a cat chasing its tail — and breathed also on the stone dwarf, which (as you remember) was standing a few feet from the lion with his back to it. Then he pounced on a tall stone Dryad which stood beyond the dwarf, turned rapidly aside to deal with a stone rabbit on his right, and rushed on to two centaurs. But at that moment Lucy said,

"Oh, Susan! Look! Look at the lion."

I expect you've seen someone put a lighted match to a bit of newspaper which is propped up in a grate against an unlit fire. And for a second nothing seems to have happened; and then you notice a tiny streak of flame creeping along the edge of the newspaper. It was like that now. For a second after Aslan had breathed upon him the stone lion looked just the same. Then a tiny streak of gold began to run along his white marble back — then it spread — then the colour seemed to lick all over him as the flame licks all over a bit of paper — then, while his hind-quarters were still obviously stone the lion shook his mane and all the heavy, stony folds rippled into living hair. Then he opened a great red mouth, warm and living, and gave a prodigious yawn. And now his hind legs had come to life. He lifted one of them and scratched himself. Then, having caught sight of Aslan, he went bounding after him and frisking round him whimpering with delight and jumping up to lick his face.

Of course the children's eyes turned to follow the lion; but the sight they saw was so wonderful that they soon forgot about *him*. Everywhere the statues were coming to life. The courtyard looked no longer like a museum; it looked more like a zoo. Creatures were running after Aslan and dancing round him till he was almost hidden in the crowd. Instead of all that deadly white the courtyard was now a blaze of colours; glossy chestnut sides of centaurs, indigo horns of unicorns, dazzling plumage of birds, reddy-brown

of foxes, dogs, and satyrs, yellow stockings and crimson hoods of dwarfs; and the birch-girls in silver, and the beech-girls in fresh, transparent green, and the larch-girls in green so bright that it was almost yellow. And instead of the deadly silence the whole place rang with the sound of happy roarings, brayings, yelpings, barkings, squealings, cooings, neighings, stampings, shouts, hurrahs, songs and laughter.

"Ooh!" said Susan in a different tone. "Look! I wonder — I mean, is it safe?"

Lucy looked and saw that Aslan had just breathed on the feet of the stone giant.

"It's all right!" shouted Aslan joyously. "Once the feet are put right, all the rest of him will follow."

"That wasn't exactly what I meant," whispered Susan to Lucy. But it was too late to do anything about it now even if Aslan would have listened to her. The change was already creeping up the Giant's legs. Now he was moving his feet. A moment later he lifted the club off his shoulder, rubbed his eyes and said,

"Bless me! I must have been asleep. Now! Where's that dratted little Witch that was running about on the ground. Somewhere just by my feet it was." But when everyone had shouted up to him to explain what had really happened, and when the Giant had put his hand to his ear and got them to repeat it all again so that at last he understood, then he bowed down till his head was no further off than the top of a haystack and touched his cap repeatedly to Aslan, beaming all over his honest ugly face, (giants of any sort are now so rare in England and so few giants are good tempered that ten to one you have never seen a giant when his face is beaming. It's a sight well worth looking at.)

"Now for the inside of this house!" said Aslan. "Look alive, everyone. Up stairs and down stairs and in my lady's chamber! Leave no corner unsearched. You never know where some poor prisoner may be concealed."

And into the interior they all rushed and for several minutes the whole of that dark, horrible, fusty old castle echoed with the opening of windows and with everyone's voices crying out at once "Don't forget the dungeons — Give us a hand with this door! — Here's another little winding stair — Oh! I say. Here's a poor little kangaroo. Call Aslan — Phew! How it smells in here — Look out for trap-doors — Up here! There are a whole lot more on

the landing!" But the best of all was when Lucy came rushing upstairs shouting out,

"Aslan! Aslan! I've found Mr. Tumnus. Oh, do come quick."

A moment later Lucy and the little Faun were holding one another by both hands and dancing round and round for joy. The little chap was none the worse for having been a statue and was of course very interested in all she had to tell him.

But at last the ransacking of the Witch's fortress was ended. The whole castle stood empty with every door and window open and the light and the sweet spring air flooding in to all the dark and evil places which needed them so badly. The whole crowd of liberated statues surged back into the courtyard. And it was then that someone (Tumnus, I think) first said,

"But how are we going to get out?" for Aslan had got in by a jump and the gates were still locked.

"That'll be all right," said Aslan; and then, rising on his hind-legs, he bawled up at the Giant. "Hi! You up there," he roared. "What's your name?"

"Giant Rumblebuffin if it please your honour," said the Giant, once more touching his cap.

"Well then, Giant Rumblebuffin," said Aslan, "just let us out of this, will you?"

"Certainly, your honour. It will be a pleasure," said Giant Rumblebuffin. "Stand well away from the gates, all you little 'uns." Then he strode to the gate himself and bang — bang — bang — went his huge club. The gates creaked at the first blow, cracked at the second, and shivered at the third. Then he tackled the towers on each side of them and after a few minutes of crashing and thudding both the towers and a good bit of the wall on each side went thundering down in a mass of hopeless rubble; and when the dust cleared it was odd, standing in that dry, grim, stony yard, to see through the gap all the grass and waving trees and sparkling streams of the forest, and the blue hills beyond that and beyond them the sky.

"Blowed if I ain't all in a muck sweat," said the Giant puffing like the largest railway engine. "Comes of being out of condition. I suppose neither of you young ladies has such a thing as a pocket-handkerchee about you?"

"Yes, I have," said Lucy standing on tip-toes and holding her handkerchief up as far as she could reach.

"Thank you, Missie," said Giant Rumblebuffin stooping down. Next moment Lucy got rather a fright for she found herself caught up in mid-air

between the Giant's finger and thumb. But just as she was getting near his face he suddenly started and then put her gently back on the ground muttering, "Bless me! I've picked up the little girl instead. I beg your pardon, Missie, I thought you was the handkerchee!"

"No, no," said Lucy laughing, "here it is!" This time he managed to get it but it was only about the same size to him that a saccharine tablet would be to you, so that when she saw him solemnly rubbing it to and fro across his great red face, she said, "I'm afraid it's not much use to you, Mr. Rumblebuffin."

"Not at all. Not at all," said the Giant politely. "Never met a nicer handkerchee. So fine, so handy. So — I don't know how to describe it."

"What a nice giant he is!" said Lucy to Mr. Tumnus.

"Oh yes," replied the Faun. "All the Buffins always were. One of the most respected of all the giant families in Narnia. Not very clever, perhaps (I never knew a giant that was) but an old family. With traditions, you know. If he'd been the other sort she'd never have turned him into stone."

At this point Aslan clapped his paws together and called for silence.

"Our day's work is not yet over," he said, "and if the Witch is to be finally defeated before bed-time we must find the battle at once."

"And join in I hope, Sir!" added the largest of the centaurs.

"Of course," said Aslan. "And now! Those who can't keep up — that is, children, dwarfs, and small animals — must ride on the backs of those who can — that is, lions, centaurs, unicorns, horses, giants and eagles. Those who are good with their noses must come in the front with us lions to smell out where the battle is. Look lively and sort yourselves."

And with a great deal of bustle and cheering they did. The most pleased of the lot was the other lion, who kept running about everywhere pretending to be very busy but really in order to say to everyone he met, "Did you hear what he said? *Us lions*. That means him and me. *Us lions*. That's what I like about Aslan. No side, no stand-off-ishness. *Us lions*. That meant him and me." At least he went on saying this till Aslan had loaded him up with three dwarfs, one Dryad, two rabbits, and a hedgehog. That steadied him a bit.

When all were ready (it was a big sheep-dog who actually helped Aslan most in getting them sorted into their proper order) they set out through the gap in the castle wall. At first the lions and dogs went nosing about in all directions. But then suddenly one great hound picked up the scent and gave a bay. There was no time lost after that. Soon all the dogs and lions and

wolves and other hunting animals were going at full speed with their noses to the ground, and all the others, streaked out for about half a mile behind them, were following as fast as they could. The noise was like an English fox-hunt only better because every now and then with the music of the hounds was mixed the roar of the other lion and sometimes the far deeper and more awful roar of Aslan himself. Faster and faster they went as the scent became easier and easier to follow. And then, just as they came to the last curve in a narrow, winding valley, Lucy heard above all these noises another noise — a different one, which gave her a queer feeling inside. It was a noise of shouts and shrieks and of the clashing of metal against metal.

Then they came out of the narrow valley and at once she saw the reason. There stood Peter and Edmund and all the rest of Aslan's army fighting desperately against the crowd of horrible creatures whom she had seen last night; only now, in the daylight, they looked even stranger and more evil and more deformed. There also seemed to be far more of them. Aslan's army — which had their backs to her — looked terribly few. And there were statues dotted all over the battlefield, so apparently the Witch had been using her wand. But she did not seem to be using it now. She was fighting with her stone knife. It was Peter she was fighting — both of them going at it so hard that Lucy could hardly make out what was happening; she only saw the stone knife and Peter's sword flashing so quickly that they looked like three knives and three swords. That pair were in the centre. On each side the line stretched out. Horrible things were happening wherever she looked.

"Off my back, children," shouted Aslan. And they both tumbled off. Then with a roar that shook all Narnia from the Western lamp-post to the shores of the Eastern sea the great beast flung himself upon the White Witch. Lucy saw her face lifted towards him for one second with an expression of terror and amazement. Then Lion and Witch had rolled over together but with the Witch underneath; and at the same moment all war-like creatures whom Aslan had led from the Witch's house rushed madly on the enemy's line, dwarfs with their battle-axes, dogs with teeth, the giant with his club (and his feet also crushed dozens of the foe) unicorns with their horns, centaurs with swords and hoofs. And Peter's tired army cheered, and the newcomers roared, and the enemy squealed and gibbered till the wood re-echoed with the din of that onset.

CHAPTER XVII

The Hunting of the White Stag

The battle was all over a few minutes after their arrival. Most of the enemy had been killed in the first charge of Aslan and his companions; and when those who were still living saw that the Witch was dead they either gave themselves up or took to flight. The next thing that Lucy knew was that Peter and Aslan were shaking hands. It was strange to her to see Peter looking as he looked now — his face was so pale and stern and he seemed so much older.

"It was all Edmund's doing, Aslan," Peter was saying. "We'd have been beaten if it hadn't been for him. The Witch was-turning our troops into stone right and left. But nothing would stop him. He fought his way through three ogres to where she was just turning one of your leopards into a statue. And when he reached her he had the sense to bring his sword smashing down on her wand instead of trying to go for her directly and simply getting made a statue himself for his pains. That was the mistake all the rest were making. Once her wand was broken we began to have some chance — if we hadn't lost so many already. He was terribly wounded. We must go and see him."

They found Edmund in charge of Mrs. Beaver a little way back from the fighting line. He was covered with blood, his mouth was open, and his face a nasty green colour.

"Quick, Lucy," said Aslan.

And then, almost for the first time, Lucy remembered the precious cordial that had been given her for a Christmas present. Her hands trembled so much that she could hardly undo the stopper, but she managed it in the end and poured a few drops into her brother's mouth.

"There are other people wounded," said Aslan while she was still looking eagerly into Edmund's pale face and wondering if the cordial would have any result.

"Yes, I know," said Lucy crossly. "Wait a minute."

"Daughter of Eve," said Aslan in a graver voice, "others also are at the point of death. Must more people die for Edmund?"

“I’m sorry, Aslan,” said Lucy getting up and going with him. And for the next half hour they were busy — she attending to the wounded while he restored those who had been turned into stone. When at last she was free to come back to Edmund she found him standing on his feet and not only healed of his wounds but looking better than she had seen him look — oh, for ages; in fact ever since his first term at that horrid school which was where he had begun to go wrong. He had become his real old self again and could look you in the face. And there on the field of battle Aslan made him a Knight.

“Does he know,” whispered Lucy to Susan, “what Aslan did for him? Does he know what the arrangement with the Witch really was?”

“Hush! No. Of course not,” said Susan.

“Oughtn’t he to be told?” said Lucy.

“Oh, surely not,” said Susan. “It would be too awful for him. Think how you’d feel if you were he.”

“All the same I think he ought to know,” said Lucy. But at that moment they were interrupted.

That night they slept where they were. How Aslan provided food for them all I don’t know; but somehow or other they found themselves all sitting down on the grass to a fine high tea at about eight o’clock. Next day they began marching Eastward down the side of the great river. And the next day after that, at about tea-time, they actually reached the mouth. The castle of Cair Paravel on its little hill towered up above them; before them were the sands, with rocks and little pools of salt water, and sea weed, and the smell of the sea, and long miles of bluish-green waves breaking forever and ever on the beach. And, oh, the cry of the sea gulls! Have you heard it? Can you remember?

That evening after tea the four children all managed to get down to the beach again and get their shoes and stockings off and feel the sand between their toes. But next day was more solemn. For then, in the Great Hall of Cair Paravel — that wonderful hall with the ivory roof and the west door all hung with peacock’s feathers and the eastern door which opens right onto the sea, in the presence of all their friends and to the sound of trumpets, Aslan solemnly crowned them and led them onto the four thrones amid deafening shouts of, “Long Live King Peter! Long Live Queen Susan! Long Live King Edmund! Long Live Queen Lucy!”

“Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen. Bear it well, Sons of Adam! Bear it well, Daughters of Eve!” said Aslan.

And through the Eastern door, which was wide open came the voices of the mermen and the mermaids swimming close to the castle steps and singing in honour of their new Kings and Queens.

So the children sat in their thrones and sceptres were put into their hands and they gave rewards and honours to all their friends, to Tumnus the Faun, and to the Beavers, and Giant Rumblebuffin, to the leopards, and the good centaurs and the good dwarfs, and to the lion. And that night there was a great feast in Cair Paravel, and revelry and dancing, and gold flashed and wine flowed, and answering to the music inside, but stranger, sweeter, and more piercing, came the music of the sea people.

But amidst all these rejoicings Aslan himself quietly slipped away. And when the Kings and Queens noticed that he wasn’t there they said nothing about it. For Mr. Beaver had warned them, “He’ll be coming and going” he had said. “One day you’ll see him and another you won’t. He doesn’t like being tied down — and of course he has other countries to attend to. It’s quite all right. He’ll often drop in. Only you mustn’t press him. He’s wild, you know. Not like a *tame* lion.”

And now, as you see, this story is nearly (but not quite) at an end. These two Kings and two Queens governed Narnia well and long and happy was their reign. At first much of their time was spent in seeking out the remnants of the White Witch’s army and destroying them, and indeed for a long time there would be news of evil things lurking in the wilder parts of the forest — a haunting here and a killing there, a glimpse of a werewolf one month and a rumour of a hag the next. But in the end all that foul brood was stamped out. And they made good laws and kept the peace and saved good trees from being unnecessarily cut down, and liberated young dwarfs and young satyrs from being sent to school, and generally stopped busybodies and interferers and encouraged ordinary people who wanted to live and let live. And they drove back the fierce giants (quite a different sort from Giant Rumblebuffin) on the North of Narnia when these ventured across the frontier. And they entered into friendship and alliance with countries beyond the sea and paid them visits of state and received visits of state from them. And they themselves grew and changed as the years passed over them. And Peter became a tall and deep chested man and a great warrior, and he was called King Peter the Magnificent. And Susan grew

into a tall and gracious woman with black hair that fell almost to her feet and the Kings of the countries beyond the sea began to send ambassadors asking for her hand in marriage. And she was called Queen Susan the Gentle. Edmund was a graver and quieter man than Peter, and great in council and judgement. He was called King Edmund the Just. But as for Lucy, she was always gay and golden haired, and all Princes in those parts desired her to be their Queen, and her own people called her Queen Lucy the Valiant.

So they lived in great joy and if ever they remembered their life in this world it was only as one remembers a dream. And one year it fell out that Tumnus (who was a middle-aged Faun by now and beginning to be stout) came down river and brought them news that the White Stag had once more appeared in his parts — the White Stag who would give you wishes if you caught him. So these two Kings and two Queens with the principal members of their court, rode a-hunting with horns and hounds in the Western Woods to follow the White Stag. And they had not hunted long before they had a sight of him. And he led them a great pace over rough and smooth and through thick and thin, till the horses of all the courtiers were tired out and only these four were still following. And they saw the stag enter into a thicket where their horses could not follow. Then said King Peter (for they talked in quite a different style now, having been Kings and Queens for so long) “Fair Consorts, let us now alight from our horses and follow this beast into the thicket; for in all my days I never hunted a nobler quarry.”

“Sir,” said the others, “even so let us do.”

So they alighted and tied their horses to trees and went on into the thick wood on foot. And as soon as they had entered it Queen Susan said,

“Fair friends, here is a great marvel, for I seem to see a tree of iron.”

“Madam,” said King Edmund, “if you look well upon it you shall see it is a pillar of iron with a lantern set on the top thereof.”

“Marry, a strange device,” said King Peter, “to set a lantern here where the trees cluster so thick about it and so high above it that if it were lit it should give light to no man!”

“Sir,” said Queen Lucy. “By likelihood when this post and this lamp were set here there were smaller trees in the place, or fewer, or none. For this is a young wood and the iron post is old.” And they stood looking upon it. Then said King Edmund,

“I know not how it is, but this lamp on the post worketh upon me strangely. It runs in my mind that I have seen the like before; as it were in a dream, or in the dream of a dream.”

“Sir,” answered they all, “it is even so with us also.”

“And more,” said Queen Lucy, “for it will not go out of my mind that if we pass this post and lantern, either we shall find strange adventures or else some great change of our fortunes.”

“Madam,” said King Edmund, “the like foreboding stirreth in my heart also.”

“And in mine, fair brother,” said King Peter.

“And in mine too,” said Queen Susan. “Wherefore by my council we shall lightly return to our horses and follow this White Stag no further.”

“Madam,” said King Peter, “therein I pray thee to have me excused. For never since we four were Kings and Queens in Narnia have we set our hands to any high matter, as battles, quests, feats of arms, acts of justice, and the like, and then given over; but always what we have taken in hand, the same we have achieved.”

“Sister,” said Queen Lucy, “my royal brother speaks rightly. And it seems to me we should be shamed if for any fearing or foreboding we turned back from following so noble a beast as now we have in chase.”

“And so say I,” said King Edmund. “And I have such desire to find the signification of this thing that I would not by my good will turn back for the richest jewel in all Narnia and all the islands.”

“Then in the name of Aslan,” said Queen Susan, “if ye will all have it so, let us go on and take the adventure that shall fall to us.”

So these Kings and Queens entered the thicket, and before they had gone a score of paces they all remembered that the thing they had seen was called a lamp-post, and before they had gone twenty more, they noticed that they were making their way not through branches but through coats. And next moment they all came tumbling out of a wardrobe door into the empty room, and they were no longer Kings and Queens in their hunting array but just Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy in their old clothes. It was the same day and the same hour of the day on which they had all gone into the wardrobe to hide. Mrs. Macready and the visitors were still talking in the passage; but luckily they never came into the empty room and so the children weren’t caught.

And that would have been the very end of the story if it hadn’t been that they felt they really must explain to the Professor why four of the coats out of his wardrobe were missing. And the Professor, who was a very remarkable man, didn’t tell them not to be silly or not to tell lies, but believed the whole story. “No,” he said, “I don’t think it will be any good trying to go back through the wardrobe door to get the coats. You won’t get into Narnia again by *that* route. Nor would the coats be much use by now if you did! Eh? What’s that? Yes, of course you’ll get back to Narnia again some day. Once a King in Narnia, always a King in Narnia. But don’t go trying to use the same route twice. Indeed, don’t *try* to get there at all. It’ll happen when you’re not looking for it. And don’t talk too much about it even among yourselves. And don’t mention it to anyone else unless you find that they’ve had adventures of the same sort themselves. What’s that? How will you know? Oh, you’ll *know* all right. Odd things, they say — even their looks — will let the secret out. Keep your eyes open. Bless me, what *do* they teach them at these schools?”

And that is the very end of the adventures of the wardrobe. But if the Professor was right it was only the beginning of the adventures of Narnia.

THE END

PRINCE CASPIAN (1951)



THE RETURN TO NARNIA

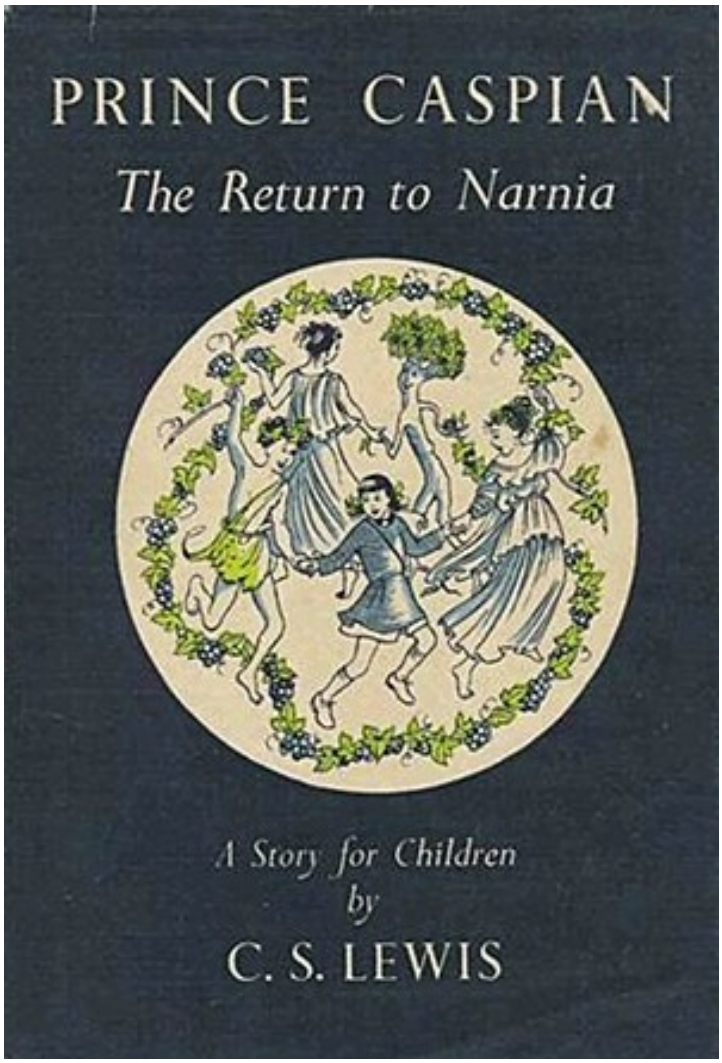
Lewis actually finished writing his sequel Narnia book, published in 1951, before the first book was officially published. Now, it is numbered as volume four in recent editions of the series, which are sequenced according to Narnia chronological history. The novel once again features the four Pevensie children of the first novel, set about one year later in England, though the plot in Narnia occurs 1,300 years later.

Prince Caspian opens with the Pevensie siblings standing on a British railway station, when they are magically whisked away to a beach near a ruined castle. They determine the ruin is Cair Paravel, where they ruled as the Kings and Queens of Narnia, and discover the treasure vault where Peter's sword and shield, Susan's bow and arrows and Lucy's bottle of magical cordial and dagger are stored. Susan's horn for summoning help is missing, as she left it in the woods the day they returned to England after their prior visit to Narnia. Although only a year has passed in England, much has changed in Narnia.

The children intervene to rescue Trumpkin the dwarf from soldiers that have brought him to the ruins in order to drown him. Trumpkin tells the children that since their disappearance, a race of men called Telmarines have invaded Narnia, driving the Talking Beasts into the wilderness and pushing even their memory underground. Narnia is ruled by King Miraz and his wife Queen Prunaprismia, but the rightful king is Miraz's nephew, Prince Caspian, who has gained the support of the Old Narnians. Miraz usurped the throne by killing his brother, Caspian's father King Caspian IX. Miraz tolerated Caspian as heir until his own son was born. Prince Caspian, until that point ignorant of his uncle's deeds, escaped from Miraz's Castle with the aid of his tutor Doctor Cornelius, who schooled him in the lore of Old Narnia, giving him Queen Susan's horn. Caspian fled into the forest, but was knocked unconscious when his horse bolted. He awoke in the den of a talking badger, Trufflehunter, and two dwarfs, Nikabrik and Trumpkin,

who accepted Caspian as their king and set about helping him regain his throne...

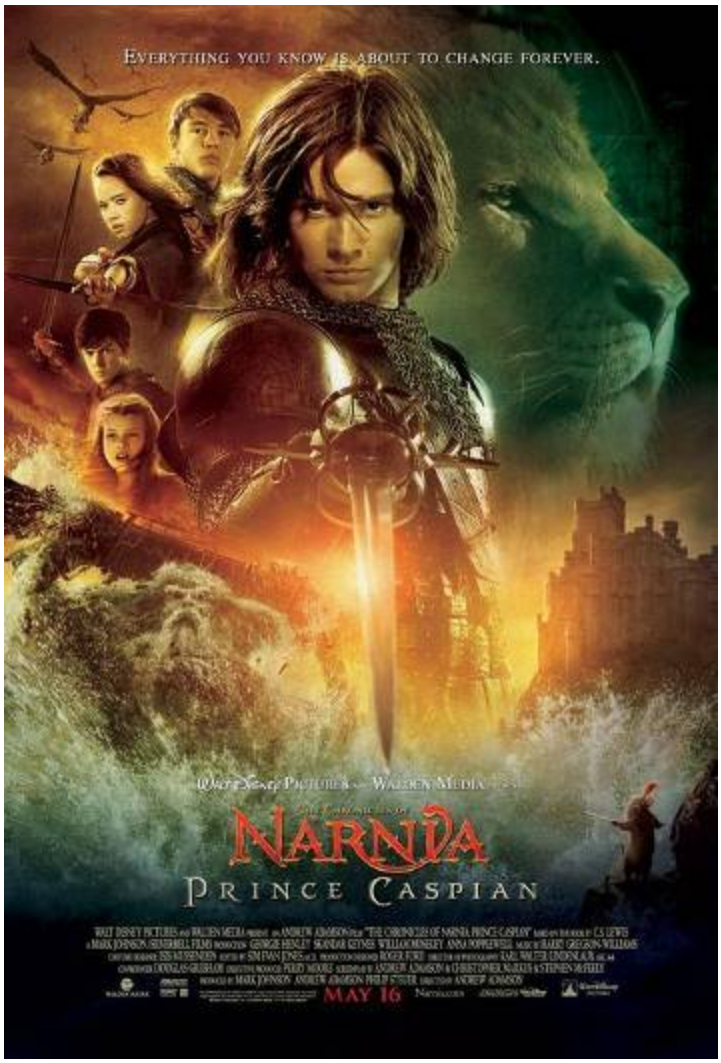
The two major themes of the novel are courage and chivalry and, as Lewis himself commented in a letter to an American fan, “the restoration of the true religion after a corruption”. The Telmarine conquest of Narnia, as depicted in the novel, is in many ways similar to the historical Norman Conquest of England. Though there is no precise parallel in actual English history to the specific events of this book, the end result — “Old Narnians” and Telmarines becoming a single people and living together in harmony — is similar to the historical process of Saxons and Normans eventually fusing into a single English people.



The first edition

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The 2008 film adaptation

Chapter I

THE ISLAND

Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, and it has been told in another book called *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* how they had a remarkable adventure. They had opened the door of a magic wardrobe and found themselves in a quite different world from ours, and in that different world they had become Kings and Queens in a country called Narnia. While they were in Narnia they seemed to reign for years and years; but when they came back through the door and found themselves in England again, it all seemed to have taken no time at all. At any rate, no one noticed that they had ever been away, and they never told anyone except one very wise grown-up.

That had all happened a year ago, and now all four of them were sitting on a seat at a railway station with trunks and playboxes piled up round them. They were, in fact, on their way back to school. They had travelled together as far as this station, which was a junction; and here, in a few minutes, one train would arrive and take the girls away to one school, and in about half an hour another train would arrive and the boys would go off to another school. The first part of the journey, when they were all together, always seemed to be part of the holidays; but now when they would be saying good-by and going different ways so soon, everyone felt that the holidays were really over and everyone felt their term time feelings beginning again, and they were all rather gloomy and no-one could think of anything to say. Lucy was going to boarding school for the first time.

It was an empty, sleepy, country station and there was hardly anyone on the platform except themselves. Suddenly Lucy gave a sharp little cry, like someone who has been stung by a wasp.

“What’s up, Lu?” said Edmund — and then suddenly broke off and made a noise like “Ow!”

“What on earth — —” began Peter, and then he too suddenly changed what he had been going to say. Instead, he said, “Susan, let go! What are you doing? Where are you dragging me to?”

“I’m not touching you,” said Susan. “Someone is pulling *me*. Oh — oh — oh — stop it!”

Everyone noticed that all the others' faces had gone very white.

"I felt just the same," said Edmund in a breathless voice. "As if I were being dragged along. A most frightful pulling — ugh! it's beginning again."

"Me too," said Lucy. "Oh, I can't bear it."

"Look sharp!" shouted Edmund. "All catch hands and keep together. This is magic — I can tell by the feeling. Quick!"

"Yes," said Susan. "Hold hands. Oh, I do wish it would stop — oh!"

Next moment the luggage, the seat, the platform, and the station had completely vanished. The four children, holding hands and panting, found themselves standing in a woody place — such a woody place that branches were sticking into them and there was hardly room to move. They all rubbed their eyes and took a deep breath.

"Oh, Peter!" exclaimed Lucy. "Do you think we can possibly have got back to Narnia?"

"It might be anywhere," said Peter, "I can't see a yard in all these trees. Let's try to get into the open — if there is any open."

With some difficulty, and with some stings from nettles and pricks from thorns, they struggled out of the thicket. Then they had another surprise. Everything became much brighter, and after a few steps they found themselves at the edge of the wood, looking down on a sandy beach. A few yards away a very calm sea was falling on the sand with such tiny ripples that it made hardly any sound. There was no land in sight and no clouds in the sky. The sun was about where it ought to be at ten o'clock in the morning, and the sea was a dazzling blue. They stood sniffing in the sea-smell.

"By Jove!" said Peter. "This is good enough."

Five minutes later everyone was barefooted and wading in the cool clear water.

"This is better than being in a stuffy train on the way back to Latin and French and Algebra!" said Edmund. And then for quite a long time there was no more talking, only splashing and looking for shrimps and crabs.

"All the same," said Susan presently, "I suppose we'll have to make some plans. We shall want something to eat before long."

"We've got the sandwiches Mother gave us for the journey," said Edmund. "At least I've got mine."

"Not me," said Lucy. "Mine were in my little bag."

"So were mine," said Susan.

“Mine are in my coat-pocket, there on the beach,” said Peter. “That’ll be two lunches among four. This isn’t going to be such fun.”

“At present,” said Lucy, “I want something to drink more than something to eat.”

Everyone else now felt thirsty, as one usually is after wading in salt water under a hot sun.

“It’s like being shipwrecked,” remarked Edmund. “In the books they always find springs of clear, fresh water on the island. We’d better go and look for them.”

“Does that mean we have to go back into all that thick wood?” said Susan.

“Not a bit of it,” said Peter. “If there are streams they’re bound to come down to the sea, and if we walk along the beach we’re bound to come to them.”

They all now waded back and went first across the smooth, wet sand and then up to the dry, crumbly sand that sticks to one’s toes, and began putting on their shoes and socks. Edmund and Lucy wanted to leave them behind and do their exploring with bare feet, but Susan said this would be a mad thing to do. “We might never find them again,” she pointed out, “and we shall want them if we’re still here when night comes and it begins to be cold.”

When they were dressed again they set out along the shore with the sea on their left hand and the wood on their right. Except for an occasional seagull it was a very quiet place. The wood was so thick and tangled that they could hardly see into it at all; and nothing in it moved — not a bird, not even an insect.

Shells and seaweed and anemones, or tiny crabs in rock-pools, are all very well, but you soon get tired of them if you are thirsty. The children’s feet, after the change from the cool water, felt hot and heavy. Susan and Lucy had raincoats to carry. Edmund had put down his coat on the station seat just before the magic overtook them, and he and Peter took it in turns to carry Peter’s great-coat.

Presently the shore began to curve round to the right. About quarter of an hour later, after they had crossed a rocky ridge which ran out into a point, it made quite a sharp turn. Their backs were now to the part of the sea which had met them when they first came out of the wood, and now, looking

ahead, they could see across the water another shore, thickly wooded like the one they were exploring.

“I wonder, is that an island or do we join on to it presently?” said Lucy.

“Don’t know,” said Peter and they all plodded on in silence.

The shore that they were walking on drew nearer and nearer to the opposite shore, and as they came round each promontory the children expected to find the place where the two joined. But in this they were disappointed. They came to some rocks which they had to climb and from the top they could see a fair way ahead and— “Oh bother!” said Edmund, “it’s no good. We shan’t be able to get to those other woods at all. We’re on an island!”

It was true. At this point the channel between them and the opposite coast was only about thirty or forty yards wide; but they could now see that this was its narrowest place. After that, their own coast bent round to the right again and they could see open sea between it and the mainland. It was obvious that they had already come much more than half-way round the island.

“Look!” said Lucy suddenly. “What’s that?” She pointed to a long silvery, snake-like thing that lay across the beach.

“A stream! A stream!” shouted the others, and, tired as they were, they lost no time in clattering down the rocks and racing to the fresh water. They knew that the stream would be better to drink farther up, away from the beach, so they went at once to the spot where it came out of the wood. The trees were as thick as ever, but the stream had made itself a deep course between high mossy banks so that by stooping you could follow it up in a sort of tunnel of leaves. They dropped on their knees by the first brown, dimply pool and drank and drank, and dipped their faces in the water, and then dipped their arms in up to the elbow.

“Now,” said Edmund, “what about those sandwiches?”

“Oh, hadn’t we better save them?” said Susan. “We may need them far worse later on.”

“I do wish,” said Lucy, “now that we’re not thirsty, we could go on feeling as not-hungry as we did when we *were* thirsty.”

“But what about those sandwiches?” repeated Edmund. “There’s no good saving them till they go bad. You’ve got to remember it’s a good deal hotter here than in England and we’ve been carrying them about in pockets for hours.” So they got out the two packets and divided them into four

portions, and nobody had quite enough, but it was a great deal better than nothing. Then they talked about their plans for the next meal. Lucy wanted to go back to the sea and catch shrimps, until someone pointed out that they had no nets. Edmund said they must gather gulls' eggs from the rocks, but when they came to think of it they couldn't remember having seen any gulls' eggs and wouldn't be able to cook them if they found any. Peter thought to himself that unless they had some stroke of luck they would soon be glad to eat eggs raw, but he didn't see any point in saying this out loud. Susan said it was a pity they had eaten the sandwiches so soon. One or two tempers very nearly got lost at this stage. Finally Edmund said:

"Look here. There's only one thing to be done. We must explore the wood. Hermits and knights-errant and people like that always manage to live somehow if they're in a forest. They find roots and berries and things."

"What sort of roots?" asked Susan.

"I always thought it meant roots of trees," said Lucy.

"Come on," said Peter, "Ed is right. And we must try to do something. And it'll be better than going out into the glare and the sun again."

So they all got up and began to follow the stream. It was very hard work. They had to stoop under branches and climb over branches, and they blundered through great masses of stuff like rhododendrons and tore their clothes and got their feet wet in the stream; and still there was no noise at all except the noise of the stream and the noises they were making themselves. They were beginning to get very tired of it when they noticed a delicious smell, and then a flash of bright colour high above them at the top of the right bank.

"I say!" exclaimed Lucy. "I do believe that's an apple tree."

It was. They panted up the steep bank, forced their way through some brambles, and found themselves standing round an old tree that was heavy with large yellowish-golden apples as firm and juicy as you could wish to see.

"And this is not the only tree," said Edmund with his mouth full of apple. "Look there — and there."

"Why, there are dozens of them," said Susan, throwing away the core of her first apple and picking her second. "This must have been an orchard — long, long ago, before the place went wild and the wood grew up."

"Then this was once an inhabited island," said Peter.

"And what's that?" said Lucy, pointing ahead.

“By Jove, it’s a wall,” said Peter. “An old stone wall.”

Pressing their way between the laden branches they reached the wall. It was very old, and broken down in places, with moss and wallflowers growing on it, but it was higher than all but the tallest trees. And when they came quite close to it they found a great arch which must once have had a gate in it but was now almost filled up with the largest of all the apple trees. They had to break some of the branches to get past, and when they had done so they all blinked because the daylight became suddenly much brighter. They found themselves in a wide open place with walls all round it. In here there were no trees, only level grass and daisies, and ivy, and grey walls. It was a bright, secret, quiet place, and rather sad; and all four stepped out into the middle of it, glad to be able to straighten their backs and move their limbs freely.

Chapter II

THE ANCIENT TREASURE HOUSE

“This wasn’t a garden,” said Susan presently. “It was a castle and this must have been the courtyard.”

“I see what you mean,” said Peter. “Yes. That is the remains of a tower. And there is what used to be a flight of steps going up to the top of the walls. And look at those other steps — the broad, shallow ones — going up to that doorway. It must have been the door into the great hall.”

“Ages ago, by the look of it,” said Edmund.

“Yes, ages ago,” said Peter. “I wish we could find out who the people were that lived in this castle; and how long ago.”

“It gives me a queer feeling,” said Lucy.

“Does it, Lu?” said Peter, turning and looking hard at her. “Because it does the same to me. It is the queerest thing that has happened this queer day. I wonder where we are and what it all means?”

While they were talking they had crossed the courtyard and gone through the other doorway into what had once been the hall. This was now very like the courtyard, for the roof had long since disappeared and it was merely another space of grass and daisies, except that it was shorter and narrower and the walls were higher. Across the far end there was a kind of terrace about three feet higher than the rest.

“I wonder, was it really the hall?” said Susan. “What that terrace kind of thing?”

“Why, you silly,” said Peter (who had become strangely excited), “don’t you see? That was the dais where the High Table was, where the King and the great lords sat. Anyone would think you had forgotten that we ourselves were once Kings and Queens and sat on a dais just like that, in our great hall.”

“In our castle of Cair Paravel,” continued Susan in a dreamy and rather sing-song voice, “at the mouth of the great river of Narnia. How could I forget?”

“How it all comes back!” said Lucy. “We could pretend we were in Cair Paravel now. This hall must have been very like the great hall we feasted in.”

“But unfortunately without the feast,” said Edmund. “It’s getting late, you know. Look how long the shadows are. And have you noticed that it isn’t so hot?”

“We shall need a camp fire if we’ve got to spend the night here,” said Peter. “I’ve got matches. Let’s go and see if we can collect some dry wood.”

Everyone saw the sense of this, and for the next half-hour they were busy. The orchard through which they had first come into the ruins turned out not to be a good place for firewood. They tried the other side of the castle, passing out of the hall by a little side door into a maze of stony humps and hollows which must once have been passages and smaller rooms but was now all nettles and wild roses. Beyond this they found a wide gap in the castle wall and stepped through it into a wood of darker and bigger trees where they found dead branches and rotten wood and sticks and dry leaves and fir-cones in plenty. They went to and fro with bundles until they had a good pile on the dais. At the fifth journey they found the well, just outside the hall, hidden in weeds, but clean and fresh and deep when they had cleared these away. The remains of a stone pavement ran half-way round it. Then the girls went out to pick some more apples and the boys built the fire, on the dais and fairly close to the corner between two walls, which they thought would be the snuggest and warmest place. They had great difficulty in lighting it and used a lot of matches, but they succeeded in the end. Finally, all four sat down with their backs to the wall and their faces to the fire. They tried roasting some of the apples on the ends of sticks. But roast apples are not much good without sugar, and they are too hot to eat with your fingers till they are too cold to be worth eating. So they had to content themselves with raw apples, which, as Edmund said, made one realise that school suppers weren’t so bad after all— “I shouldn’t mind a good thick slice of bread and margarine this minute,” he added. But the spirit of adventure was rising in them all, and no one really wanted to be back at school.

Shortly after the last apple had been eaten, Susan went out to the well to get another drink. When she came back she was carrying something in her hand.

“Look,” she said in a rather choking kind of voice. “I found it by the well.” She handed it to Peter and sat down. The others thought she looked and sounded as if she might be going to cry. Edmund and Lucy eagerly bent

forward to see what was in Peter's hand — a little bright thing that gleamed in the firelight.

"Well, I'm — I'm jiggered," said Peter, and his voice also sounded queer. Then he handed it to the others.

All now saw what it was — a little chess-knight, ordinary in size but extraordinarily heavy because it was made of pure gold; and the eyes in the horse's head were two tiny little rubies — or rather one was, for the other had been knocked out.

"Why!" said Lucy, "it's exactly like one of the golden chessmen we used to play with when we were Kings and Queens at Cair Paravel."

"Cheer up, Su," said Peter to his other sister.

"I can't help it," said Susan. "It brought back — oh, such lovely times. And I remembered playing chess with fauns and good giants, and the mer-people singing in the sea, and my beautiful horse — and — and — —"

"Now," said Peter in a quite different voice, "it's about time we four started using our brains."

"What about?" asked Edmund.

"Have none of you guessed where we are?" said Peter.

"Go on, go on," said Lucy. "I've felt for hours that there was some wonderful mystery hanging over this place."

"Fire ahead, Peter," said Edmund. "We're all listening."

"We are in the ruins of Cair Paravel itself," said Peter.

"But, I say," replied Edmund. "I mean, how do you make that out? This place has been ruined for ages. Look at all those big trees growing right up to the gates. Look at the very stones. Anyone can see that nobody has lived here for hundreds of years."

"I know," said Peter. "That is the difficulty. But let's leave that out for the moment. I want to take the points one by one. First point: this hall is exactly the same shape and size as the hall at Cair Paravel. Just picture a roof on this, and a coloured pavement instead of grass, and tapestries on the walls, and you get our royal banqueting hall."

No one said anything.

"Second point," continued Peter. "The castle well is exactly where our well was, a little to the south of the great hall; and it is exactly the same size and shape."

Again there was no reply.

“Third point: Susan has just found one of our old chessmen — or something as like one of them as two peas.”

Still nobody answered.

“Fourth point. Don’t you remember — it was the very day before the ambassadors came from the King of Calormen — don’t you remember planting the orchard outside the north gate of Cair Paravel? The greatest of all the wood-people, Pomona herself, came to put good spells on it. It was those very decent little chaps the moles who did the actual digging. Can you have forgotten that funny old Lilygloves, the chief mole, leaning on his spade and saying, ‘Believe me, your Majesty, you’ll be glad of these fruit trees one day.’ And by Jove he was right.”

“I do! I do!” said Lucy, and clapped her hands.

“But look here, Peter,” said Edmund. “This must be all rot. To begin with, we didn’t plant the orchard slap up against the gate. We wouldn’t have been such fools.”

“No, of course not,” said Peter. “But it has grown up to the gate since.”

“And for another thing,” said Edmund, “Cair Paravel wasn’t on an island.”

“Yes, I’ve been wondering about that. But it was a what-do-you-call-it, a peninsula. Jolly nearly an island. Couldn’t it have been made an island since our time? Somebody has dug a channel.”

“But half a moment!” said Edmund. “You keep on saying *since our time*. But it’s only a year ago since we came back from Narnia. And you want to make out that in one year castles have fallen down, and great forests have grown up, and little trees we saw planted ourselves have turned into a big old orchard, and goodness knows what else. It’s all impossible.”

“There’s one thing,” said Lucy. “If this is Cair Paravel there ought to be a door at this end of the dais. In fact we ought to be sitting with our backs against it at this moment. You know — the door that led down to the treasure chamber.”

“I suppose there isn’t a door,” said Peter, getting up.

The wall behind them was a mass of ivy.

“We can soon find out,” said Edmund, taking up one of the sticks that they had laid ready for putting on the fire. He began beating the ivied wall. Tap-tap went the stick against the stone; and again, tap-tap; and then, all at once, boom-boom, with a quite different sound, a hollow, wooden sound.

“Great Scott!” said Edmund.

“We must clear this ivy away,” said Peter.

“Oh, do let’s leave it alone,” said Susan. “We can try it in the morning. If we’ve got to spend the night here I don’t want an open door at my back and a great big black hole that anything might come out of, besides the draught and the damp. And it’ll soon be dark.”

“Susan! How can you?” said Lucy with a reproachful glance. But both the boys were too much excited to take any notice of Susan’s advice. They worked at the ivy with their hands and with Peter’s pocket knife till the knife broke. After that they used Edmund’s. Soon the whole place where they had been sitting was covered with ivy; and at last they had the door cleared.

“Locked, of course,” said Peter.

“But the wood’s all rotten,” said Edmund. “We can pull it to bits in no time, and it will make extra firewood. Come on.”

It took them longer than they expected and, before they had done, the great hall had grown dusky and the first star or two had come out overhead. Susan was not the only one who felt a slight shudder as the boys stood above the pile of splintered wood, rubbing the dirt off their hands and staring into the cold, dark opening they had made.

“Now for a torch,” said Peter.

“Oh, what is the good?” said Susan. “And as Edmund said — —”

“I’m not saying it now,” Edmund interrupted. “I still don’t understand, but we can settle that later. I suppose you’re coming down, Peter?”

“We must,” said Peter. “Cheer up, Susan. It’s no good behaving like kids now that we are back in Narnia. You’re a queen here. And anyway no-one could go to sleep with a mystery like this on our minds.”

They tried to use long sticks as torches but this was not a success. If you held them with the lighted end up they went out, and if you held them the other way they scorched your hand and the smoke got in your eyes. In the end they had to use Edmund’s electric torch; luckily it had been a birthday present less than a week ago and the battery was almost new. He went first, with the light. Then came Lucy, then Susan, and Peter brought up the rear.

“I’ve come to the top of the steps,” said Edmund.

“Count them,” said Peter.

“One — two — three,” said Edmund, as he went cautiously down, and so up to sixteen. “And this is the bottom,” he shouted back.

“Then it really must be Cair Paravel,” said Lucy. “There were sixteen.” Nothing more was said till all four were standing in a knot together at the foot of the stairway. Then Edmund flashed his torch slowly round.

“O — o — o — oh!!” said all the children at once.

For now all knew that it was indeed the ancient treasure chamber of Cair Paravel where they had once reigned as Kings and Queens of Narnia. There was a kind of path up the middle (as it might be in a greenhouse), and along each side at intervals stood rich suits of armour, like knights guarding the treasures. In between the suits of armour, and on each side of the path, were shelves covered with precious things — necklaces and arm rings and finger rings and golden bowls and dishes and long tusks of ivory, brooches and coronets and chains of gold, and heaps of unset stones lying piled anyhow as if they were marbles or potatoes — diamonds, rubies, carbuncles, emeralds, topazes and amethysts. Under the shelves stood great chests of oak strengthened with iron bars and heavily padlocked. And it was bitterly cold, and so still that they could hear themselves breathing, and the treasures were so covered with dust that unless they had realised where they were and remembered most of the things, they would hardly have known they were treasures. There was something sad and a little frightening about the place, because it all seemed so forsaken and long ago. That was why nobody said anything for at least a minute.

Then, of course, they began walking about and picking things up to look at. It was like meeting very old friends. If you had been there you would have heard them saying things like, “Oh look! Our coronation rings — do you remember first wearing this? — Why, this is the little brooch we all thought was lost — I say, isn’t that the armour you wore in the great tournament in the Lone Islands? — do you remember the dwarf making that for me? — do you remember drinking out of that horn? — do you remember, do you remember?”

But suddenly Edmund said, “Look here. We mustn’t waste the battery: goodness knows how often we shall need it. Hadn’t we better take what we want and get out again?”

“We must take the gifts,” said Peter. For long ago at a Christmas in Narnia he and Susan and Lucy had been given certain presents which they valued more than their whole kingdom. Edmund had had no gift, because he was not with them at the time. (This was his own fault, and you can read about it in the other book.)

They all agreed with Peter and walked up the path to the wall at the far end of the treasure chamber, and there, sure enough, the gifts were still hanging. Lucy's was the smallest for it was only a little bottle. But the bottle was made of diamond instead of glass, and it was still more than half full of the magical cordial which would heal almost every wound and every illness. Lucy said nothing and looked very solemn as she took her gift down from its place and slung the belt over her shoulder and once more felt the bottle at her side where it used to hang in the old days. Susan's gift had been a bow and arrows and a horn. The bow was still there, and the ivory quiver, full of well-feathered arrows, but— "Oh, Susan," said Lucy. "Where's the horn?"

"Oh bother, bother, bother," said Susan after she had thought for a moment. "I remember now. I took it with me the last day of all, the day we went hunting the White Stag. It must have got lost when we blundered back into that other place — England, I mean."

Edmund whistled. It was indeed a most shattering loss; for this was an enchanted horn and, whenever you blew it, help was certain to come to you, wherever you were.

"Just the sort of thing that might come in handy in a place like this," said Edmund.

"Never mind," said Susan, "I've still got the bow." And she took it.

"Won't the string be perished, Su?" said Peter.

But whether by some magic in the air of the treasure chamber or not, the bow was still in working order. Archery and swimming were the things Susan was good at. In a moment she had bent the bow and then she gave one little pluck to the string. It twanged: a chirruping twang that vibrated through the whole room. And that one small noise brought back the old days to the children's minds more than anything that had happened yet. All the battles and hunts and feasts came rushing into their heads together.

Then she unstrung the bow again and slung the quiver at her side.

Next, Peter took down his gift — the shield with the great red lion on it, and the royal sword. He blew, and rapped them on the floor, to get off the dust. He fitted the shield on his arm and slung the sword by his side. He was afraid at first that it might be rusty and stick to the sheath. But it was not so. With one swift motion he drew it and held it up, shining in the torchlight.

"It is my sword Rhindon," he said; "with it I killed the Wolf." There was a new tone in his voice, and the others all felt that he was really Peter the

High King again. Then, after a little pause, everyone remembered that they must save the battery.

They climbed the stair again and made up a good fire and lay down close together for warmth. The ground was very hard and uncomfortable, but they fell asleep in the end.

Chapter III

THE DWARF

The worst of sleeping out of doors is that you wake up so dreadfully early. And when you wake you have to get up because the ground is so hard that you are uncomfortable. And it makes matters worse if there is nothing but apples for breakfast and you have had nothing but apples for supper the night before. When Lucy had said — truly enough — that it was a glorious morning, there did not seem to be anything else nice to be said. Edmund said what everyone was feeling, “We’ve simply got to get off this island.”

When they had drunk from the well and splashed their faces they all went down the stream again to the shore and stared at the channel which divided them from the mainland.

“We’ll have to swim,” said Edmund.

“It would be all right for Su,” said Peter (Susan had won prizes for swimming at school). “But I don’t know about the rest of us.” By “the rest of us” he really meant Edmund, who couldn’t yet do two lengths at the school baths, and Lucy, who could hardly swim at all.

“Anyway,” said Susan, “there may be currents. Father says it’s never wise to bathe in a place you don’t know.”

“But, Peter,” said Lucy, “look here. I know I can’t swim for nuts at home — in England, I mean. But couldn’t we all swim long ago — if it was long ago — when we were kings and queens in Narnia? We could ride then too, and do all sorts of things. Don’t you think — —”

“Ah, but we were sort of grown-up then,” said Peter. “We reigned for years and years and learned to do things. Aren’t we just back at our proper ages again now?”

“Oh!” said Edmund in a voice which made everyone stop talking and listen to him.

“I’ve just seen it all,” he said.

“Seen what?” asked Peter.

“Why, the whole thing,” said Edmund. “You know what we were puzzling about last night, that it was only a year ago since we left Narnia but everything looks as if no one had lived in Cair Paravel for hundreds of years? Well, don’t you see? You know that, however long we seemed to

have lived in Narnia, when we got back through the wardrobe it seemed to have taken no time at all?"

"Go on," said Susan. "I think I'm beginning to understand."

"And that means," continued Edmund, "that, once you're out of Narnia, you have no idea how Narnian time is going. Why shouldn't hundreds of years have gone past in Narnia while only one year has passed for us in England?"

"By Jove, Ed," said Peter. "I believe you've got it. In that sense it really was hundreds of years ago that we lived in Cair Paravel. And now we're coming back to Narnia just as if we were Crusaders or Anglo-Saxons or Ancient Britons or someone coming back to modern England!"

"How excited they'll be to see us — —" began Lucy, but at the same moment everyone else said "Hush!" or "Look!" For now something was happening.

There was a wooded point on the mainland a little to their right, and they all felt sure that just beyond that point must be the mouth of the river. And now, round that point there came into sight a boat. When it had cleared the point, it turned and began coming along the channel towards them. There were two people on board, one rowing, the other sitting in the stern and holding a bundle that twitched and moved as if it were alive. Both these people seemed to be soldiers. They had steel caps on their heads and light shirts of chain-mail. Their faces were bearded and hard. The children drew back from the beach into the wood and watched without moving a finger.

"This'll do," said the soldier in the stern when the boat had come about opposite to them.

"What about tying a stone to his feet, Corporal?" said the other, resting on his oars.

"Garn!" growled the other. "We don't need that, and we haven't brought one. He'll drown sure enough without a stone, as long as we've tied the cords right." With these words he rose and lifted his bundle. Peter now saw that it was really alive and was in fact a Dwarf, bound hand and foot but struggling as hard as he could. Next moment he heard a twang just beside his ear, and all at once the soldier threw up his arms, dropping the Dwarf in the bottom of the boat, and fell over into the water. He floundered away to the far bank and Peter knew that Susan's arrow had struck on his helmet. He turned and saw that she was very pale but was already fitting a second arrow to the string. But it was never used. As soon as he saw his companion

fall, the other soldier, with a loud cry, jumped out of the boat on the far side, and he also floundered through the water (which was apparently just in his depth) and disappeared into the woods of the mainland.

"Quick! Before she drifts!" shouted Peter. He and Susan, fully dressed as they were, plunged in, and before the water was up to their shoulders their hands were on the side of the boat. In a few seconds they had hauled her to the bank and lifted the Dwarf out, and Edmund was busily engaged in cutting his bonds with the pocket knife. (Peter's sword would have been sharper, but a sword is very inconvenient for this sort of work because you can't hold it anywhere lower than the hilt.) When at last the dwarf was free, he sat up, rubbed his arms and legs, and exclaimed:

"Well, whatever they say, you don't *feel* like ghosts."

Like most Dwarfs he was very stocky and deep-chested. He would have been about three feet high if he had been standing up, and an immense beard and whiskers of coarse red hair left little of his face to be seen except beak-like nose and twinkling black eyes.

"Anyway," he continued, "ghosts or not, you've saved my life and I'm extremely obliged to you."

"But why should we be ghosts?" asked Lucy.

"I've been told all my life," said the Dwarf, "that these woods along the shore were as full of ghosts as they were of trees. That's what the story is. And that's why, when they want to get rid of anyone, they usually bring him down here (like they were doing with me) and say they'll leave him to the ghosts. But I always wondered if they didn't really drown 'em or cut their throats. I never quite believed in the ghosts. But those two cowards you've just shot believed all right. They were more frightened of taking me to my death than I was of going!"

"Oh," said Susan. "So that's why they both ran away."

"Eh? What's that?" said the Dwarf.

"They got away," said Edmund. "To the mainland."

"I wasn't shooting to kill, you know," said Susan. She would not have liked anyone to think she could miss at such a short range.

"Hm," said the Dwarf. "That's not so good. That may mean trouble later on. Unless they hold their tongues for their own sake."

"What were they going to drown you for?" asked Peter.

"Oh, I'm a dangerous criminal, I am," said the Dwarf cheerfully. "But that's a long story. Meantime, I was wondering if perhaps you were going to

ask me to breakfast? You've no idea what an appetite it gives one, being executed."

"There's only apples," said Lucy dolefully.

"Better than nothing, but not so good as fresh fish," said the Dwarf. "It looks as if I'll have to ask you to breakfast instead. I saw some fishing tackle in that boat. And anyway, we must take her round to the other side of the island. We don't want anyone from the mainland coming down and seeing her."

"I ought to have thought of that myself," said Peter.

The four children and the Dwarf went down to the water's edge, pushed off the boat with some difficulty, and scrambled aboard. The Dwarf at once took charge. The oars were of course too big for him to use, so Peter rowed and the Dwarf steered them north along the channel and presently eastward round the tip of the island. From here the children could see right up the river, and all the bays and headlands of the coast beyond it. They thought they could recognise bits of it, but the woods, which had grown up since their time, made everything look very different.

When they had come round into open sea on the east of the island, the Dwarf took to fishing. They had an excellent catch of pavenders, a beautiful rainbow-coloured fish which they all remembered eating in Cair Paravel in the old days. When they had caught enough they ran the boat up into a little creek and moored her to a tree. The Dwarf, who was a most capable person (and, indeed, though one meets bad Dwarfs, I never heard of a Dwarf who was a fool), cut the fish open, cleaned them, and said:

"Now, what we want next is some firewood."

"We've got some up at the castle," said Edmund.

The Dwarf gave a low whistle. "Beards and bedsteads!" he said. "So there really is a castle, after all?"

"It's only a ruin," said Lucy.

The Dwarf stared round at all four of them with a very curious expression on his face. "And who on earth — —" he began, but then broke off and said, "No matter. Breakfast first. But one thing before we go on. Can you lay your hand on your hearts and tell me I'm really alive? Are you sure I wasn't drowned and we're not all ghosts together?"

When they had all reassured him, the next question was how to carry the fish. They had nothing to string them on and no basket. They had to use Edmund's hat in the end because no one else had a hat. He would have

made much more fuss about this if he had not by now been so ravenously hungry.

At first the Dwarf did not seem very comfortable in the castle. He kept looking round and sniffing and saying, “H’m. Looks a bit spooky after all. Smells like ghosts, too.” But he cheered up when it came to lighting the fire and showing them how to roast the fresh pavenders in the embers. Eating hot fish with no forks, and one pocket knife between five people, is a messy business and there were several burnt fingers before the meal was ended; but, as it was now nine o’clock and they had been up since five, nobody minded the burns so much as you might have expected. When everyone had finished off with a drink from the well and an apple or so, the Dwarf produced a pipe about the size of his own arm, filled it, lit it, blew a great cloud of fragrant smoke and said, “Now.”

“You tell us your story first,” said Peter. “And then we’ll tell you ours.”

“Well,” said the Dwarf, “as you’ve saved my life it is only fair you should have your own way. But I hardly know where to begin. First of all I’m a messenger of King Caspian’s.”

“Who’s he?” asked four voices all at once.

“Caspian the Tenth, King of Narnia, and long may he reign!” answered the Dwarf. “That is to say, he ought to be King of Narnia and we hope he will be. At present he is only King of us Old Narnians — —”

“What do you mean by *old* Narnians, please?” asked Lucy.

“Why, that’s us,” said the Dwarf. “We’re a kind of rebellion, I suppose.”

“I see,” said Peter. “And Caspian is the chief Old Narnian.”

“Well, in a manner of speaking,” said the Dwarf, scratching his head. “But he’s really a New Narnian himself, a Telmarine, if you follow me.”

“I don’t,” said Edmund.

“It’s worse than the Wars of the Roses,” said Lucy.

“Oh dear,” said the Dwarf. “I’m doing this very badly. Look here: I think I’ll have to go right back to the beginning and tell you how Caspian grew up in his uncle’s court and how he comes to be on our side at all. But it’ll be a long story.”

“All the better,” said Lucy. “We love stories.”

So the Dwarf settled down and told his tale. I shall not give it to you in his words, putting in all the children’s questions and interruptions, because it would take too long and be confusing, and, even so, it would leave out

some points that the children only heard later. But the gist of the story, as they knew it in the end, was as follows.

Chapter IV

THE DWARF TELLS OF PRINCE CASPIAN

Prince Caspian lived in a great castle in the centre of Narnia with his uncle, Miraz, the King of Narnia, and his aunt, who had red hair and was called Queen Prunaprismia. His father and mother were dead and the person whom Caspian loved best was his nurse, and though (being a prince) he had wonderful toys which would do almost anything but talk, he liked best the last hour of the day when the toys had all been put back in their cupboards and Nurse would tell him stories.

He did not care much for his uncle and aunt, but about twice a week his uncle would send for him and they would walk up and down together for half an hour on the terrace at the south side of the castle. One day, while they were doing this, the King said to him,

"Well, boy, we must soon teach you to ride and use a sword. You know that your aunt and I have no children, so it looks as if you might have to be King when I'm gone. How shall you like that, eh?"

"I don't know, Uncle," said Caspian.

"Don't know, eh?" said Miraz. "Why, I should like to know what more anyone could wish for!"

"All the same, I *do* wish," said Caspian.

"What do you wish?" asked the King.

"I wish — I wish — I wish I could have lived in the Old Days," said Caspian. (He was only a very little boy at the time.)

Up till now King Miraz had been talking in the tiresome way that some grown-ups have, which makes it quite clear that they are not really interested in what they are saying, but now he suddenly gave Caspian a very sharp look.

"Eh? What's that?" he said. "What old days do you mean?"

"Oh, don't you know, Uncle?" said Caspian. "When everything was quite different. When all the animals could talk, and there were nice people who lived in the streams and the trees. Naiads and Dryads they were called. And there were Dwarfs. And there were lovely little Fauns in all the woods. They had feet like goats. And — —"

“That’s all nonsense, for babies,” said the King sternly. “Only fit for babies, do you hear? You’re getting too old for that sort of stuff. At your age you ought to be thinking of battles and adventures, not fairy tales.”

“Oh, but there *were* battles and adventures in those days,” said Caspian. “Wonderful adventures. Once there was a White Witch and she made herself Queen of the whole country. And she made it so that it was always winter. And then two boys and two girls came from somewhere and so they killed the Witch and they were made Kings and Queens of Narnia, and their names were Peter and Susan and Edmund and Lucy. And so they reigned for ever so long and everyone had a lovely time, and it was all because of Aslan — —”

“Who’s he?” said Miraz. And if Caspian had been a very little older, the tone of his uncle’s voice would have warned him that it would be wiser to shut up. But he babbled on,

“Oh, don’t you know?” he said. “Aslan is the great Lion who comes from over the sea.”

“Who has been telling you all this nonsense?” said the King in a voice of thunder. Caspian was frightened and said nothing.

“Your Royal Highness,” said King Miraz, letting go of Caspian’s hand, which he had been holding till now, “I insist upon being answered. Look me in the face. Who has been telling you this pack of lies?”

“N — Nurse,” faltered Caspian, and burst into tears.

“Stop that noise,” said his uncle, taking Caspian by the shoulders and giving him a shake. “Stop it. And never let me catch you talking — or *thinking* either — about all those silly stories again. There never were those Kings and Queens. How could there be two Kings at the same time? And there’s no such person as Aslan. And there are no such things as lions. And there never was a time when animals could talk. Do you hear?”

“Yes, Uncle,” sobbed Caspian.

“Then let’s have no more of it,” said the King. Then he called to one of the gentlemen-in-waiting who were standing at the far end of the terrace and said in a cold voice, “Conduct His Royal Highness to his apartments and send His Royal Highness’s nurse to me AT ONCE.”

Next day Caspian found what a terrible thing he had done, for Nurse had been sent away without even being allowed to say good-bye to him, and he was told he was to have a Tutor.

Caspian missed his nurse very much and shed many tears; and because he was so miserable, he thought about the old stories of Narnia far more than before. He dreamed of Dwarfs and Dryads every night and tried very hard to make the dogs and cats in the castle talk to him. But the dogs only wagged their tails and the cats only purred.

Caspian felt sure that he would hate the new Tutor, but when the new Tutor arrived about a week later he turned out to be the sort of person it is almost impossible not to like. He was the smallest, and also the fattest, man Caspian had ever seen. He had a long, silvery, pointed beard which came down to his waist, and his face, which was brown and covered with wrinkles, looked very wise, very ugly, and very kind. His voice was grave and his eyes were merry so that, until you got to know him really well, it was hard to know when he was joking and when he was serious. His name was Doctor Cornelius.

Of all his lessons with Doctor Cornelius the one that Caspian liked best was History. Up till now, except for Nurse's stories, he had known nothing about the History of Narnia, and he was very surprised to learn that the royal family were newcomers in the country.

"It was your Highness's ancestor, Caspian the First," said Doctor Cornelius, "who first conquered Narnia and made it his kingdom. It was he who brought all your nation into the country. You are not native Narnians at all. You are all Telmarines — that is, you all came from the Land of Telmar, far beyond the Western Mountains. That is why Caspian the First is called Caspian the Conqueror."

"Please, Doctor," asked Caspian one day, "who lived in Narnia before we all came here out of Telmar?"

"No men — or very few — lived in Narnia before the Telmarines took it," said Doctor Cornelius.

"Then who did my great-great-grandcesters conquer?"

"*Whom*, not *who*, your Highness," said Doctor Cornelius. "Perhaps it is time to turn from History to Grammar."

"Oh please, not yet," said Caspian. "I mean, wasn't there a battle? Why is he called Caspian the Conqueror if there was nobody here to fight with him?"

"I said there were very few *men* in Narnia," said the Doctor, looking at the little boy very strangely through his great spectacles.

For a moment Caspian was puzzled and then suddenly his heart gave a leap. “Do you mean,” he gasped, “that there were other things? Do you mean it was like in the stories? Were there —— ?”

“Hush!” said Doctor Cornelius, laying his head very close to Caspian’s. “Not a word more. Don’t you know your nurse was sent away for telling you about Old Narnia? The King doesn’t like it. If he found me telling you secrets, you’d be whipped and I should have my head cut off.”

“But why?” asked Caspian.

“It is high time we turned to Grammar now,” said Doctor Cornelius, in a loud voice. “Will your Royal Highness be pleased to open Pulverulentus Siccus at the fourth page of his *Grammatical Garden or the Arbour of Accidence pleasantlie open’d to Tender Wits*?”

After that it was all nouns and verbs till lunchtime, but I don’t think Caspian learned much. He was too excited. He felt sure that Doctor Cornelius would not have said so much unless he meant to tell him more sooner or later.

In this he was not disappointed. A few days later his Tutor said, “To-night I am going to give you a lesson in Astronomy. At dead of night two noble planets, Tarva and Alambil, will pass within one degree of each other. Such a conjunction has not occurred for two hundred years, and your Highness will not live to see it again. It will be best if you go to bed a little earlier than usual. When the time of the conjunction draws near I will come and wake you.”

This didn’t seem to have anything to do with Old Narnia, which was what Caspian really wanted to hear about, but getting up in the middle of the night is always interesting and he was moderately pleased. When he went to bed that night, he thought at first that he would not be able to sleep; but he soon dropped off and it seemed only a few minutes before he felt someone gently shaking him.

He sat up in bed and saw that the room was full of moonlight. Doctor Cornelius, muffled in a hooded robe and holding a small lamp in his hand, stood by the bedside. Caspian remembered at once what they were going to do. He got up and put on some clothes. Although it was a summer night he felt colder than he had expected and was quite glad when the Doctor wrapped him in a robe like his own and gave him a pair of warm, soft buskins for his feet. A moment later, both muffled so that they could hardly

be seen in the dark corridors, and both shod so that they made almost no noise, master and pupil left the room.

Caspian followed the Doctor through many passages and up several staircases, and at last, through a little door in a turret, they came out upon the leads. On one side were the battlements, on the other a steep roof; below them, all shadowy and shimmery, the castle gardens; above them, stars and moon. Presently they came to another door, which led into the great central tower of the whole castle: Doctor Cornelius unlocked it and they began to climb the dark winding stair of the tower. Caspian was becoming excited; he had never been allowed up this stair before.

It was long and steep, but when they came out on the roof of the tower and Caspian had got his breath, he felt that it had been well worth it. Away on his right he could see, rather indistinctly, the Western Mountains. On his left was the gleam of the Great River, and everything was so quiet that he could hear the sound of the waterfall at Beaversdam, a mile away. There was no difficulty in picking out the two stars they had come to see. They hung rather low in the southern sky, almost as bright as two little moons and very close together.

"Are they going to have a collision?" he asked in an awe-struck voice.

"Nay, dear Prince," said the Doctor (and he too spoke in a whisper). "The great lords of the upper sky know the steps of their dance too well for that. Look well upon them. Their meeting is fortunate and means some great good for the sad realm of Narnia. Tarva, the Lord of Victory, salutes Alambil, the Lady of Peace. They are just coming to their nearest."

"It's a pity that tree gets in the way," said Caspian. "We'd really see better from the West Tower, though it is not so high."

Doctor Cornelius said nothing for about two minutes, but stood still with his eyes fixed on Tarva and Alambil. Then he drew a deep breath and turned to Caspian.

"There," he said. "You have seen what no man now alive has seen, nor will see again. And you are right. We should have seen it even better from the smaller tower. I brought you here for another reason."

Caspian looked up at him, but the Doctor's hood concealed most of his face.

"The virtue of this tower," said Doctor Cornelius, "is that we have six empty rooms beneath us, and a long stair, and the door at the bottom of the stair is locked. We cannot be overheard."

“Are you going to tell me what you wouldn’t tell me the other day?” said Caspian.

“I am,” said the Doctor. “But remember. You and I must never talk about these things except here — on the very top of the Great Tower.”

“No. That’s a promise,” said Caspian. “But do go on please.”

“Listen,” said the Doctor. “All you have heard about Old Narnia is true. It is not the land of Men. It is the country of Aslan, the country of the Waking Trees and Visible Naiads, of Fauns and Satyrs, of Dwarfs and Giants, of the gods and the Centaurs, of Talking Beasts. It was against these that the first Caspian fought. It is you Telmarines who silenced the beasts and the trees and the fountains, and who killed and drove away the Dwarfs and Fauns, and are now trying to cover up even the memory of them. The King does not allow them to be spoken of.”

“Oh, I do wish we hadn’t,” said Caspian. “And I *am* glad it was all true, even if it is all over.”

“Many of your race wish that in secret,” said Doctor Cornelius.

“But, Doctor,” said Caspian, “why do you say *my* race? After all, I suppose you’re a Telmarine too.”

“Am I?” said the Doctor.

“Well, you’re a Man anyway,” said Caspian.

“Am I?” repeated the Doctor in a deeper voice, at the same moment throwing back his hood so that Caspian could see his face clearly in the moonlight.

All at once Caspian realised the truth and felt that he ought to have realised it long before. Doctor Cornelius was so small, and so fat, and had such a very long beard. Two thoughts came into his head at the same moment. One was a thought of terror— “He’s not a real man, not a man at all, he’s a *Dwarf*, and he’s brought me up here to kill me.” The other was sheer delight— “There are real Dwarfs still, and I’ve seen one at last.”

“So you’ve guessed it in the end,” said Doctor Cornelius. “Or guessed it nearly right. I’m not a pure Dwarf. I have human blood in me too. Many Dwarfs escaped in the great battles and lived on, shaving their beards and wearing high-heeled shoes and pretending to be men. They have mixed with your Telmarines. I am one of those, only a half-Dwarf, and if any of my kindred, the true Dwarfs, are still alive anywhere in the world, doubtless they would despise me and call me a traitor. But never in all these years

have we forgotten our own people and all the other happy creatures of Narnia, and the long-lost days of freedom."

"I'm — I'm sorry, Doctor," said Caspian. "It wasn't my fault, you know."

"I am not saying these things in blame of you, dear Prince," answered the Doctor. "You may well ask why I say them at all. But I have two reasons. Firstly, because my old heart has carried these secret memories so long that it aches with them and would burst if I did not whisper them to you. But secondly, for this: that when you become King you may help us, for I know that you also, Telmarine though you are, love the Old Things."

"I do, I do," said Caspian. "But how can I help?"

"You can be kind to the poor remnants of the Dwarf people, like myself. You can gather learned magicians and try to find a way of awaking the trees once more. You can search through all the nooks and wild places of the land to see if any Fauns or Talking Beasts or Dwarfs are perhaps still alive in hiding."

"Do you think there are any?" asked Caspian eagerly.

"I don't know — I don't know," said the Doctor with a deep sigh. "Sometimes I am afraid there can't be. I have been looking for traces of them all my life. Sometimes I have thought I heard a Dwarf-drum in the mountains. Sometimes at night, in the woods, I thought I had caught a glimpse of Fauns and Satyrs dancing a long way off; but when I came to the place, there was never anything there. I have often despaired; but something always happens to start me hoping again. I don't know. But at least you can try to be a King like the High King Peter of old, and not like your uncle."

"Then it's true about the Kings and Queens too, and about the White Witch?" said Caspian.

"Certainly it is true," said Cornelius. "Their reign was the Golden Age in Narnia and the land has never forgotten them."

"Did they live in this castle, Doctor?"

"Nay, my dear," said the old man. "This castle is a thing of yesterday. Your great-great-grandfather built it. But when the two sons of Adam and the two daughters of Eve were made Kings and Queens of Narnia by Aslan himself, they lived in the castle of Cair Paravel. No man alive has seen that blessed place and perhaps even the ruins of it have now vanished. But we believe it was far from here, down at the mouth of the Great River, on the very shore of the sea."

“Ugh!” said Caspian with a shudder. “Do you mean in the Black Woods? Where all the — the — you know, the ghosts live?”

“Your Highness speaks as you have been taught,” said the Doctor. “But it is all lies. There are no ghosts there. That is a story invented by the Telmarines. Your Kings are in deadly fear of the sea because they can never quite forget that in all stories Aslan comes from over the sea. They don’t want to go near it and they don’t want anyone else to go near it. So they have let great woods grow up to cut their people off from the coast. But because they have quarrelled with the trees they are afraid of the woods. And because they are afraid of the woods they imagine that they are full of ghosts. And the Kings and great men, hating both the sea and the wood, partly believe these stories, and partly encourage them. They feel safer if no one in Narnia dares to go down to the coast and look out to sea — towards Aslan’s land and the morning and the eastern end of the world.”

There was a deep silence between them for a few minutes. Then Doctor Cornelius said, “Come. We have been here long enough. It is time to go down and to bed.”

“Must we?” said Caspian. “I’d like to go on talking about these things for hours and hours and hours.”

“Someone might begin looking for us, if we did that,” said Doctor Cornelius.

Chapter V

CASPIAN'S ADVENTURE IN THE MOUNTAINS

After this, Caspian and his Tutor had many more secret conversations on the top of the Great Tower, and at each conversation Caspian learned more about Old Narnia, so that thinking and dreaming about the old days, and longing that they might come back, filled nearly all his spare hours. But of course he had not many hours to spare, for now his education was beginning in earnest. He learned sword-fighting and riding, swimming and diving, how to shoot with the bow and play on the recorder and the theorbo, how to hunt the stag and cut him up when he was dead, besides Cosmography, Rhetoric, Heraldry, Versification, and of course History, with a little Law, Physic, Alchemy and Astronomy. Of Magic he learned only the theory, for Doctor Cornelius said the practical part was not a proper study for princes. "And I myself," he added, "am only a very imperfect magician and can do only the smallest experiments." Of Navigation ("Which is a noble and heroical art," said the Doctor) he was taught nothing, because King Miraz disapproved of ships and the sea.

He also learned a great deal by using his own eyes and ears. As a little boy he had often wondered why he disliked his aunt, Queen Prunaprismia; he now saw that it was because she disliked him. He also began to see that Narnia was an unhappy country. The taxes were high and the laws were stern and Miraz was a cruel man.

After some years there came a time when the Queen seemed to be ill and there was a great deal of bustle and pother about her in the castle and doctors came and the courtiers whispered. This was in early summertime. And one night, while all this fuss was going on, Caspian was unexpectedly wakened by Doctor Cornelius after he had been only a few hours in bed.

"Are we going to do a little Astronomy, Doctor?" said Caspian.

"Hush!" said the Doctor. "Trust me and do exactly as I tell you. Put on all your clothes; you have a long journey before you."

Caspian was very surprised, but he had learned to have confidence in his Tutor and he began doing what he was told at once. When he was dressed the Doctor said, "I have a wallet for you. We must go into the next room and fill it with victuals from your Highness's supper table."

“My gentlemen-in-waiting will be there,” said Caspian.

“They are fast asleep and will not wake,” said the Doctor. “I am a very minor magician but I can at least contrive a charmed sleep.”

They went into the antechamber and there, sure enough, the two gentlemen-in-waiting were, sprawling on chairs and snoring hard. Doctor Cornelius quickly cut up the remains of a cold chicken and some slices of venison and put them, with bread and an apple or so and a little flask of good wine, into the wallet which he then gave to Caspian. It fitted on by a strap over Caspian’s shoulder, like a satchel you would use for taking books to school.

“Have you your sword?” asked the Doctor.

“Yes,” said Caspian.

“Then put this mantle over all to hide the sword and the wallet. That’s right. And now we must go to the Great Tower and talk.”

When they had reached the top of the Tower (it was a cloudy night, not at all like the night when they had seen the conjunction of Tarva and Alambil) Doctor Cornelius said,

“Dear Prince, you must leave this castle at once and go to seek your fortune in the wide world. Your life is in danger here.”

“Why? asked Caspian.

“Because you are the true King of Narnia: Caspian the Tenth, the true son and heir of Caspian the Ninth. Long life to your Majesty” — and suddenly, to Caspian’s great surprise, the little man dropped down on one knee and kissed his hand.

“What does it all mean? I don’t understand,” said Caspian.

“I wonder you have never asked me before,” said the Doctor, “why, being the son of King Caspian, you are not King Caspian yourself. Everyone except your Majesty knows that Miraz is a usurper. When he first began to rule he did not even pretend to be the King: he called himself Lord Protector. But then your royal mother died, the good Queen and the only Telmarine who was ever kind to me. And then, one by one, all the great lords, who had known your father, died or disappeared. Not by accident, either. Miraz weeded them out. Belisar and Uvilas were shot with arrows on a hunting party: by chance, it was pretended. All the great house of the Passarids he sent to fight giants on the northern frontier till one by one they fell. Arlian and Erimon and a dozen more he executed for treason on a false charge. The two brothers of Beaversdam he shut up as madmen. And finally

he persuaded the seven noble lords, who alone among all the Telmarines did not fear the sea, to sail away and look for new lands beyond the Eastern Ocean, and, as he intended, they never came back. And when there was no one left who could speak a word for you, then his flatterers (as he had instructed them) begged him to become King. And of course he did."

"Do you mean he now wants to kill me too?" said Caspian.

"That is almost certain," said Doctor Cornelius.

"But why now?" said Caspian. "I mean, why didn't he do it long ago if he wanted to? And what harm have I done him?"

"He has changed his mind about you because of something that happened only two hours ago. The Queen has had a son."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," said Caspian.

"Don't see!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Have all my lessons in History and Politics taught you no more than that? Listen. As long as he had no children of his own, he was willing enough that you should be King after he died. He may not have cared much about you, but he would rather you should have the throne than a stranger. Now that he has a son of his own he will want his own son to be the next King. You are in the way. He'll clear you out of the way."

"Is he really as bad as that?" said Caspian. "Would he really murder me?"

"He murdered your Father," said Doctor Cornelius.

Caspian felt very queer and said nothing.

"I can tell you the whole story," said the Doctor. "But not now. There is no time. You must fly at once."

"You'll come with me?" said Caspian.

"I dare not," said the Doctor. "It would make your danger greater. Two are more easily tracked than one. Dear Prince, dear King Caspian, you must be very brave. You must go alone and at once. Try to get across the southern border to the court of King Nain of Archenland. He will be good to you."

"Shall I never see you again?" said Caspian in a quavering voice.

"I hope so, dear King," said the Doctor. "What friend have I in the wide world except your Majesty? And I have a little magic. But in the meantime, speed is everything. Here are two gifts before you go. This is a little purse of gold — alas, all the treasure in this castle should be your own by rights. And here is something far better."

He put in Caspian's hands something which he could hardly see but which he knew by the feel to be a horn.

"That," said Doctor Cornelius, "is the greatest and most sacred treasure of Narnia. Many terrors I endured, many spells did I utter, to find it, when I was still young. It is the magic horn of Queen Susan herself which she left behind her when she vanished from Narnia at the end of the Golden Age. It is said that whoever blows it shall have strange help — no one can say how strange. It may have power to call Queen Lucy and King Edmund and Queen Susan and the High King Peter back from the past, and they will set all to rights. It may be that it will call up Aslan himself. Take it, King Caspian: but do not use it except at your greatest need. And now, haste, haste, haste. The little door at the very bottom of the Tower, the door into the garden, is unlocked. There we must part."

"Can't I get my horse Destrier?" said Caspian.

"He is already saddled and waiting for you just at the corner of the orchard."

During the long climb down the winding staircase Cornelius whispered many more words of direction and advice. Caspian's heart was sinking, but he tried to take it all in. Then came the fresh air in the garden, a fervent handclasp with the Doctor, a run across the lawn, a welcoming whinny from Destrier, and so King Caspian the Tenth left the castle of his fathers. Looking back, he saw fireworks going up to celebrate the birth of the new prince.

All night he rode southward, choosing by-ways and bridle paths through woods as long as he was in country that he knew; but afterwards he kept to the high road. Destrier was as excited as his master at this unusual journey, and Caspian, though tears had come into his eyes at saying good-bye to Doctor Cornelius, felt brave and, in a way, happy, to think that he was King Caspian riding to seek adventures, with his sword on his left hip and Queen Susan's magic horn on his right. But when day came, with a sprinkle of rain, and he looked about him and saw on every side unknown woods, wild heaths and blue mountains, he thought how large and strange the world was and felt frightened and small.

As soon as it was full daylight he left the road and found an open grassy place amid a wood where he could rest. He took off Destrier's bridle and let him graze, ate some cold chicken and drank a little wine, and presently fell asleep. It was late afternoon when he awoke. He ate a morsel and continued

his journey, still southward, by many unfrequented lanes. He was now in a land of hills, going up and down, but always more up than down. From every ridge he could see the mountains growing bigger and blacker ahead. As the evening closed in, he was riding their lower slopes. The wind rose. Soon rain fell in torrents. Destrier became uneasy; there was thunder in the air. And now they entered a dark and seemingly endless pine forest, and all the stories Caspian had ever heard of trees being unfriendly to Man crowded into his mind. He remembered that he was, after all, a Telmarine, one of the race who cut down trees wherever they could and were at war with all wild things; and though he himself might be unlike other Telmarines, the trees could not be expected to know this.

Nor did they. The wind became a tempest, the woods roared and creaked all round him. There came a crash. A tree fell right across the road just behind him. “Quiet, Destrier, quiet!” said Caspian, patting his horse’s neck; but he was trembling himself and knew that he had escaped death by an inch. Lightning flashed and a great crack of thunder seemed to break the sky in two just overhead. Destrier bolted in good earnest. Caspian was a good rider, but he had not the strength to hold him back. He kept his seat, but he knew that his life hung by a thread during the wild career that followed. Tree after tree rose up before them in the dusk and was only just avoided. Then, almost too suddenly to hurt (and yet it did hurt him too) something struck Caspian on the forehead and he knew no more.

When he came to himself he was lying in a firelit place with bruised limbs and a bad headache. Low voices were speaking close at hand.

“And now,” said one, “before it wakes up we must decide what to do with it.”

“Kill it,” said another. “We can’t let it live. It would betray us.”

“We ought to have killed it at once, or else let it alone,” said a third voice. “We can’t kill it now. Not after we’ve taken it in and bandaged its head and all. It would be murdering a guest.”

“Gentlemen,” said Caspian in a feeble voice, “whatever you do to me, I hope you will be kind to my poor horse.”

“Your horse had taken flight long before we found you,” said the first voice — a curiously husky, earthy voice, as Caspian now noticed.

“Now don’t let it talk you round with its pretty words,” said the second voice. “I still say — —”

“Horns and halibuts!” exclaimed the third voice. “Of course we’re not going to murder it. For shame, Nikabrik. What do you say, Trufflehunter? What shall we do with it?”

“I shall give it a drink,” said the first voice, presumably Trufflehunter’s. A dark shape approached the bed. Caspian felt an arm slipped gently under his shoulders — if it was exactly an arm. The shape somehow seemed wrong. The face that bent towards him seemed wrong too. He got the impression that it was very hairy and very long nosed, and there were odd white patches on each side of it. “It’s a mask of some sort,” thought Caspian. “Or perhaps I’m in a fever and imagining it all.” A cupful of something sweet and hot was set to his lips and he drank. At that moment one of the others poked the fire. A blaze sprang up and Caspian almost screamed with the shock as the sudden light revealed the face that was looking into his own. It was not a man’s face but a badger’s, though larger and friendlier and more intelligent than the face of any badger he had seen before. And it had certainly been talking. He saw, too, that he was on a bed of heather, in a cave. By the fire sat two little bearded men, so much wilder and shorter and hairier and thicker than Doctor Cornelius that he knew them at once for real Dwarfs, ancient Dwarfs with not a drop of human blood in their veins. And Caspian knew that he had found the Old Narnians at last. Then his head began to swim again.

In the next few days he learned to know them by names. The Badger was called Trufflehunter; he was the oldest and kindest of the three. The Dwarf who had wanted to kill Caspian was a sour Black Dwarf (that is, his hair and beard were black, and thick and hard like horse-hair). His name was Nikabrik. The other Dwarf was a Red Dwarf with hair rather like a Fox’s and he was called Trumpkin.

“And now,” said Nikabrik on the first evening when Caspian was well enough to sit up and talk, “we still have to decide what to do with this Human. You two think you’ve done it a great kindness by not letting me kill it. But I suppose the upshot is that we have to keep it a prisoner for life. I’m certainly not going to let it go alive — to go back to its own kind and betray us all.”

“Bulbs and bolsters! Nikabrik,” said Trumpkin. “Why need you talk so unhandsomely? It isn’t the creature’s fault that it bashed its head against a tree outside our hole. And I don’t think it looks like a traitor.”

“I say,” said Caspian, “you haven’t yet found out whether I *want* to go back. I don’t. I want to stay with you — if you’ll let me. I’ve been looking for people like you all my life.”

“That’s a likely story,” growled Nikabrik. “You’re a Telmarine and a Human, aren’t you? Of course you want to go back to your own kind.”

“Well, even if I did, I couldn’t,” said Caspian. “I was flying for my life when I had my accident. The King wants to kill me. If you’d killed me, you’d have done the very thing to please him.”

“Well now,” said Trufflehunter, “you don’t say so!”

“Eh?” said Trumpkin. “What’s that? What have you been doing, Human, to fall foul of Miraz at your age?”

“He’s my uncle,” began Caspian, when Nikabrik jumped up with his hand on his dagger.

“There you are!” he cried. “Not only a Telmarine but close kin and heir to our greatest enemy. Are you still mad enough to let this creature live?” He would have stabbed Caspian then and there, if the Badger and Trumpkin had not got in the way and forced him back to his seat and held him down.

“Now, once and for all, Nikabrik,” said Trumpkin. “Will you contain yourself, or must Trufflehunter and I sit on your head?”

Nikabrik sulkily promised to behave, and the other two asked Caspian to tell his whole story. When he had done so there was a moment’s silence.

“This is the queerest thing I ever heard,” said Trumpkin.

“I don’t like it,” said Nikabrik. “I didn’t know there were stories about us still told among the Humans. The less they know about us the better. That old nurse, now. She’d better have held her tongue. And it’s all mixed up with that Tutor: a renegade Dwarf. I hate ’em. I hate ’em worse than the Humans. You mark my words — no good will come of it.”

“Don’t you go talking about things you don’t understand, Nikabrik,” said Trufflehunter. “You Dwarfs are as forgetful and changeable as the Humans themselves. I’m a beast, I am, and a Badger what’s more. We don’t change. We hold on. I say great good will come of it. This is the true King of Narnia we’ve got here: a true King, coming back to true Narnia. And we beasts remember, even if Dwarfs forget, that Narnia was never right except when a son of Adam was King.”

“Whistles and whirligigs! Trufflehunter,” said Trumpkin. “You don’t mean you want to give the country to Humans?”

“I said nothing about that,” answered the Badger. “It’s not Men’s country (who should know that better than me?) but it’s a country for a man to be King of. We badgers have long enough memories to know that. Why, bless us all, wasn’t the High King Peter a Man?”

“Do you believe all those old stories?” asked Trumpkin.

“I tell you, we don’t change, we beasts,” said Trufflehunter. “We don’t forget. I believe in the High King Peter and the rest that reigned at Cair Paravel, as firmly as I believe in Aslan himself.”

“As firmly as *that*, I dare say,” said Trumpkin. “But who believes in Aslan nowadays?”

“I do,” said Caspian. “And if I hadn’t believed in him before, I would now. Back there among the Humans the people who laughed at Aslan would have laughed at stories about Talking Beasts and Dwarfs. Sometimes I did wonder if there really was such a person as Aslan: but then sometimes I wondered if there were really people like you. Yet there you are.”

“That’s right,” said Trufflehunter. “You’re right, King Caspian. And as long as you will be true to Old Narnia you shall be *my* King, whatever they say. Long life to your Majesty.”

“You make me sick, Badger,” growled Nikabrik. “The High King Peter and the rest may have been Men, but they were a different sort of Men. This is one of the cursed Telmarines. He has *hunted* beasts for sport. Haven’t you, now?” he added, rounding suddenly on Caspian.

“Well, to tell you the truth, I have,” said Caspian. “But they weren’t Talking Beasts.”

“It’s all the same thing,” said Nikabrik.

“No, no, no,” said Trufflehunter. “You know it isn’t. You know very well that the beasts in Narnia nowadays are different and are no more than the poor dumb, witless creatures you’d find in Kalormen or Telmar. They’re smaller too. They’re far more different from us than the half-Dwarfs are from you.”

There was a great deal more talk, but it all ended with the agreement that Caspian should stay and even the promise that, as soon as he was able to go out, he should be taken to see what Trumpkin called “the Others”; for apparently in these wild parts all sorts of creatures from the Old Days of Narnia still lived on in hiding.

Chapter VI

THE PEOPLE THAT LIVED IN HIDING

Now began the happiest times that Caspian had ever known. On a fine summer morning when the dew lay on the grass he set off with the Badger and the two Dwarfs, up through the forest to a high saddle in the mountains and down on to their sunny southern slopes where one looked across the green wolds of Archenland.

“We will go first to the Three Bulgy Bears,” said Trumpkin.

They came in a glade to an old hollow oak tree covered with moss, and Trufflehunter tapped with his paw three times on the trunk and there was no answer. Then he tapped again and a woolly sort of voice from inside said, “Go away. It’s not time to get up yet.” But when he tapped the third time there was a noise like a small earthquake from inside and a sort of door opened and out came three brown bears, very bulgy indeed and blinking their little eyes. And when everything had been explained to them (which took a long time because they were so sleepy) they said, just as Trufflehunter had said, that a son of Adam ought to be King of Narnia and all kissed Caspian — very wet, snuffly kisses they were — and offered him some honey. Caspian did not really want honey, without bread, at that time in the morning, but he thought it polite to accept It took him a long time afterwards to get unsticky.

After that they went on till they came among tall beech trees and Trufflehunter called out, “Pattertwig! Pattertwig! Pattertwig!” and almost at once, bounding down from branch to branch till he was just above their heads, came the most magnificent red squirrel that Caspian had ever seen. He was far bigger than the ordinary dumb squirrels which he had sometimes seen in the castle gardens; indeed he was nearly the size of a terrier and the moment you looked in his face you saw that he could talk. Indeed the difficulty was to get him to stop talking, for, like all squirrels, he was a chatterer. He welcomed Caspian at once and asked if he would like a nut and Caspian said thanks, he would. But as Pattertwig went bounding away to fetch it, Trufflehunter whispered in Caspian’s ear, “Don’t look. Look the other way. It’s very bad manners among squirrels to watch anyone going to his store or to look as if you wanted to know where it was.” Then Pattertwig

came back with the nut and Caspian ate it and after that Pattertwig asked if he could take any messages to other friends. “For I can go nearly everywhere without setting foot to ground,” he said. Trufflehunter and the Dwarfs thought this a very good idea and gave Pattertwig messages to all sorts of people with queer names telling them all to come to a feast and council on Dancing Lawn at midnight three nights ahead. “And you’d better tell the three Bulgies too,” added Trumpkin. “We forgot to mention it to them.”

Their next visit was to the Seven Brothers of Shuddering Wood. Trumpkin led the way back to the saddle and then down eastward on the northern slope of the mountains till they came to a very solemn place among rocks and fir trees. They went very quietly and presently Caspian could feel the ground shake under his feet as if someone were hammering down below. Trumpkin went to a flat stone about the size of the top of a water-butt, and stamped on it with his foot. After a long pause it was moved away by someone or something underneath, and there was a dark, round hole with a good deal of heat and steam coming out of it and in the middle of the hole the head of a Dwarf very like Trumpkin himself. There was a long talk here and the Dwarf seemed more suspicious than the Squirrel or the Bulgy Bears had been, but in the end the whole party were invited to come down. Caspian found himself descending a dark stairway into the earth, but when he came to the bottom he saw firelight. It was the light of a furnace. The whole place was a smithy. A subterranean stream ran past on one side of it. Two Dwarfs were at the bellows, another was holding a piece of red-hot metal on the anvil with a pair of tongs, a fourth was hammering it, and two, wiping their horny little hands on a greasy cloth, were coming forward to meet the visitors. It took some time to satisfy them that Caspian was a friend and not an enemy, but when they did, they all cried, “Long live the King,” and their gifts were noble — mail shirts and helmets and swords for Caspian and Trumpkin and Nikabrik. The Badger could have had the same if he had liked, but he said he was a beast, he was, and if his claws and teeth could not keep his skin whole, it wasn’t worth keeping. The workmanship of the arms was far finer than any Caspian had ever seen, and he gladly accepted the Dwarf-made sword instead of his own, which looked, in comparison, as feeble as a toy and as clumsy as a stick. The seven brothers (who were all Red Dwarfs) promised to come to the feast at Dancing Lawn.

A little farther on, in a dry, rocky ravine they reached the cave of five Black Dwarfs. They looked suspiciously at Caspian, but in the end the eldest of them said, “If he is against Miraz, we’ll have him for King.” And the next oldest said, “Shall we go farther up for you, up to the crags? There’s an Ogre or two and a Hag that we could introduce you to, up there.”

“Certainly not,” said Caspian.

“I should think not, indeed,” said Trufflehunter. “We want none of that sort on our side.” Nikabrik disagreed with this, but Trumpkin and the Badger overruled him. It gave Caspian a shock to realise that the horrible creatures out of the old stories, as well as the nice ones, had some descendants in Narnia still.

“We should not have Aslan for our friend if we brought in that rabble,” said Trufflehunter as they came away from the cave of the Black Dwarfs.

“Oh, Aslan!” said Trumpkin, cheerily but contemptuously. “What matters much more is that you wouldn’t have me.”

“Do you believe in Aslan?” said Caspian to Nikabrik.

“I’ll believe in anyone or anything,” said Nikabrik, “that’ll batter these cursed Telmarine barbarians to pieces or drive them out of Narnia. Anyone or anything, Aslan *or* the White Witch, do you understand?”

“Silence, silence,” said Trufflehunter. “You do not know what you are saying. She was a worse enemy than Miraz and all his race.”

“Not to Dwarfs, she wasn’t,” said Nikabrik.

Their next visit was a pleasanter one. As they came lower down, the mountains opened out into a great glen or wooded gorge with a swift river running at the bottom. The open places near the river’s edge were a mass of foxgloves and wild roses and the air was buzzing with bees. Here Trufflehunter called again, “Glenstorm! Glenstorm!” and after a pause Caspian heard the sound of hoofs. It grew louder till the valley trembled and at last, breaking and trampling the thickets, there came in sight the noblest creatures that Caspian had yet seen, the great Centaur Glenstorm and his three sons. His flanks were glossy chestnut and the beard that covered his broad chest was golden-red. He was a prophet and a star-gazer and knew what they had come about.

“Long live the King,” he cried. “I and my sons are ready for war. When is the battle to be joined?”

Up till now neither Caspian nor the others had really been thinking of a war. They had some vague idea, perhaps, of an occasional raid on some

Human farmstead or of attacking a party of hunters, if it ventured too far into these southern wilds. But, in the main, they had thought only of living to themselves in woods and caves and building up an attempt at Old Narnia in hiding. As soon as Glenstorm had spoken everyone felt much more serious.

"Do you mean a real war to drive Miraz out of Narnia?" asked Caspian.

"What else?" said the Centaur. "Why else does your Majesty go clad in mail and girt with sword?"

"Is it possible, Glenstorm?" said the Badger.

"The time is ripe," said Glenstorm. "I watch the skies, Badger, for it is mine to watch, as it is yours to remember. Tarva and Alambil have met in the halls of high heaven, and on earth a son of Adam has once more arisen to rule and name the creatures. The hour has struck. Our council at the Dancing Lawn must be a council of war." He spoke in such a voice that neither Caspian nor the others hesitated for a moment: it now seemed to them quite possible that they might win a war and quite certain that they must wage one.

As it was now past the middle of the day, they rested with the Centaurs and ate such food as the Centaurs provided — cakes of oaten meal, and apples, and herbs, and wine, and cheese.

The next place they were to visit was quite near at hand, but they had to go a long way round in order to avoid a region in which Men lived. It was well into the afternoon before they found themselves in level fields, warm between hedgerows. There Trufflehunter called at the mouth of a little hole in a green bank and out popped the last thing Caspian expected — a Talking Mouse. He was of course bigger than a common mouse, well over a foot high when he stood on his hind legs, and with ears nearly as long (though broader) than a rabbit's. His name was Reepicheep and he was a gay and martial mouse. He wore a tiny little rapier at his side and twirled his long whiskers as if they were a moustache. "There are twelve of us, Sire," he said with a dashing and graceful bow, "and I place all the resources of my people unreservedly at your Majesty's disposal." Caspian tried hard (and successfully) not to laugh, but he couldn't help thinking that Reepicheep and all his people could very easily be put in a washing basket and carried home on one's back.

It would take too long to mention all the creatures whom Caspian met that day — Clodsley Shovel the Mole, the three Hardbiters (who were

badgers like Trufflehunter), Camillo the Hare, and Hogglestock the Hedgehog. They rested at last beside a well at the edge of a wide and level circle of grass, bordered with tall elms which now threw long shadows across it, for the sun was setting, the daisies closing, and the rooks flying home to bed. Here they supped on food they had brought with them and Trumpkin lit his pipe (Nikabrik was not a smoker).

"Now," said the Badger, "if only we could wake the spirits of these trees and this well, we should have done a good day's work."

"Can't we?" said Caspian.

"No," said Trufflehunter. "We have no power over them. Since the Humans came into the land, felling forests and defiling streams, the Dryads and Naiads have sunk into a deep sleep. Who knows if ever they will stir again? And that is a great loss to our side. The Telmarines are horribly afraid of the woods, and once the Trees moved in anger, our enemies would go mad with fright and be chased out of Narnia as quick as their legs could carry them."

"What imaginations you Animals have!" said Trumpkin, who didn't believe in such things. "But why stop at Trees and Waters? Wouldn't it be even nicer if the stones started throwing themselves at old Miraz?"

The Badger only grunted at this, and after that there was such a silence that Caspian had nearly dropped off to sleep when he thought he heard a faint musical sound from the depth of the woods at his back. Then he thought it was only a dream and turned over again; but as soon as his ear touched the ground he felt or heard (it was hard to tell which) a faint beating or drumming. He raised his head. The beating noise at once became fainter, but the music returned, clearer this time. It was like flutes. He saw that Trufflehunter was sitting up staring into the wood. The moon was bright; Caspian had been asleep longer than he thought. Nearer and nearer came the music, a tune wild and yet dreamy, and the noise of many light feet, till at last, out from the wood into the moonlight, came dancing shapes such as Caspian had been thinking of all his life. They were not much taller than Dwarfs, but far slighter and more graceful. Their curly heads had little horns, the upper part of their bodies gleamed naked in the pale light, but their legs and feet were those of goats.

"Fauns!" cried Caspian, jumping up, and in a moment they were all round him. It took next to no time to explain the whole situation to them and they accepted Caspian at once. Before he knew what he was doing he

found himself joining in the dance. Trumpkin, with heavier and jerkier movements, did likewise and even Trufflehunter hopped and lumbered about as best he could. Only Nikabrik stayed where he was, looking on in silence. The Fauns footed it all round Caspian to their reedy pipes. Their strange faces, which seemed mournful and merry all at once, looked into his; dozens of Fauns, Mentius and Obentinus and Dumnus, Voluns, Voltinus, Girbius, Nimienus, Nausus and Oscuns. Pattertwig had sent them all.

When Caspian awoke next morning he could hardly believe that it had not all been a dream; but the grass was covered with little cloven hoof-marks.

Chapter VII

OLD NARNIA IN DANGER

The place where they had met the Fauns was, of course, Dancing Lawn itself, and here Caspian and his friends remained till the night of the Great Council. To sleep under the stars, to drink nothing but well water and to live chiefly on nuts and wild fruit, was a strange experience for Caspian after his bed with silken sheets in a tapestried chamber at the castle, with meals laid out on gold and silver dishes in the ante-room, and attendants ready at his call. But he had never enjoyed himself more. Never had sleep been more refreshing nor food tasted more savoury, and he began already to harden and his face wore a kinglier look.

When the great night came, and his various strange subjects came stealing into the lawn by ones and twos and threes or by sixes and sevens — the moon then shining almost at her full — his heart swelled as he saw their numbers and heard their greetings. All whom he had met were there: Bulgy Bears and Red Dwarfs and Black Dwarfs, Moles and Badgers, Hares and Hedgehogs, and others whom he had not yet seen — five Satyrs as red as foxes, the whole contingent of Talking Mice, armed to the teeth and following a shrill trumpet, some Owls, the Old Raven of Ravenscaur. Last of all (and this took Caspian's breath away), with the Centaurs came a small but genuine Giant, Wimbleweather of Deadman's Hill, carrying on his back a basketful of rather sea-sick Dwarfs who had accepted his offer of a lift and were now wishing they had walked instead.

The Bulgy Bears were very anxious to have the feast first and leave the council till afterwards: perhaps till to-morrow. Reepicheep and his Mice said that councils and feasts could both wait, and proposed storming Miraz in his own castle that very night. Pattertwig and the other Squirrels said they could talk and eat at the same time, so why not have the council and feast all at once? The Moles proposed throwing up entrenchments round the Lawn before they did anything else. The Fauns thought it would be better to begin with a solemn dance. The Old Raven, while agreeing with the Bears that it would take too long to have a full council before supper, begged to be allowed to give a brief address to the whole company. But Caspian and the

Centaurs and the Dwarfs over-ruled all these suggestions and insisted on holding a real council of war at once.

When all the other creatures had been persuaded to sit down quietly in a great circle, and when (with more difficulty) they had got Pattertwig to stop running to and fro and saying "Silence! Silence, everyone, for the King's speech," Caspian, feeling a little nervous, got up. "Narnians!" he began, but he never got any further, for at that very moment Camillo the Hare said, "Hush! There's a Man somewhere near."

They were all creatures of the wild, accustomed to being hunted, and they all became still as statues. The beasts all turned their noses in the direction which Camillo had indicated.

"Smells like Man and yet not quite like Man," whispered Trufflehunter.

"It's getting steadily nearer," said Camillo.

"Two badgers and you three Dwarfs, with your bow at the ready, go softly off to meet it," said Caspian.

"We'll settle 'un," said a Black Dwarf grimly, fitting a shaft to his bowstring.

"Don't shoot if it is alone," said Caspian. "Catch it."

"Why?" asked the Dwarf.

"Do as you're told," said Glenstorm the Centaur.

Everyone waited in silence while the three Dwarfs and two Badgers trotted stealthily across to the trees on the north-west side of the Lawn. Then came a sharp dwarfish cry, "Stop! Who goes there?" and a sudden spring. A moment later a voice, which Caspian knew well, could be heard saying, "All right, all right, I'm unarmed. Take my wrists if you like, worthy Badgers, but don't bite right through them. I want to speak to the King."

"Doctor Cornelius!" cried Caspian with joy, and rushed forward to greet his old master. Everyone else crowded round.

"Pah!" said Nikabrik. "A renegade Dwarf. A half-and-halfer! Shall I pass my sword through its throat?"

"Be quiet, Nikabrik," said Trumpkin. "The creature can't help its ancestry."

"This is my greatest friend and the saviour of my life," said Caspian. "And anyone who doesn't like his company may leave my army: at once. Dearest Doctor, I *am* glad to see you again. How ever did you find us out?"

“By a little use of simple magic, your Majesty,” said the Doctor, who was still puffing and blowing from having walked so fast. “But there’s no time to go into that now. We must all fly from this place at once. You are already betrayed and Miraz is on the move. Before mid-day to-morrow you will be surrounded.”

“Betrayed!” said Caspian. “And by whom?”

“Another renegade Dwarf, no doubt,” said Nikabrik.

“By your horse Destrier,” said Doctor Cornelius. “The poor brute knew no better. When you were knocked off, of course, he went dawdling back to his stable in the castle. Then the secret of your flight was known. I made myself scarce, having no wish to be questioned about it in Miraz’s torture chamber. I had a pretty good guess from my crystal as to where I should find you. But all day — that was the day before yesterday — I saw Miraz’s tracking parties out in the woods. Yesterday I learned that his army is out. I don’t think some of your — um — pure-blooded Dwarfs have as much woodcraft as might be expected. You’ve left tracks all over the place. Great carelessness. At any rate something has warned Miraz that Old Narnia is not so dead as he had hoped, and he is on the move.”

“Hurrah!” said a very shrill and small voice from somewhere at the Doctor’s feet. “Let them come! All I ask is that the King will put me and my people in the front.”

“What on earth?” said Doctor Cornelius. “Has your Majesty got grasshoppers — or mosquitoes — in your army?” Then after stooping down and peering carefully through his spectacles, he broke into a laugh.

“By the Lion,” he swore, “it’s a mouse. Signior Mouse, I desire your better acquaintance. I am honoured by meeting so valiant a beast.”

“My friendship you shall have, learned Man,” piped Reepicheep. “And any Dwarf — or Giant — in the army who does not give you good language shall have my sword to reckon with.”

“Is there time for this foolery?” asked Nikabrik. “What are our plans? Battle or flight?”

“Battle if need be,” said Trumpkin. “But we are hardly ready for it yet, and this is no very defensible place.”

“I don’t like the idea of running away,” said Caspian.

“Hear him! Hear him!” said the Bulgy Bears. “Whatever we do, don’t let’s have any *running*. Especially not before supper; and not too soon after it neither.”

“Those who run first do not always run last,” said the Centaur. “And why should we let the enemy choose our position instead of choosing it ourselves? Let us find a strong place.”

“That’s wise, your Majesty, that’s wise,” said Trufflehunter.

“But where are we to go?” asked several voices.

“Your Majesty,” said Doctor Cornelius, “and all you variety of creatures, I think we must fly east and down the river to the great woods. The Telmarines hate that region. They have always been afraid of the sea and of something that may come over the sea. That is why they have let the great woods grow up. If traditions speak true, the ancient Cair Paravel was at the river-mouth. All that part is friendly to us and hateful to our enemies. We must go to Aslan’s How.”

“Aslan’s How?” said several voices. “We do not know what it is.”

“It lies within the skirts of the Great Woods and it is a huge mound which Narnians raised in very ancient times over a very magical place, where there stood — and perhaps still stands — a very magical Stone. The Mound is all hollowed out within into galleries and caves, and the Stone is in the central cave of all. There is room in the mound for all our stores, and those of us who have most need of cover and are most accustomed to underground life can be lodged in the caves. The rest of us can lie in the wood. At a pinch all of us (except this worthy Giant) could retreat into the Mound itself, and there we should be beyond the reach of every danger except famine.”

“It is a good thing we have a learned man among us,” said Trufflehunter; but Trumpkin muttered under his breath, “Soup and celery! I wish our leaders would think less about these old wives’ tales and more about victuals and arms.” But all approved of Cornelius’s proposal and that very night, half an hour later, they were on the march. Before sunrise they arrived at Aslan’s How.

It was certainly an awesome place, a round green hill on top of another hill, long since grown over with trees, and one little, low doorway leading into it. The tunnels inside were a perfect maze till you got to know them, and they were lined and roofed with smooth stones, and on the stones, peering in the twilight, Caspian saw strange characters and snaky patterns, and pictures in which the form of a Lion was repeated again and again. It all seemed to belong to an even older Narnia than the Narnia of which his nurse had told him.

It was after they had taken up their quarters in and around the How that fortune began to turn against them. King Miraz's scouts soon found their new lair, and he and his army arrived on the edge of the woods. And as so often happens, the enemy turned out stronger than they had reckoned. Caspian's heart sank as he saw company after company arriving. And though Miraz's men may have been afraid of going into the wood, they were even more afraid of Miraz, and with him in command they carried battle deeply into it and sometimes almost to the How itself. Caspian and other captains of course made many sorties into the open country. Thus there was fighting on most days and sometimes by night as well; but Caspian's party had on the whole the worst of it.

At last there came a night when everything had gone as badly as possible, and the rain which had been falling heavily all day had ceased at nightfall only to give place to raw cold. That morning Caspian had arranged what was his biggest battle yet, and all had hung their hopes on it. He, with most of the Dwarfs, was to have fallen on the King's right wing at daybreak, and then, when they were heavily engaged, Giant Wimbleweather, with the Centaurs and some of the fiercest beasts, was to have broken out from another place and endeavoured to cut the King's right off from the rest of the army. But it had all failed. No one had warned Caspian (because no one in these later days of Narnia remembered) that Giants are not at all clever. Poor Wimbleweather, though as brave as a lion, was a true Giant in that respect. He had broken out at the wrong time and from the wrong place, and both his party and Caspian's had suffered badly and done the enemy little harm. The best of the Bears had been hurt, a Centaur terribly wounded, and there were few in Caspian's party who had not lost blood. It was a gloomy company that huddled under the dripping trees to eat their scanty supper.

The gloomiest of all was Giant Wimbleweather. He knew it was all his fault. He sat in silence shedding big tears which collected on the end of his nose and then fell off with a huge splash on the whole bivouac of the Mice, who had just been beginning to get warm and drowsy. They all jumped up, shaking the water out of their ears and wringing their little blankets, and asked the Giant in shrill but forcible voices whether he thought they weren't wet enough without this sort of thing. And then other people woke up and told the Mice they had been enrolled as scouts and not as a concert party, and asked why they couldn't keep quiet. And Wimbleweather tiptoed away

to find some place where he could be miserable in peace and stepped on somebody's tail and somebody (they said afterwards it was a fox) bit him. And so everyone was out of temper.

But in the secret and magical chamber at the heart of the How, King Caspian, with Cornelius and the Badger and Nikabrik and Trumpkin, were at council. Thick pillars of ancient workmanship supported the roof. In the centre was the Stone itself — a stone table, split right down the centre, and covered with what had once been writing of some kind: but ages of wind and rain and snow had almost worn them away in old times when the Stone Table had stood on the hilltop, and the Mound had not yet been built above it. They were not using the Table nor sitting round it: it was too magic a thing for any common use. They sat on logs a little way from it, and between them was a rough wooden table, on which stood a rude clay lamp lighting up their pale faces and throwing big shadows on the walls.

"If your Majesty is ever to use the Horn," said Trufflehunter, "I think the time has now come." Caspian had of course told them of this treasure several days ago.

"We are certainly in great need," answered Caspian. "But it is hard to be sure we are at our greatest. Supposing there came an even worse need and we had already used it?"

"By that argument," said Nikabrik, "your Majesty will never use it until it is too late."

"I agree with that," said Doctor Cornelius.

"And what do you think, Trumpkin?" asked Caspian.

"Oh, as for me," said the Red Dwarf, who had been listening with complete indifference, "your Majesty knows I think the Horn — and that bit of broken stone over there — and your great King Peter — and your Lion Aslan — are all eggs in moonshine. It's all one to me when your Majesty blows the Horn. All I insist is that the army is told nothing about it. There's no good raising hopes of magical help which (as I think) are sure to be disappointed."

"Then in the name of Aslan we will wind Queen Susan's Horn," said Caspian.

"There is one thing, Sire," said Doctor Cornelius, "that should perhaps be done first. We do not know what form the help will take. It might call Aslan himself from oversea. But I think it is more likely to call Peter the High King and his mighty consorts down from the high past. But in either

case, I do not think we can be sure that the help will come to this very spot — —”

“You never said a truer word,” put in Trumpkin.

“I think,” went on the learned man, “that they — or he — will come back to one or other of the Ancient Places of Narnia. This, where we now sit, is the most ancient and most deeply magical of all, and here, I think, the answer is likeliest to come. But there are two others. One is Lantern Waste, up-river, west of Beaversdam, where the Royal Children first appeared in Narnia, as the records tell. The other is down at the river-mouth, where their castle of Cair Paravel once stood. And if Aslan himself comes, that would be the best place for meeting him too, for every story says that he is the son of the great Emperor-over-Sea, and over the sea he will pass. I should like very much to send messengers to both places, to Lantern Waste and the river-mouth, to receive them — or him — or it.”

“Just as I thought,” muttered Trumpkin. “The first result of all this foolery is not to bring us help but to lose us two fighters.”

“Who would you think of sending, Doctor Cornelius?” asked Caspian.

“Squirrels are best for getting through enemy country without being caught,” said Trufflehunter.

“All our squirrels (and we haven’t many),” said Nikabrik, “are rather flighty. The only one I’d trust on a job like that would be Pattertwig.”

“Let it be Pattertwig, then,” said King Caspian. “And who for our other messenger? I know you’d go, Trufflehunter, but you haven’t the speed. Nor you, Doctor Cornelius.”

“I won’t go,” said Nikabrik. “With all these Humans and beasts about, there must be a Dwarf here to see that the Dwarfs are fairly treated.”

“Thimbles and thunderstorms!” cried Trumpkin in a rage. “Is that how you speak to the King? Send me, Sire, I’ll go.”

“But I thought you didn’t believe in the Horn, Trumpkin,” said Caspian.

“No more I do, your Majesty. But what’s that got to do with it? I might as well die on a wild goose chase as die here. You are my King. I know the difference between giving advice and taking orders. You’ve had my advice, and now it’s the time for orders.”

“I will never forget this, Trumpkin,” said Caspian. “Send for Pattertwig, one of you. And when shall I blow the Horn?”

“I would wait for sunrise, your Majesty,” said Doctor Cornelius. “That sometimes has an effect in operations of White Magic.”

A few minutes later Pattertwig arrived and had his task explained to him. As he was, like many squirrels, full of courage and dash and energy and excitement and mischief (not to say conceit), he no sooner heard it than he was eager to be off. It was arranged that he should run for Lantern Waste while Trumpkin made the shorter journey to the river-mouth. After a hasty meal they both set off with the fervent thanks and good wishes of the King, the Badger, and Cornelius.

Chapter VIII

HOW THEY LEFT THE ISLAND

“and so,” said Trumpkin (for, as you have realised, it was he who had been telling all this story to the four children, sitting on the grass in the ruined hall of Cair Paravel)— “and so I put a crust or two in my pocket, left behind all weapons but my dagger, and took to the woods in the grey of the morning. I’d been plugging away for many hours when there came a sound that I’d never heard the like of in my born days. Eh, I won’t forget that. The whole air was full of it, loud as thunder but far longer, cool and sweet as music over water, but strong enough to shake the woods. And I said to myself, ‘If that’s not the Horn, call me a rabbit.’ And a moment later I wondered why he hadn’t blown it sooner — —”

“What time was it?” asked Edmund.

“Between nine and ten of the clock,” said Trumpkin.

“Just when we were at the railway station!” said all the children, and looked at one another with shining eyes.

“Please go on,” said Lucy to the Dwarf.

“Well, as I was saying, I wondered, but I went on as hard as I could pelt. I kept on all night — and then, when it was half light this morning, as if I’d no more sense than a Giant, I risked a short cut across open country to cut off a big loop of the river, and was caught. Not by the army, but by a pompous old fool who has charge of a little castle which is Miraz’s last stronghold towards the coast. I needn’t tell you they got no true tale out of me, but I was a Dwarf and that was enough. But, lobsters and lollipops! it is a good thing the seneschal *was* a pompous fool. Anyone else would have run me through there and then. But nothing would do for him short of a grand execution: sending me down ‘to the ghosts’ in the full ceremonial way. And then this young lady” (he nodded at Susan) “does her bit of archery — and it was pretty shooting, let me tell you — and here we are. And without my armour, for of course they took that.” He knocked out and refilled his pipe.

“Great Scott!” said Peter. “So it was the horn — your own horn, Su — that dragged us all off that seat on the platform yesterday morning! I can hardly believe it; yet it all fits in.”

“I don’t know why you shouldn’t believe it,” said Lucy, “if you believe in magic at all. Aren’t there lots of stories about magic forcing people out of one place — out of one world — into another? I mean, when a magician in *The Arabian Nights* calls up a Jinn, it has to come. We had to come, just like that.”

“Yes,” said Peter, “I suppose what makes it feel so queer is that in the stories it’s always someone in our world who does the calling. One doesn’t really think about where the Jinn’s coming *from*.”

“And now we know what it feels like for the Jinn,” said Edmund with a chuckle. “Golly! It’s a bit uncomfortable to know that *we* can be whistled for like that. It’s worse than what Father says about living at the mercy of the telephone.”

“But we want to be here, don’t we,” said Lucy, “if Aslan wants us?”

“Meanwhile,” said the Dwarf, “what are we to do? I suppose I’d better go back to King Caspian and tell him no help has come.”

“No help?” said Susan. “But it has worked. And here we are.”

“Um — um — yes, to be sure. I see that,” said the Dwarf, whose pipe seemed to be blocked (at any rate he made himself very busy cleaning it). “But — well — I mean — —”

“But don’t you yet see who we are?” shouted Lucy. “You *are* stupid.”

“I suppose you are the four children out of the old stories,” said Trumpkin. “And I’m very glad to meet you of course. And it’s very interesting, no doubt. But — no offence?” — and he hesitated again.

“Do get on and say whatever you’re going to say,” said Edmund.

“Well, then — no offence,” said Trumpkin. “But, you know, the King and Trufflehunter and Doctor Cornelius were expecting — well, if you see what I mean, help. To put it in another way, I think they’d been imagining you as great warriors. As it is — we’re awfully fond of children and all that, but just at the moment, in the middle of a war — but I’m sure you understand.”

“You mean you think we’re no good,” said Edmund, getting red in the face.

“Now pray don’t be offended,” interrupted the Dwarf. “I assure you, my dear little friends — —”

“*Little* from you is really a bit too much,” said Edmund, jumping up. “I suppose you don’t believe we won the Battle of Beruna? Well, you can say what you like about me because I know — —”

“There’s no good losing our tempers,” said Peter. “Let’s fit him out with fresh armour and fit ourselves out from the treasure chamber, and have a talk after that.”

“I don’t quite see the point — —” began Edmund, but Lucy whispered in his ear, “Hadn’t we better do what Peter says? He is the High King, you know. And I think he has an idea.” So Edmund agreed and by the aid of his torch they all, including Trumpkin, went down the steps again into the dark coldness and dusty splendour of the treasure house.

The Dwarf’s eyes glistened as he saw the wealth that lay on the shelves (though it had to stand on tiptoes to do so) and he muttered to himself, “It would never do to let Nikabrik see this; never.” They found easily enough a mail shirt for him, a sword, a helmet, a shield, a bow and quiverful of arrows, all of dwarfish size. The helmet was of copper, set with rubies, and there was gold on the hilt of the sword: Trumpkin had never seen, much less carried, so much wealth in all his life. The children also put on mail shirts and helmets; a sword and shield were found for Edmund and a bow for Lucy — Peter and Susan were of course already carrying their gifts. As they came back up the stairway, jingling in their mail, and already looking and feeling more like Narnians and less like school-children, the two boys were behind, apparently making some plan. Lucy heard Edmund say, “No, let me do it. It will be more of a sucks for him if I win, and less of a let-down for us all if I fail.”

“All right, Ed,” said Peter.

When they came out into the daylight Edmund turned to the Dwarf very politely and said, “I’ve got something to ask you. Kids like us don’t often have the chance of meeting a great warrior like you. Would you have a little fencing match with me? It would be frightfully decent.”

“But, lad,” said Trumpkin, “these swords are sharps.”

“I know,” said Edmund. “But I’ll never get anywhere near you and you’ll be quite clever enough to disarm me without doing me any damage.”

“It’s a dangerous game,” said Trumpkin. “But since you make such a point of it, I’ll try a pass or two.”

Both swords were out in a moment and the three others jumped off the dais and stood watching. It was well worth it. It was not like the silly fighting you see with broad swords on the stage. It was not even like the rapier fighting which you sometimes see rather better done. This was real broad-sword fighting. The great thing is to slash at your enemy’s legs and

feet because they are the part that have no armour. And when he slashes at yours you jump with both feet off the ground so that his blow goes under them. This gave the Dwarf an advantage because Edmund, being much taller, had to be always stooping. I don't think Edmund would have had a chance if he had fought Trumpkin twenty-four hours earlier. But the air of Narnia had been working upon him ever since they arrived on the island, and all his old battles came back to him, and his arms and fingers remembered their old skill. He was King Edmund once more. Round and round the two combatants circled, stroke after stroke they gave, and Susan (who never could learn to like this sort of thing) shouted out, "Oh, *do* be careful." And then, so quickly that no one (unless they knew, as Peter did) could quite see how it happened, Edmund flashed his sword round with a peculiar twist, the Dwarf's sword flew out of his grip, and Trumpkin was wringing his empty hand as you do after a "sting" from a cricket-bat.

"Not hurt, I hope, my dear little friend?" said Edmund, panting a little and returning his own sword to its sheath.

"I see the point," said Trumpkin drily. "You know a trick I never learned."

"That's quite true," put in Peter. "The best swordsman in the world may be disarmed by a trick that's new to him. I think it's only fair to give Trumpkin a chance at something else. Will you have a shooting match with my sister? There are no tricks in archery, you know."

"Ah, you're jokers, you are," said the Dwarf. "I begin to see. As if I didn't know how she can shoot, after what happened this morning. All the same, I'll have a try." He spoke gruffly, but his eyes brightened, for he was a famous bowman among his own people.

All five of them came out into the courtyard.

"What's to be the target?" asked Peter.

"I think that apple hanging over the wall on the branch there would do," said Susan.

"That'll do nicely, lass," said Trumpkin. "You mean the yellow one near the middle of the arch?"

"No, not that," said Susan. "The red one up above — over the battlement."

The Dwarf's face fell. "Looks more like a cherry than an apple," he muttered, but he said nothing out loud.

They tossed up for first shot (greatly to the interest of Trumpkin, who had never seen a coin tossed before) and Susan lost. They were to shoot from the top of the steps that led from the hall into the courtyard. Everyone could see from the way the Dwarf took his position and handled the bow that he knew what he was about.

Twang went the string. It was an excellent shot. The tiny apple shook as the arrow passed, and a leaf came fluttering down. Then Susan went to the top of the steps and strung her bow. She was not enjoying her match half so much as Edmund had enjoyed his; not because she had any doubt about hitting the apple but because Susan was so tender-hearted that she almost hated to beat someone who had been beaten already. The Dwarf watched her keenly as she drew the shaft to her ear. A moment later, with a little soft thump which they could all hear in that quiet place, the apple fell to the grass with Susan's arrow in it.

"Oh, well done, Su," shouted the other children.

"It wasn't really any better than yours," said Susan to the Dwarf. "I think there was a tiny breath of wind as you shot."

"No there wasn't," said Trumpkin. "Don't tell me. I know when I am fairly beaten. I won't even say that the scar of my last wound catches me a bit when I get my arm well back — —"

"Oh, are you wounded?" asked Lucy. "Do let me look."

"It's not a sight for little girls," began Trumpkin, but then he suddenly checked himself. "There I go talking like a fool again," he said. "I suppose you're as likely to be a great surgeon as your brother was to be a great swordsman or your sister to be a great archer." He sat down on the steps and took off his hauberk and slipped down his little shirt, showing an arm hairy and muscular (in proportion) as a sailor's though not much bigger than a child's. There was a clumsy bandage on the shoulder which Lucy proceeded to unroll. Underneath, the cut looked very nasty and there was a good deal of swelling. "Oh, poor Trumpkin," said Lucy. "How horrid." Then she carefully dripped on to it one single drop of the cordial from her flask.

"Hullo. Eh? What have you done?" said Trumpkin. But however he turned his head and squinted and whisked his beard to and fro, he couldn't quite see his own shoulder. Then he felt it as well as he could, getting his arms and fingers into very difficult positions as you do when you're trying to scratch a place that is just out of reach. Then he swung his arm and raised it and tried the muscles, and finally jumped to his feet crying, "Giants and

junipers! It's cured! It's as good as new." After that he burst into a great laugh and said, "Well, I've made as big a fool of myself as ever a Dwarf did. No offence, I hope? My humble duty to your Majesties all — humble duty. And thanks for my life, my cure, my breakfast — and my lesson."

The children all said it was quite all right and not to mention it.

"And now," said Peter, "if you've really decided to believe in us — —"

"I have," said the Dwarf.

"It's quite clear what we have to do. We must join King Caspian at once."

"The sooner the better," said Trumpkin. "My being such a fool has already wasted about an hour."

"It's about two days' journey, the way you came," said Peter. "For us, I mean. We can't walk all day and night like you Dwarfs." Then he turned to the others. "What Trumpkin calls Aslan's How is obviously the Stone Table itself. You remember it was about half a day's march, or a little less, from there down to the Fords of Beruna — —"

"Beruna's Bridge, we call it," said Trumpkin.

"There was no bridge in our time," said Peter. "And then from Beruna down to here was another day and a bit. We used to get home about teatime on the second day, going easily. Going hard, we could do the whole thing in a day and a half perhaps."

"But remember it's all woods now," said Trumpkin, "and there are enemies to dodge."

"Look here," said Edmund, "need we go by the same way that Our Dear Little Friend came?"

"No more of that, your Majesty, if you love me," said the Dwarf.

"Very well," said Edmund. "May I say our D.L.F.?"

"Oh, Edmund," said Susan. "Don't keep *on* at him like that."

"That's all right, lass — I mean your Majesty," said Trumpkin with a chuckle. "A jibe won't raise a blister." (And after that they often called him the D.L.F. till they'd almost forgotten what it meant.)

"As I was saying," continued Edmund, "we needn't go that way. Why shouldn't we row a little south till we come to Glasswater Creek and row up it? That brings us up behind the Hill of the Stone Table, and we'll be safe while we're at sea. If we start at once, we can be at the head of Glasswater before dark, get a few hours' sleep, and be with Caspian pretty early to-morrow."

“What a thing it is to know the coast,” said Trumpkin. “None of us know anything about Glasswater.”

“What about food?” asked Susan.

“Oh, we’ll have to do with apples,” said Lucy. “Do let’s get on. We’ve done nothing yet, and we’ve been here nearly two days.”

“And anyway, no one’s going to have my hat for a fish-basket again,” said Edmund.

They used one of the raincoats as a kind of bag and put a good many apples in it. Then they all had a good long drink at the well (for they would meet no more fresh water till they landed at the head of the Creek) and went down to the boat. The children were sorry to leave Cair Paravel, which, even in ruins, had begun to feel like home again.

“The D.L.F. had better steer,” said Peter, “and Ed and I will take an oar each. Half a moment, though. We’d better take off our mail: we’re going to be pretty warm before we’re done. The girls had better be in the bows and shout directions to the D.L.F. because he doesn’t know the way. You’d better get us a fair way out to sea till we’ve passed the island.”

And soon the green, wooded coast of the island was falling away behind them, and its little bays and headlands were beginning to look flatter, and the boat was rising and falling in the gentle swell. The sea began to grow bigger around them and, in the distance, bluer, but close round the boat it was green and bubbly. Everything smelled salt and there was no noise except the swishing of water and the clop-clop of water against the sides and the splash of the oars and the jolting noise of the rowlocks. The sun grew hot.

It was delightful for Lucy and Susan in the bows, bending over the edge and trying to get their hands in the sea which they could never quite reach. The bottom, mostly pure, pale sand but with occasional patches of purple seaweed, could be seen beneath them.

“It’s like old times,” said Lucy. “Do you remember our voyage to Terebinthia — and Galma — and Seven Isles — and the Lone Islands?”

“Yes,” said Susan, “and our great ship the *Splendour Hyaline*, with the swan’s head at her prow and the carved swan’s wings coming back almost to her waist?”

“And the silken sails, and the great stern lanterns?”

“And the feasts on the poop and the musicians.”

“Do you remember when we had the musicians up in the rigging playing flutes so that it sounded like music out of the sky?”

Presently Susan took over Edmund’s oar and he came forward to join Lucy. They had passed the island now and stood closer in to the shore — all wooded and deserted. They would have thought it very pretty if they had not remembered the time when it was open and breezy and full of merry friends.

“Phew! This is pretty gruelling work,” said Peter.

“Can’t I row for a bit?” said Lucy.

“The oars are too big for you,” said Peter shortly, not because he was cross but because he had no strength to spare for talking.

Chapter IX

WHAT LUCY SAW

Susan and the two boys were bitterly tired with rowing before they rounded the last headland and began the final pull up Glasswater itself, and Lucy's head ached from the long hours of sun and the glare on the water. Even Trumpkin longed for the voyage to be over. The seat on which he sat to steer had been made for men, not Dwarfs, and his feet did not reach the floor-boards; and everyone knows how uncomfortable that is even for ten minutes. And as they all grew more tired, their spirits fell. Up till now the children had only been thinking of how to get to Caspian. Now they wondered what they would do when they found him, and how a handful of Dwarfs and woodland creatures could defeat an army of grown-up Humans.

Twilight was coming on as they rowed slowly up the windings of Glasswater Creek — a twilight which deepened as the banks drew closer together and the overhanging trees began almost to meet overhead. It was very quiet in here as the sound of the sea died away behind them; they could even hear the trickle of the little streams that poured down from the forest into Glasswater.

They went ashore at last, far too tired to attempt lighting a fire; and even a supper of apples (though most of them felt that they never wanted to see an apple again) seemed better than trying to catch or shoot anything. After a little silent munching they all huddled down together in the moss and dead leaves between four large beech trees.

Everyone except Lucy went to sleep at once. Lucy, being far less tired, found it hard to get comfortable. Also, she had forgotten till now that all Dwarfs snore. She knew that one of the best ways of getting to sleep is to stop trying, so she opened her eyes. Through a gap in the bracken and branches she could just see a patch of water in the Creek and the sky above it. Then, with a thrill of memory, she saw again, after all those years, the bright Narnian stars. She had once known them better than the stars of our own world, because as a Queen in Narnia she had gone to bed much later than as a child in England. And there they were — at least, three of the summer constellations could be seen from where she lay: the Ship, the

Hammer, and the Leopard. “Dear old Leopard,” she murmured happily to herself.

Instead of getting drowsier she was getting more awake — with an odd, night-time, dreamish kind of wakefulness. The Creek was growing brighter. She knew now that the moon was on it, though she couldn’t see the moon. And now she began to feel that the whole forest was coming awake like herself. Hardly knowing why she did it, she got up quickly and walked a little distance away from their bivouac.

“This is lovely,” said Lucy to herself. It was cool and fresh; delicious smells were floating everywhere. Somewhere close by she heard the twitter of a nightingale beginning to sing, then stopping, then beginning again. It was a little lighter ahead. She went towards the light and came to a place where there were fewer trees, and whole patches or pools of moonlight, but the moonlight and the shadows so mixed that you could hardly be sure where anything was or what it was. At the same moment the nightingale, satisfied at last with his tuning up, burst into full song.

Lucy’s eyes began to grow accustomed to the light, and she saw the trees that were nearest her more distinctly. A great longing for the old days when the trees could talk in Narnia came over her. She knew exactly how each of these trees would talk if only she could wake them, and what sort of human form it would put on. She looked at a silver birch: it would have a soft, showery voice and would look like a slender girl, with hair blown all about her face, and fond of dancing. She looked at the oak: he would be a wizened, but hearty old man with a frizzled beard and warts on his face and hands, and hair growing out of the warts. She looked at the beech under which she was standing. Ah! — she would be the best of all. She would be a gracious goddess, smooth and stately, the lady of the wood.

“Oh, Trees, Trees, Trees,” said Lucy (though she had not been intending to speak at all). “Oh, Trees, wake, wake, wake. Don’t you remember it? Don’t you remember *me*? Dryads and Hamadryads, come out, come to me.”

Though there was not a breath of wind they all stirred about her. The rustling noise of the leaves was almost like words. The nightingale stopped singing as if to listen to it. Lucy felt that at any moment she would begin to understand what the trees were trying to say. But the moment did not come. The rustling died away. The nightingale resumed its song. Even in the moonlight the wood looked more ordinary again. Yet Lucy had the feeling (as you sometimes have when you are trying to remember a name or a date

and almost get it, but it vanishes before you really do) that she had just missed something: as if she had spoken to the trees a split second too soon or a split second too late, or used all the right words except one, or put in one word that was just wrong.

Quite suddenly she began to feel tired. She went back to the bivouac, snuggled down between Susan and Peter, and was asleep in a few minutes.

It was a cold and cheerless waking for them all next morning, with a grey twilight in the wood (for the sun had not yet risen) and everything damp and dirty.

"Apples, heigh-ho," said Trumpkin with a rueful grin. "I must say you ancient kings and queens don't overfeed your courtiers!"

They stood up and shook themselves and looked about. The trees were thick and they could see no more than a few yards in any direction.

"I suppose your Majesties know the way all right?" said the Dwarf.

"I don't," said Susan. "I've never seen these woods in my life before. In fact I thought all along that we ought to have gone by the river."

"Then I think you might have said so at the time," answered Peter, with pardonable sharpness.

"Oh, don't take any notice of her," said Edmund. "She always is a wet blanket. You've got that pocket compass of yours, Peter, haven't you? Well, then, we're as right as rain. We've only got to keep on going north-west — cross that little river, the what-do-you-call-it? — the Rush — —"

"I know," said Peter. "The one that joins the big river at the Fords of Beruna, or Beruna's Bridge, as the D.L.F. calls it."

"That's right. Cross it and strike uphill, and we'll be at the Stone Table (Aslan's How, I mean) by eight or nine o'clock. I hope King Caspian will give us a good breakfast!"

"I hope you're right," said Susan. "I can't remember all that at all."

"That's the worst of girls," said Edmund to Peter and the Dwarf. "They never can carry a map in their heads."

"That's because our heads have something inside them," said Lucy.

At first things seemed to be going pretty well. They even thought they had struck an old path; but if you know anything about woods, you will know that one is always finding imaginary paths. They disappear after about five minutes and then you think you have found another (and hope it is not another but more of the same one) and it also disappears, and after

you have been well lured out of your right direction you realise that none of them were paths at all. The boys and the Dwarf, however, were used to woods and were not taken in for more than a few seconds.

They had plodded on for about half an hour (three of. them very stiff from yesterday's rowing) when Trumpkin suddenly whispered, "Stop." They all stopped. "There's something following us," he said in a low voice. "Or rather, something keeping up with us: over there on the left." They all stood still, listening and staring till their ears and eyes ached. "You and I'd better each have an arrow on the string," said Susan to Trumpkin. The Dwarf nodded, and when both bows were ready for action the party went on again.

They went a few dozen yards through fairly open woodland, keeping a sharp look-out. Then they came to a place where the undergrowth thickened and they had to pass nearer to it. Just as they were passing the place, there came a sudden something that snarled and flashed, rising out from the breaking twigs like a thunderbolt. Lucy was knocked down and winded, hearing the twang of a bowstring as she fell. When she was able to take notice of things again, she saw a great grim-looking grey bear lying dead with Trumpkin's arrow in its side.

"The D.L.F. beat you in *that* shooting match, Su," said Peter, with a slightly forced smile. Even he had been shaken by this adventure.

"I — I left it too late," said Susan, in an embarrassed voice. "I was so afraid it might be, you know — one of our kind of bears, a *talking* bear." She hated killing things.

"That's the trouble of it," said Trumpkin, "when most of the beasts have gone enemy and gone dumb, but there are still some of the other kind left. You never know, and you daren't wait to see."

"Poor old Bruin," said Susan. "You don't think he was?"

"Not he," said the Dwarf. "I saw the face and I heard the snarl. He only wanted Little Girl for his breakfast. And talking of breakfast, I didn't want to discourage your Majesties when you said you hoped King Caspian would give you a good one: but meat's precious scarce in camp. And there's good eating on a bear. It would be a shame to leave the carcass without taking a bit, and it won't delay us more than half an hour. I dare say you two youngsters — Kings, I should say — know how to skin a bear?"

"Let's go and sit down a fair way off," said Susan to Lucy. "I know what a horrid messy business *that* will be." Lucy shuddered and nodded. When

they had sat down she said: “Such a horrible idea has come into my head, Su.”

“What’s that?”

“Wouldn’t it be dreadful if some day, in our own world, at home, men started going wild inside, like the animals here, and still looked like men, so that you’d never know which were which?”

“We’ve got enough to bother about here and now in Narnia,” said the practical Susan, “without imagining things like that.”

When they rejoined the boys and the Dwarf, as much as they thought they could carry of the best meat had been cut off. Raw meat is not a nice thing to fill one’s pockets with, but they folded it up in fresh leaves and made the best of it. They were all experienced enough to know that they would feel quite differently about these squashy and unpleasant parcels when they had walked long enough to be really hungry.

On they trudged again (stopping to wash three pairs of hands that needed it in the first stream they passed) until the sun rose and the birds began to sing, and more flies than they wanted were buzzing in the bracken. The stiffness from yesterday’s rowing began to wear off.

Everybody’s spirits rose. The sun grew warmer and they took their helmets off and carried them.

“I suppose we are going right?” said Edmund about an hour later.

“I don’t see how we can go wrong as long as we don’t bear too much to the left,” said Peter. “If we bear too much to the right, the worst that can happen is wasting a little time by striking the Great River too soon and not cutting off the corner.”

And again they trudged on with no sound except the thud of their feet and the jingle of their chain shirts.

“Where’s this bally Rush got to?” said Edmund a good deal later.

“I certainly thought we’d have struck it by now,” said Peter. “But there’s nothing to do but keep on.” They both knew that the Dwarf was looking anxiously at them, but he said nothing.

And still they trudged on and their mail shirts began to feel very hot and heavy.

“What on earth?” said Peter suddenly.

They had come, without seeing it, almost to the edge of a small precipice from which they looked down into a gorge with a river at the bottom. On

the far side the cliffs rose much higher. None of the party except Edmund (and perhaps Trumpkin) was a rock climber.

"I'm sorry," said Peter. "It's my fault for coming this way. We're lost. I've never seen this place in my life before."

The Dwarf gave a low whistle between his teeth.

"Oh, do let's go back and go the other way," said Susan. "I knew all along we'd get lost in these woods."

"Susan!" said Lucy, reproachfully, "don't nag at Peter like that. It's so rotten, and he's doing all he can."

"And don't you snap at Su like that, either," said Edmund. "I think she's quite right."

"Tubs and tortoiseshells!" exclaimed Trumpkin. "If we've got lost coming, what chance have we of finding our way back? And if we're to go back to the Island and begin all over again — even supposing we could — we might as well give the whole thing up. Miraz will have finished with Caspian before we get there at that rate."

"You think we ought to go on?" said Lucy.

"I'm not sure the High King *is* lost," said Trumpkin. "What's to hinder this river being the Rush?"

"Because the Rush is not in a gorge," said Peter, keeping his temper with some difficulty.

"Your Majesty says *is*," replied the Dwarf, "but oughtn't you to say *was*? You knew this country hundreds — it may be a thousand — years ago. Mayn't it have changed? A landslide might have pulled off half the side of that hill, leaving bare rock, and there are your precipices beyond the gorge. Then the Rush might go on deepening its course year after year till you get the little precipices this side. Or there might have been an earthquake, or anything."

"I never thought of that," said Peter.

"And anyway," continued Trumpkin, "even if this is not the Rush, it's flowing roughly north and so it must fall into the Great River anyway. I think I passed something that might have been it, on my way down. So if we go down-stream, to our right, we'll hit the Great River. Perhaps not so high as we'd hoped, but at least we'll be no worse off than if you'd come my way."

"Trumpkin, you're a brick," said Peter. "Come on, then. Down this side of the gorge."

“Look! Look! Look!” cried Lucy.

“Where? What?” asked everyone.

“The Lion,” said Lucy. “Aslan himself. Didn’t you see?” Her face had changed completely and her eyes shone.

“Do you really mean — —” began Peter.

“Where did you think you saw him?” asked Susan.

“Don’t talk like a grown-up,” said Lucy, stamping her foot. “I didn’t *think* I saw him. I saw him.”

“Where, Lu?” asked Peter.

“Right up there between those mountain ashes. No, this side of the gorge. And up, not down. Just the opposite of the way you want to go. And he wanted us to go where he was — up there.”

“How do you know that was what he wanted?” asked Edmund.

“He — I — I just know,” said Lucy, “by his face.”

The others all looked at each other in puzzled silence.

“Her Majesty may well have seen a lion,” put in Trumpkin. “There are lions in these woods, I’ve been told. But it needn’t have been a friendly and talking lion any more than the bear was a friendly and talking bear.”

“Oh, don’t be so stupid,” said Lucy. “Do you think I don’t know Aslan when I see him?”

“He’d be a pretty elderly lion by now,” said Trumpkin, “if he’s one you knew when you were here before! And if it could be the same one, what’s to prevent him having gone wild and witless like so many others?”

Lucy turned crimson and I think she would have flown at Trumpkin, if Peter had not laid his hand on her arm. “The D.L.F. doesn’t understand. How could he? You must just take it, Trumpkin, that we do really know about Aslan; a little bit about him, I mean. And you mustn’t talk about him like that again. It isn’t lucky for one thing: and it’s all nonsense for another. The only question is whether Aslan was really there.”

“But I know he was,” said Lucy, her eyes filling with tears.

“Yes, Lu, but we don’t, you see,” said Peter.

“There’s nothing for it but a vote,” said Edmund.

“All right,” replied Peter. “You’re the eldest, D.L.F. What do you vote for? Up or down?”

“Down,” said the Dwarf. “I know nothing about Aslan. But I do know that if we turn left and follow the gorge up, it might lead us all day before we found a place where we could cross it. Whereas if we turn right and go

down, we're bound to reach the Great River in about a couple of hours. And if there are any real lions about, we want to go away from them, not towards them."

"What do you say, Susan?"

"Don't be angry, Lu," said Susan, "but I do think we should go down. I'm dead tired. Do let's get out of this wretched wood into the open as quick as we can. And none of us except you saw *anything*."

"Edmund?" said Peter.

"Well, there's just this," said Edmund, speaking quickly and turning a little red. "When we first discovered Narnia a year ago — or a thousand years ago, whichever it is — it was Lucy who discovered it first and none of us would believe her. I was the worst of the lot, I know. Yet she was right after all. Wouldn't it be fair to believe her this time? I vote for going up."

"Oh, Ed!" said Lucy and seized his hand.

"And now it's your turn, Peter," said Susan, "and I do hope — —"

"Oh, shut up, shut up and let a chap think," interrupted Peter. "I'd much rather not have to vote."

"You're the High King," said Trumpkin sternly.

"Down," said Peter after a long pause. "I know Lucy may be right after all, but I can't help it. We must do one or the other."

So they set off to their right along the edge, downstream. And Lucy came last of the party, crying bitterly.

Chapter X

THE RETURN OF THE LION

To keep along the edge of the gorge was not so easy as it had looked. Before they had gone many yards they were confronted with young fir woods growing on the very edge, and after they had tried to go through these, stooping and pushing for about ten minutes, they realised that, in there, it would take them an hour to do half a mile. So they came back and out again and decided to go round the fir wood. This took them much farther to their right than they wanted to go, far out of sight of the cliffs and out of sound of the river, till they began to be afraid they had lost it altogether. Nobody knew the time, but it was getting to the hottest part of the day.

When they were able at last to go back to the edge of the gorge (nearly a mile below the point from which they had started) they found the cliffs on their side of it a good deal lower and more broken. Soon they found a way down into the gorge and continued the journey at the river's edge. But first they had a rest and a long drink. No one was talking any more about breakfast, or even dinner, with Caspian.

They may have been wise to stick to the Rush instead of going along the top. It kept them sure of their direction: and ever since the fir wood they had all been afraid of being forced too far out of their course and losing themselves in the wood. It was an old and pathless forest, and you could not keep anything like a straight course in it. Patches of hopeless brambles, fallen trees, boggy places and dense undergrowth would be always getting in your way. But the gorge of the Rush was not at all a nice place for travelling either. I mean, it was not a nice place for people in a hurry. For an afternoon's ramble ending in a picnic tea it would have been delightful. It had everything you could want on an occasion of that sort — rumbling waterfalls, silver cascades, deep, amber-coloured pools, mossy rocks, and deep moss on the banks in which you could sink over your ankles, every kind of fern, jewel-like dragon flies, sometimes a hawk overhead and once (Peter and Trumpkin both thought) an eagle. But of course what the children and the Dwarf wanted to see as soon as possible was the Great River below them, and Beruna, and the way to Aslan's How.

As they went on, the Rush began to fall more and more steeply. Their journey became more and more of a climb and less and less of a walk — in places even a dangerous climb over slippery rock with a nasty drop into dark chasms, and the river roaring angrily at the bottom.

You may be sure they watched the cliffs on their left eagerly for any sign of a break or any place where they could climb them; but those cliffs remained cruel. It was maddening, because everyone knew that if once they were out of the gorge on that side, they would have only a smooth slope and a fairly short walk to Caspian's headquarters.

The boys and the Dwarf were now in favour of lighting a fire and cooking their bear-meat. Susan didn't want this; she only wanted, as she said, "to get on and finish it and get out of these beastly woods". Lucy was far too tired and miserable to have any opinion about anything. But as there was no dry wood to be had, it mattered very little what anyone thought. The boys began to wonder if raw meat was really as nasty as they had always been told. Trumpkin assured them it was.

Of course, if the children had attempted a journey like this a few days ago in England, they would have been knocked up. I think I have explained before how Narnia was altering them. Even Lucy was by now, so to speak, only one-third of a little girl going to boarding school for the first time, and two-thirds of Queen Lucy of Narnia.

"At last!" said Susan.

"Oh, hurray!" said Peter.

The river gorge had just made a bend and the whole view spread out beneath them. They could see open country stretching before them to the horizon and, between it and them, the broad silver ribbon of the Great River. They could see the specially broad and shallow place which had once been the Fords of Beruna but was now spanned by a long, many-arched bridge. There was a little town at the far end of it.

"By Jove," said Edmund. "We fought the Battle of Beruna just where that town is!"

This cheered the boys more than anything. You can't help feeling stronger when you look at a place where you won a glorious victory, not to mention a kingdom, hundreds of years ago. Peter and Edmund were soon so busy talking about the battle that they forgot their sore feet and the heavy drag of their mail shirts on their shoulders. The Dwarf was interested too.

They were all getting on at a quicker pace now. The going became easier. Though there were still sheer cliffs on their left, the ground was becoming lower on their right. Soon it was no longer a gorge at all, only a valley. There were no more waterfalls and presently they were in fairly thick woods again.

Then — all at once — *whizz*, and a sound rather like the stroke of a woodpecker. The children were still wondering where (ages ago) they had heard a sound just like that and why they disliked it so, when Trumpkin shouted, “Down,” at the same moment forcing Lucy (who happened to be next to him) flat down into the bracken. Peter, who had been looking up to see if he could spot a squirrel, had seen what it was — a long cruel arrow had sunk into a tree trunk just above his head. As he pulled Susan down and dropped himself, another came rasping over his shoulder and struck the ground at his side.

“Quick! Quick! Get back! *Crawl*!” panted Trumpkin.

They turned and wriggled along uphill, under the bracken, amid clouds of horribly buzzing flies. Arrows whizzed round them. One struck Susan’s helmet with a sharp ping and glanced off. They crawled quicker. Sweat poured off them. Then they ran, stooping nearly double. The boys held their swords in their hands for fear they would trip them up.

It was heart-breaking work — all uphill again, back over the ground they had already travelled. When they felt that they really couldn’t run any more, even to save their lives, they all dropped down in the damp moss beside a waterfall and behind a big boulder, panting. They were surprised to see how high they had already got.

They listened intently and heard no sound of pursuit.

“So *that’s* all right,” said Trumpkin, drawing a deep breath. “They’re not searching the wood. Only sentries, I expect. But it means that Miraz has an outpost down there. Bottles and battledores! though, it was a near thing.”

“I ought to have my head smacked for bringing us this way at all,” said Peter.

“On the contrary, your Majesty,” said the Dwarf. “For one thing it wasn’t you, it was your royal brother, King Edmund, who first suggested going by Glasswater.”

“I’m afraid the D.L.F.’s right,” said Edmund, who had quite honestly forgotten this ever since things began going wrong.

“And for another,” continued Trumpkin, “if we’d gone my way, we’d have walked straight into that new outpost, most likely; or at least had just the same trouble avoiding it. I think this Glasswater route has turned out for the best.”

“A blessing in disguise,” said Susan.

“Some disguise!” said Edmund.

“I suppose we’ll have to go right up the gorge again now,” said Lucy.

“Lu, you’re a hero,” said Peter. “That’s the nearest you’ve got to-day to saying *I told you so*. Let’s get on.”

“And as soon as we’re well up into the forest,” said Trumpkin, “whatever anyone says, I’m going to light a fire and cook supper. But we must get well away from here.”

There is no need to describe how they toiled back up the gorge. It was pretty hard work, but oddly enough everyone felt more cheerful. They were getting their second wind; and the word supper had had a wonderful effect.

They reached the fir wood which had caused them so much trouble while it was still daylight, and bivouacked in a hollow just above it. It was tedious gathering the fire wood; but it was grand when the fire blazed up and they began producing the damp and smeary parcels of bear-meat which would have been so very unattractive to anyone who had spent the day indoors. The Dwarf had splendid ideas about cookery. Each apple (they still had a few of these) was wrapped up in bear’s meat — as if it was to be apple dumpling with meat instead of pastry, only much thicker — and spiked on a sharp stick and then roasted. And the juice of the apple worked all through the meat, like apple sauce with roast pork. Bear that has lived too much on other animals is not very nice, but bear that has had plenty of honey and fruit is excellent, and this turned out to be that sort of bear. It was a truly glorious meal. And, of course, no washing up — only lying back and watching the smoke from Trumpkin’s pipe and stretching one’s tired legs and chatting. Everyone felt quite hopeful now about finding King Caspian to-morrow and defeating Miraz in a few days. It may not have been sensible of them to feel like this, but they did.

They dropped off to sleep one by one, but all pretty quickly.

Lucy woke out of the deepest sleep you can imagine, with the feeling that the voice she liked best in the world had been calling her name. She thought at first it was her father’s voice, but that did not seem quite right. Then she thought it was Peter’s voice, but that did not seem to fit either. She

did not want to get up; not because she was still tired — on the contrary she was wonderfully rested and all the aches had gone from her bones — but because she felt so extremely happy and comfortable. She was looking straight up at the Narnian moon, which is larger than ours, and at the starry sky, for the place where they had bivouacked was comparatively open.

"Lucy," came the call again, neither her father's voice nor Peter's. She sat up, trembling with excitement but not with fear. The moon was so bright that the whole forest landscape around her was almost as clear as day, though it looked wilder. Behind her was the fir wood; away to her right the jagged cliff-tops on the far side of the gorge; straight ahead, open grass to where a glade of trees began about a bow-shot away. Lucy looked very hard at the trees of that glade.

"Why, I do believe they're moving," she said to her self. "They're walking about."

She got up, her heart beating wildly, and walked towards them. There was certainly a noise in the glade, a noise such as trees make in a high wind, though there was no wind to-night. Yet it was not exactly an ordinary tree-noise either. Lucy felt there was a tune in it, but she could not catch the tune any more than she had been able to catch the words when the trees had so nearly talked to her the night before. But there was, at least, a lilt; she felt her own feet wanting to dance as she got nearer. And now there was no doubt that the trees were really moving — moving in and out through one another as if in a complicated country dance. ("And I suppose," thought Lucy, "when trees dance, it must be a very, very country dance indeed.") She was almost among them now.

The first tree she looked at seemed at first glance to be not a tree at all but a huge man with a shaggy beard and great bushes of hair. She was not frightened: she had seen such things before. But when she looked again he was only a tree, though he was still moving. You couldn't see whether he had feet or roots, of course, because when trees move they don't walk on the surface of the earth; they wade in it as we do in water. The same thing happened with every tree she looked at. At one moment they seemed to be the friendly, lovely giant and giantess forms which the tree-people put on when some good magic has called them into full life: next moment they all looked like trees again. But when they looked like trees, it was like strangely human trees, and when they looked like people, it was like

strangely branchy and leafy people — and all the time that queer lilting, rustling, cool, merry noise.

“They are almost awake, not quite,” said Lucy. She knew she herself was wide awake, wider than anyone usually is.

She went fearlessly in among them, dancing herself at, she leaped this way and that to avoid being run into by these huge partners. But she was only half interested in them. She wanted to get beyond them to something else; it was from beyond them that the dear voice had called.

She soon got through them (half wondering whether she had been using her arms to push branches aside, or to take hands in a Great Chain with big dancers who stooped to reach her) for they were really a ring of trees round a central open place. She stepped out from among their shifting confusion of lovely lights and shadows.

A circle of grass, smooth as a lawn, met her eyes, with dark trees dancing all round it. And then — oh joy! For he was there: the huge Lion, shining white in the moonlight, with his huge black shadow underneath him.

But for the movement of his tail he might have been a stone lion, but Lucy never thought of that. She never stopped to think whether he was a friendly lion or not. She rushed to him. She felt her heart would burst if she lost a moment. And the next thing she knew was that she was kissing him and putting her arms as far round his neck as she could and burying her face in the beautiful rich silkiness of his mane.

“Aslan, Aslan. Dear Aslan,” sobbed Lucy. “At last.”

The great beast rolled over on his side so that Lucy fell, half sitting and half lying between his front paws. He bent forward and just touched her nose with his tongue. His warm breath came all round her. She gazed up into the large wise face.

“Welcome, child,” he said.

“Aslan,” said Lucy, “you’re bigger.”

“That is because you are older, little one,” answered he.

“Not because you are?”

“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”

For a time she was so happy that she did not want to speak. But Aslan spoke.

“Lucy,” he said, “we must not lie here for long. You have work in hand, and much time has been lost to-day.”

“Yes, wasn’t it a shame?” said Lucy. “*I* saw you all right. They wouldn’t believe me. They’re all so — —”

From somewhere deep inside Aslan’s body there came the faintest suggestion of a growl.

“I’m sorry,” said Lucy, who understood some of his moods. “I didn’t mean to start slanging the others. But it wasn’t my fault anyway, was it?”

The Lion looked straight into her eyes.

“Oh, Aslan,” said Lucy. “You don’t mean it was? How could I — I couldn’t have left the others and come up to you alone, how could I? Don’t look at me like that ... oh well, I suppose I *could*. Yes, and it wouldn’t have been alone, I know, not if I was with you. But what would have been the good?”

Aslan said nothing.

“You mean,” said Lucy rather faintly, “that it would have turned out all right — somehow? But how? Please, Aslan! Am I not to know?”

“To know what *would* have happened, child?” said Aslan. “No. Nobody is ever told that.”

“Oh dear,” said Lucy.

“But anyone can find out what *will* happen,” said Aslan. “If you go back to the others now, and wake them up; and tell them you have seen me again; and that you must all get up at once and follow me — what will happen? There is only one way of finding out.”

“Do you mean that is what you want me to do?” gasped Lucy.

“Yes, little one,” said Aslan.

“Will the others see you too?” asked Lucy.

“Certainly not at first,” said Aslan. “Later on, it depends.”

“But they won’t believe me!” said Lucy.

“It doesn’t matter,” said Aslan.

“Oh dear, oh dear,” said Lucy. “And I was so pleased at finding you again. And I thought you’d let me stay. And I thought you’d come roaring in and frighten all the enemies away — like last time. And now everything is going to be horrid.”

“It is hard for you, little one,” said Aslan. “But things never happen the same way twice. It has been hard for us all in Narnia before now.”

Lucy buried her head in his mane to hide from his face. But there must have been magic in his mane. She could feel lion-strength going into her. Quite suddenly she sat up.

“I’m sorry, Aslan,” she said. “I’m ready now.”

“Now you are a lioness,” said Aslan. “And now all Narnia will be renewed. But come. We have no time to lose.”

He got up and walked with stately, noiseless paces back to the belt of dancing trees through which she had just come: and Lucy went with him, laying a rather tremulous hand on his mane. The trees parted to let them through and for one second assumed their human forms completely. Lucy had a glimpse of tall and lovely wood-gods and wood-goddesses all bowing to the Lion; next moment they were trees again, but still bowing, with such graceful sweeps of branch and trunk that their bowing was itself a kind of dance.

“Now, child,” said Aslan, when they had left the trees behind them, “I will wait here. Go and wake the others and tell them to follow. If they will not, then you at least must follow me alone.”

It is a terrible thing to have to wake four people, all older than yourself and all very tired, for the purpose of telling them something they probably won’t believe and making them do something they certainly won’t like. “I mustn’t think about it, I must just do it,” thought Lucy.

She went to Peter first and shook him. “Peter,” she whispered in his ear, “wake up. Quick. Aslan is here. He says we’ve got to follow him at once.”

“Certainly, Lu. Whatever you like,” said Peter unexpectedly. This was encouraging, but as Peter instantly rolled round and went to sleep again it wasn’t much use.

Then she tried Susan. Susan did really wake up, but only to say in her most annoying grown-up voice, “You’ve been dreaming, Lucy. Go to sleep again.”

She tackled Edmund next. It was very difficult to wake him, but when at last she had done it he was really awake and sat up.

“Eh?” he said in a grumpy voice. “What are you talking about?”

She said it all over again. This was one of the worst parts of her job, for each time she said it, it sounded less convincing.

“Aslan!” said Edmund, jumping up. “Hurray! Where?”

Lucy turned back to where she could see the Lion waiting, his patient eyes fixed upon her. “There,” she said, pointing.

“Where?” asked Edmund again.

“There. There. Don’t you see? Just this side of the trees.”

Edmund stared hard for a while and then said, “No. There’s nothing there. You’ve got dazzled and muddled with the moonlight. One does, you know. I thought I saw something for a moment myself. It’s only an optical what-do-you-call-it.”

“I can see him all the time,” said Lucy. “He’s looking straight at us.”

“Then why can’t I see him?”

“He said you mightn’t be able to.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. That’s what he said.”

“Oh, bother it all,” said Edmund. “I do wish you wouldn’t keep on seeing things. But I suppose we’ll have to wake the others.”

Chapter XI

THE LION ROARS

When the whole party was finally awake Lucy had to tell her story for the fourth time. The blank silence which followed it was as discouraging as anything could be.

“I can’t see anything,” said Peter after he had stared his eyes sore. “Can you, Susan?”

“No, of course I can’t,” snapped Susan. “Because there isn’t anything to see. She’s been dreaming. Do lie down and go to sleep, Lucy.”

“And I do hope,” said Lucy in a tremulous voice, “that you will all come with me. Because — because I’ll have to go with him whether anyone else does or not.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Lucy,” said Susan. “Of course you can’t go off on your own. Don’t let her, Peter. She’s being downright naughty.”

“I’ll go with her, if she *must* go,” said Edmund. “She’s been right before.”

“I know she has,” said Peter. “And she may have been right this morning. We certainly had no luck going down the gorge. Still — at this hour of the night. And why should Aslan be invisible to us? He never used to be. It’s not like him. What does the D.L.F. say?”

“Oh, I say nothing at all,” answered the Dwarf. “If you all go, of course, I’ll go with you; and if your party splits up, I’ll go with the High King. That’s my duty to him and King Caspian. But, if you ask my private opinion, I’m a plain dwarf who doesn’t think there’s much chance of finding a road by night where you couldn’t find one by day. And I have no use for magic lions which are talking lions and don’t talk, and friendly lions though they don’t do us any good, and whopping big lions though nobody can see them. It’s all bilge and beanstalks as far as I can see.”

“He’s beating his paw on the ground for us to hurry,” said Lucy. “We must go *now*. At least I must.”

“You’ve no right to try to force the rest of us like that. It’s four to one and you’re the youngest,” said Susan.

“Oh, come on,” growled Edmund. “We’ve got to go. There’ll be no peace till we do.” He fully intended to back Lucy up, but he was annoyed at

losing his night's sleep and was making up for it by doing everything as sulkily as possible.

"On the march, then," said Peter, wearily fitting his arm into his shield-strap and putting his helmet on. At any other time he would have said something nice to Lucy, who was his favourite sister, for he knew how wretched she must be feeling, and he knew that, whatever had happened, it was not her fault. But he couldn't help being a little annoyed with her all the same.

Susan was the worst. "Supposing *I* started behaving like Lucy," she said. "I might threaten to stay here whether the rest of you went on or not. I jolly well think I shall."

"Obey the High King, your Majesty," said Trumpkin, "and let's be off. If I'm not to be allowed to sleep, I'd as soon march as stand here talking."

And so at last they got on the move. Lucy went first, biting her lip and trying not to say all the things she thought of saying to Susan. But she forgot them when she fixed her eyes on Aslan. He turned and walked at a slow pace about thirty yards ahead of them. The others had only Lucy's directions to guide them, for Aslan was not only invisible to them but silent as well. His big cat-like paws made no noise on the grass.

He led them to the right of the dancing trees — whether they were still dancing nobody knew, for Lucy had her eyes on the Lion and the rest had their eyes on Lucy — and nearer the edge of the gorge. "Cobbles and kettle-drums!" thought Trumpkin. "I hope this madness isn't going to end in a moonlight climb and broken necks."

For a long way Aslan went along the top of the precipices. Then they came to a place where some little trees grew right on the edge. He turned and disappeared among them. Lucy held her breath, for it looked as if he had plunged over the cliff; but she was too busy keeping him in sight to stop and think about this. She quickened her pace and was soon among the trees herself. Looking down, she could see a steep and narrow path going slant-wise down into the gorge between rocks, and Aslan descending it. He turned and looked at her with his happy eyes. Lucy clapped her hands and began to scramble down after him. From behind her she heard the voices of the others shouting, "Hi! Lucy! Look out, for goodness' sake. You're right on the edge of the gorge. Come back — —" and then, a moment later, Edmund's voice saying, "No, she's right. There is a way down."

Half-way down the path Edmund caught up with her.

“Look!” he said in great excitement. “Look! What’s that shadow crawling down in front of us?”

“It’s *his* shadow,” said Lucy.

“I do believe you’re right, Lu,” said Edmund. “I can’t think how I didn’t see it before. But where is he?”

“With his shadow, of course. Can’t you see him?”

“Well, I almost thought I did — for a moment. It’s such a rum light.”

“Get on, King Edmund, get on,” came Trumpkin’s voice from behind and above: and then, farther behind and still nearly at the top, Peter’s voice saying, “Oh, buck up, Susan. Give me your hand. Why, a baby could get down here. And do stop grousing.”

In a few minutes they were at the bottom and the roaring of water filled their ears. Treading delicately, like a cat, Aslan stepped from stone to stone across the stream. In the middle he stopped, bent down to drink, and as he raised his shaggy head, dripping from the water, he turned to face them again. This time Edmund saw him. “Oh, Aslan!” he cried, darting forward. But the Lion whisked round and began padding up the slope on the far side of the Rush.

“Peter, Peter,” cried Edmund. “Did you see?”

“I saw something,” said Peter. “But it’s so tricky in this moonlight. On we go, though, and three cheers for Lucy. I don’t feel half so tired now, either.”

Aslan without hesitation led them to their left, farther up the gorge. The whole journey was odd and dream-like — the roaring stream, the wet grey grass, the glimmering cliffs which they were approaching, and always the glorious, silently pacing Beast ahead. Everyone except Susan and the Dwarf could see him now.

Presently they came to another steep path, up the face of the further precipices. These were far higher than the ones they had just descended, and the journey up them was a long and tedious zig-zag. Fortunately the Moon shone right above the gorge so that neither side was in shadow.

Lucy was nearly blown when the tail and hind legs of Aslan disappeared over the top: but with one last effort she scrambled after him and came out, rather shaky-legged and breathless, on the hill they had been trying to reach ever since they left Glasswater. The long gentle slope (heather and grass and a few very big rocks that shone white in the moonlight) stretched up to

where it vanished in a glimmer of trees about half a mile away. She knew it. It was the hill of the Stone Table.

With a jingling of mail the others climbed up behind her. Aslan glided on before them and they walked after him.

“Lucy,” said Susan in a very small voice.

“Yes?” said Lucy.

“I see him now. I’m sorry.”

“That’s all right.”

“But I’ve been far worse than you know. I really believed it was him — he, I mean — yesterday. When he warned us not to go down to the fir wood. And I really believed it was him to-night, when you woke us up. I mean, deep down inside. Or I could have, if I’d let myself. But I just wanted to get out of the woods and — and — oh, I don’t know. And what ever am I to say to him?”

“Perhaps you won’t need to say much,” suggested Lucy.

Soon they reached the trees and through them the children could see the Great Mound, Aslan’s How, which had been raised over the Table since their days.

“Our side don’t keep very good watch,” muttered Trumpkin. “We ought to have been challenged before now — —”

“Hush!” said the other four, for now Aslan had stopped and turned and stood facing them, looking so majestic that they felt as glad as anyone can who feels afraid, and as afraid as anyone can who feels glad. The boys strode forward: Lucy made way for them: Susan and the Dwarf shrank back.

“Oh, Aslan,” said King Peter, dropping on one knee and raising the Lion’s heavy paw to his face, “I’m so glad. And I’m so sorry. I’ve been leading them wrong ever since we started and especially yesterday morning.”

“My dear son,” said Aslan.

Then he turned and welcomed Edmund. “Well done,” were his words.

Then, after an awful pause, the deep voice said, “Susan.” Susan made no answer but the others thought she was crying. “You have listened to fears, child,” said Aslan. “Come, let me breathe on you. Forget them. Are you brave again?”

“A little, Aslan,” said Susan.

“And now!” said Aslan in a much louder voice with just a hint of a roar in it, while his tail lashed his flanks. “And now, where is this little Dwarf, this famous swordsman and archer, who doesn’t believe in lions? Come here, son of Earth, come HERE!” — and the last word was no longer the hint of a roar but almost the real thing.

“Wraiths and wreckage!” gasped Trumpkin in the ghost of a voice. The children, who knew Aslan well enough to see that he liked the Dwarf very much, were not disturbed; but it was quite another thing for Trumpkin, who had never seen a lion before, let alone this Lion. He did the only sensible thing he could have done; that is, instead of bolting, he tottered towards Aslan.

Aslan pounced. Have you ever seen a very young kitten being carried in the mother cat’s mouth? It was like that. The Dwarf, hunched up in a little, miserable ball, hung from Aslan’s mouth. The Lion gave him one shake and all his armour rattled like a tinker’s pack and then — hey-presto — the Dwarf flew up in the air. He was as safe as if he had been in bed, though he did not feel so. As he came down the huge velvety paws caught him as gently as a mother’s arms and set him (right way up, too) on the ground.

“Son of Earth, shall we be friends?” asked Aslan.

“Ye — he — he — hes,” panted the Dwarf, for it had not yet got its breath back.

“Now,” said Aslan. “The Moon is setting. Look behind you: there is the dawn beginning. We have no time to lose. You three, you sons of Adam and son of Earth, hasten into the Mound and deal with what you will find there.”

The Dwarf was still speechless and neither of the boys dared to ask if Aslan would follow them. All three drew their swords and saluted, then turned and jingled away into the dusk. Lucy noticed that there was no sign of weariness in their faces: both the High King and King Edmund looked more like men than boys.

The girls watched them out of sight, standing close beside Aslan. The light was changing. Low down in the east, Aravir, the morning star of Narnia, gleamed like a little moon. Aslan, who seemed larger than before, lifted his head, shook his mane and roared.

The sound, deep and throbbing at first like an organ beginning on a low note, rose and became louder, and then far louder again, till the earth and air were shaking with it. It rose up from that hill and floated across all Narnia. Down in Miraz’s camp men woke, stared palely in one another’s faces, and

grasped their weapons. Down below that in the Great River, now at its coldest hour, the heads and shoulders of the nymphs, and the great weedy-bearded head of the river-god, rose from the water. Beyond it, in every field and wood, the alert ears of rabbits rose from their holes, the sleepy heads of birds came out from under wings, owls hooted, vixens barked, hedgehogs grunted, the trees stirred. In towns and villages mothers pressed babies close to their breasts, staring with wild eyes, dogs whimpered, and men leaped up groping for lights. Far away on the northern frontier the mountain giants peered from the dark gateways of their castles.

What Lucy and Susan saw was a dark something coming to them from almost every direction across the hills. It looked first like a black mist creeping on the ground, then like the stormy waves of a black sea rising higher and higher as it came on, and then, at last, like what it was — woods on the move. All the trees of the world appeared to be rushing towards Aslan. But as they drew nearer they looked less like trees, and when the whole crowd, bowing and curtsying and waving thin long arms to Aslan, were all around Lucy, she saw that it was a crowd of human shapes. Pale birch-girls were tossing their heads, willow-women pushed back their hair from their brooding faces to gaze on Aslan, the queenly beeches stood still and adored him, shaggy oak-men, lean and melancholy elms, shock-headed hollies (dark themselves, but their wives all bright with berries) and gay rowans, all bowed and rose again, shouting, “Aslan, Aslan!” in their various husky or creaking or wave-like voices.

The crowd and the dance round Aslan (for it had become a dance once more) grew so thick and rapid that Lucy was confused. She never saw where certain other people came from who were soon capering about among the trees. One was a youth, dressed only in a fawn-skin, with vine-leaves wreathed in his curly hair. His face would have been almost too pretty for a boy’s, if it had not looked so extremely wild. You felt, as Edmund said when he saw him a few days later, “There’s a chap who might do anything — absolutely anything.” He seemed to have a great many names — Bromios, Bassareus, and the Ram were three of them. There were a lot of girls with him, as wild as he. There was even, unexpectedly, someone on a donkey. And everybody was laughing: and every body was shouting out, “Euan, euan, eu-oi-oi-oi.”

“Is it a Romp, Aslan?” cried the youth. And apparently it was. But nearly everyone seemed to have a different idea as to what they were playing. It

may have been Tig, but Lucy never discovered who was It. It was rather like Blind Man's Buff, only everyone behaved as if they were blindfolded. It was not unlike Hunt the Slipper, but the slipper was never found. What made it more complicated was that the man on the donkey, who was old and enormously fat, began calling out at once, "Refreshments! Time for refreshments," and falling off his donkey and being bundled on to it again by the others, while the donkey was under the impression that the whole thing was a circus, and tried to give a display of walking on its hind legs. And all the time there were more and more vine leaves everywhere. And soon not only leaves but vines. They were climbing up everything. They were running up the legs of the tree people and circling round their necks. Lucy put up her hands to push back her hair and found she was pushing back vine branches. The donkey was a mass of them. His tail was completely entangled and something dark was nodding between his ears. Lucy looked again and saw it was a bunch of grapes. After that it was mostly grapes — overhead and underfoot and all around.

"Refreshments! Refreshments," roared the old man. Everyone began eating, and whatever hothouses your people may have, you have never tasted such grapes. Really good grapes, firm and tight on the outside, but bursting into cool sweetness when you put them into your mouth, were one of the things the girls had never had quite enough of before. Here, there were more than anyone could possibly want, and no table-manners at all. One saw sticky and stained fingers everywhere, and, though mouths were full, the laughter never ceased nor the yodelling cries of *Euan, euan, eu-oi-oi-oi-oi*, till all of a sudden everyone felt at the same moment that the game (whatever it was), and the feast, ought to be over, and everyone flopped down breathless on the ground and turned their faces to Aslan to hear what he would say next.

At that moment the sun was just rising and Lucy remembered something and whispered to Susan,

"I say, Su, I know who they are."

"Who?"

"The boy with the wild face is Bacchus and the old one on the donkey is Silenus. Don't you remember Mr Tumnus telling us about them long ago?"

"Yes, of course. But I say, Lu — —"

"What?"

“I wouldn’t have felt very safe with Bacchus and all his wild girls if we’d met them without Aslan.”

“I should think not,” said Lucy.

Chapter XII

SORCERY AND SUDDEN VENGEANCE

Meanwhile Trumpkin and the two boys arrived at the dark little stone archway which led into the inside of the Mound, and two sentinel badgers (the white patches on their cheeks were all Edmund could see of them) leaped up with bared teeth and asked them in snarling voices, “Who goes there?”

“Trumpkin,” said the Dwarf. “Bringing the High King of Narnia out of the far past.”

The badgers nosed at the boys’ hands. “At last,” they said. “At last.”

“Give us a light, friends,” said Trumpkin.

The badgers found a torch just inside the arch and Peter lit it and handed it to Trumpkin. “The D.L.F. had better lead,” he said. “We don’t know our way about this place.”

Trumpkin took the torch and went ahead into the dark tunnel. It was a cold, black, musty place, with an occasional bat fluttering in the torchlight, and plenty of cobwebs. The boys, who had been mostly in the open air since that morning at the railway station, felt as if they were going into a trap or a prison.

“I say, Peter,” whispered Edmund. “Look at those carvings on the walls. Don’t they look old? And yet we’re older than that. When we were last here, they hadn’t been made.”

“Yes,” said Peter. “That makes one think.”

The Dwarf went on ahead and then turned to the right, and then to the left, and then down some steps, and then to the left again. Then at last they saw a light ahead — light from under a door. And now for the first time they heard voices, for they had come to the door of the central chamber. The voices inside were angry ones. Someone was talking so loudly that the approach of the boys and the Dwarf had not been heard.

“Don’t like the sound of that,” whispered Trumpkin to Peter. “Let’s listen for a moment.” All three stood perfectly still on the outside of the door.

“You know well enough,” said a voice (“That’s the King,” whispered Trumpkin), “why the Horn was not blown at sunrise that morning. Have you forgotten that Miraz fell upon us almost before Trumpkin had gone, and

we were fighting for our lives for the space of three hours and more? I blew it when first I had a breathing space."

"I'm not likely to forget it," came the angry voice, "when my Dwarfs bore the brunt of the attack and one in five of them fell." ("That's Nikabrik," whispered Trumpkin.)

"For shame, Dwarf," came a thick voice ("Trufflehunter's," said Trumpkin). "We all did as much as the Dwarfs and none more than the King."

"Tell that tale your own way for all I care," answered Nikabrik. "But whether it was that the Horn was blown too late, or whether there was no magic in it, no help has come. You, you great clerk, you master magician, you know-all; are you still asking us to hang our hopes on Aslan and King Peter and all the rest of it?"

"I must confess — I cannot deny it — that I am deeply disappointed in the result of the operation," came the answer. ("That'll be Doctor Cornelius," said Trumpkin.)

"To speak plainly," said Nikabrik, "your wallet's empty, your eggs addled, your fish uncaught, your promises broken. Stand aside then and let others work. And that is why — —"

"The help will come," said Trufflehunter. "I stand by Aslan. Have patience, like us beasts. The help will come. It may be even now at the door."

"Pah!" snarled Nikabrik. "You badgers would have us wait till the sky falls and we can all catch larks. I tell you we can't wait. Food is running short; we lose more than we can afford at every encounter; our followers are slipping away."

"And why?" asked Trufflehunter. "I'll tell you why. Because it is noised among them that we have called on the Kings of old and the Kings of old have not answered. The last words Trumpkin spoke before he went (and went, most likely, to his death) were, 'If you must blow the Horn, do not let the army know why you blow it or what you hope from it.' But that same evening everyone seemed to know."

"You'd better have shoved your grey snout in a hornets' nest, Badger, than suggest that I am the blab," said Nikabrik. "Take it back, or — —"

"Oh, stop it, both of you," said King Caspian. "I want to know what it is that Nikabrik keeps on hinting we should do. But before that, I want to

know who those two strangers are whom he has brought into our council and who stand there with their ears open and their mouths shut."

"They are friends of mine," said Nikabrik. "And what better right have you yourself to be here than that you are a friend of Trumpkin's and the Badger's? And what right has that old dotard in the black gown to be here except that he is your friend? Why am I to be the only one who can't bring in his friends?"

"His Majesty is the King to whom you have sworn allegiance," said Trufflehunter sternly.

"Court manners, court manners," sneered Nikabrik. "But in this hole we may talk plainly. You know — and he knows — that this Telmarine boy will be king of nowhere and nobody in a week unless we can help him out of the trap in which he sits."

"Perhaps," said Cornelius, "your new friends would like to speak for themselves? You there, who and what are you?"

"Worshipful Master Doctor," came a thin, whining voice. "So please you, I'm only a poor old woman, I am, and very obliged to his Worshipful Dwarfship for his friendship, I'm sure. His Majesty, bless his handsome face, has no need to be afraid of an old woman that's nearly doubled up with the rheumatics and hasn't two sticks to put under her kettle. I have some poor little skill — not like yours, Master Doctor, of course — in small spells and cantrips that I'd be glad to use against our enemies if it was agreeable to all concerned. For I hate 'em. Oh yes. No one hates better than me."

"That is all most interesting and — er — satisfactory," said Doctor Cornelius. "I think I now know what you are, Madam. Perhaps your other friend, Nikabrik, would give some account of himself?"

A dull, grey voice at which Peter's flesh crept replied, "I'm hunger. I'm thirst. Where I bite, I hold till I die, and even after death they must cut out my mouthful from my enemy's body and bury it with me. I can fast a hundred years and not die. I can lie a hundred nights on the ice and not freeze. I can drink a river of blood and not burst. Show me your enemies."

"And it is in the presence of these two that you wish to disclose your plan?" said Caspian.

"Yes," said Nikabrik. "And by their help that I mean to execute it."

There was a minute or two during which Trumpkin and the boys could hear Caspian and his two friends speaking in low voices but could not make

out what they were saying. Then Caspian spoke aloud.

"Well, Nikabrik," he said, "we will hear your plan."

There was a pause so long that the boys began to wonder if Nikabrik was ever going to begin; when he did, it was in a lower voice, as if he himself did not much like what he was saying.

"All said and done," he muttered, "none of us knows the truth about the ancient days in Narnia. Trumpkin believed none of the stories. I was ready to put them to the trial. We tried first the Horn and it has failed. If there ever was a High King Peter and a Queen Susan and a King Edmund and a Queen Lucy, then either they have not heard us, or they cannot come, or they are our enemies — —"

"Or they are on the way," put in Trufflehunter.

"You can go on saying that till Miraz has fed us all to his dogs. As I was saying, we have tried one link in the chain of old legends, and it has done us no good. Well. But when your sword breaks, you draw your dagger. The stories tell of other powers beside the ancient Kings and Queens. How if we could call *them* up?"

"If you mean Aslan," said Trufflehunter, "it's all one calling on him and on the Kings. They were his servants. If he will not send them (but I make no doubt he will), is he more likely to come himself?"

"No. You're right there," said Nikabrik. "Aslan and the Kings go together. Either Aslan is dead, or he is not on our side. Or else something stronger than himself keeps him back. And if he did come — how do we know he'd be our friend? He was not always a good friend to Dwarfs by all that's told. Not even to all beasts. Ask the Wolves. And anyway, he was in Narnia only once that I ever heard of, and he didn't stay long. You may drop Aslan out of the reckoning. I was thinking of someone else."

There was no answer, and for a few minutes it was so still that Edmund could hear the wheezy and snuffling breath of the Badger.

"Who do you mean?" said Caspian at last.

"I mean a power so much greater than Aslan's that it held Narnia spellbound for years and years, if the stories are true."

"The White Witch!" cried three voices all at once, and from the noise Peter guessed that three people had leaped to their feet.

"Yes," said Nikabrik very slowly and distinctly, "I mean the Witch. Sit down again. Don't all take fright at a name as if you were children. We want power: and we want a power that will be on our side. As for power, do

not the stories say that the Witch defeated Aslan, and bound him, and killed him on that very stone which is over there, just beyond the light?"

"But they also say that he came to life again," said the Badger sharply.

"Yes, they *say*," answered Nikabrik, "but you'll notice that we hear precious little about anything he did afterwards. He just fades out of the story. How do you explain that, if he really came to life? Isn't it much more likely that he didn't, and that the stories say nothing more about him because there was nothing more to say?"

"He established the Kings and Queens," said Caspian.

"A King who has just won a great battle can usually establish himself without the help of a performing lion," said Nikabrik. There was a fierce growl, probably from Trufflehunter.

"And anyway," Nikabrik continued, "what came of the Kings and their reign? They faded too. But it's very different with the Witch. They say she ruled for a hundred years: a hundred years of winter. There's power, if you like. There's something practical."

"But, heaven and earth!" said the King, "haven't we always been told that she was the worst enemy of all? Wasn't she a tyrant ten times worse than Miraz?"

"Perhaps," said Nikabrik in a cold voice. "Perhaps she was for you humans, if there were any of you in those days. Perhaps she was for some of the beasts. She stamped out the Beavers, I dare say; at least there are none of them in Narnia now. But she got on all right with us Dwarfs. I'm a Dwarf and I stand by my own people. *We're* not afraid of the Witch."

"But you've joined with us," said Trufflehunter.

"Yes, and a lot of good it has done my people, so far," snapped Nikabrik. "Who is sent on all the dangerous raids? The Dwarfs. Who goes short when the rations fail? The Dwarfs. Who — —"

"Lies! All lies!" said the Badger.

"And so," said Nikabrik, whose voice now rose to a scream, "if you can't help my people, I'll go to someone who can."

"Is this open treason, Dwarf?" asked the King.

"Put that sword back in its sheath, Caspian," said Nikabrik. "Murder at council, eh? Is that your game? Don't be fool enough to try it. Do you think I'm afraid of you? There's three on my side, and three on yours."

"Come on, then," snarled Trufflehunter, but he was immediately interrupted.

“Stop, stop, stop,” said Doctor Cornelius. “You go on too fast. The Witch is dead. All the stories agree on that. What does Nikabrik mean by calling on the Witch?”

That grey and terrible voice which had spoken only once before said, “Oh, *is* she?”

And then the shrill, whining voice began, “Oh, bless his heart, his dear little Majesty needn’t mind about the White Lady — that’s what *we* call her — being dead. The Worshipful Master Doctor is only making game of a poor old woman like me when he says that. Sweet Master Doctor, learned Master Doctor, who ever heard of a witch that really died? You can always get them back.”

“Call her up,” said the grey voice. “We are all ready. Draw the circle. Prepare the blue fire.”

Above the steadily increasing growl of the Badger and Cornelius’s sharp “What?” rose the voice of King Caspian like thunder.

“So that is your plan, Nikabrik! Black sorcery and the calling up of an accursed ghost. And I see who your companions are — a Hag and a Wer-Wolf!”

The next minute or so was very confused. There was an animal roaring, a clash of steel; the boys and Trumpkin rushed in; Peter had a glimpse of a horrible, grey, gaunt creature, half man and half wolf, in the very act of leaping upon a boy about his own age, and Edmund saw a badger and a Dwarf rolling on the floor in a sort of cat fight. Trumpkin found himself face to face with the Hag. Her nose and chin stuck out like a pair of nut-crackers, her dirty grey hair was flying about her face and she had just got Doctor Cornelius by the throat. At one slash of Trumpkin’s sword her head rolled on the floor. Then the light was knocked over and it was all swords, teeth, claws, fists and boots for about sixty seconds. Then silence.

“Are you all right, Ed?”

“I — I think so,” panted Edmund. “I’ve got that brute Nikabrik, but he’s still alive.”

“Weights and water-bottles!” came an angry voice. “It’s *me* you’re sitting on. Get off. You’re like a young elephant.”

“Sorry, D.L.F.,” said Edmund. “Is that better?”

“Ow! No!” bellowed Trumpkin. “You’re putting your boot in my mouth. Go away.”

“Is King Caspian anywhere?” asked Peter.

“I’m here,” said a rather faint voice. “Something bit me.”

They all heard the noise of someone striking a match. It was Edmund. The little flame showed his face, looking pale and dirty. He blundered about for a little, found the candle (they were no longer using the lamp, for they had run out of oil), set it on the table and lit it. When the flame rose clear, several people scrambled to their feet. Six faces blinked at one another in the candlelight.

“We don’t seem to have any enemies left,” said Peter. “There’s the Hag, dead.” (He turned his eyes quickly away from her.) “And Nikabrik, dead too. And I suppose this thing is a Wer-Wolf. It’s so long since I’ve seen one. Wolf’s head and man’s body. That means he was just turning from man into wolf at the moment he was killed. And you, I suppose, are King Caspian?”

“Yes,” said the other boy. “But I’ve no idea who you are.”

“It’s the High King, King Peter,” said Trumpkin.

“Your Majesty is very welcome,” said Caspian.

“And so is *your* Majesty,” said Peter. “I haven’t come to take your place, you know, but to put you into it.”

“Your Majesty,” said another voice at Peter’s elbow. He turned and found himself face to face with the Badger. Peter leaned forward, put his arms round the beast and kissed the furry head: it wasn’t a girlish thing for him to do, because he was the High King.

“Best of badgers,” he said. “You never doubted us all through.”

“No credit to me, your Majesty,” said Trufflehunter. “I’m a beast and we don’t change. I’m a badger, what’s more, and we hold on.”

“I am sorry for Nikabrik,” said Caspian, “though he hated me from the first moment he saw me. He had gone sour inside from long suffering and hating. If we had won quickly he might have become a good Dwarf in the days of peace. I don’t know which of us killed him. I’m glad of that.”

“You’re bleeding,” said Peter.

“Yes, I’m bitten,” said Caspian. “It was that — that wolf thing.” Cleaning and bandaging the wound took a little time, and when it was done Trumpkin said, “Now. Before everything else we want some breakfast.”

“But not here,” said Peter.

“No,” said Caspian with a shudder. “And we must send someone to take away the bodies.”

“Let the vermin be flung into a pit,” said Peter. “But the Dwarf we will give to his people to be buried in their own fashion.”

They breakfasted at last in another of the dark cellars of Aslan’s How. It was not such a breakfast as they would have chosen, for Caspian and Cornelius were thinking of venison pasties, and Peter and Edmund of buttered eggs and hot coffee, but what everyone got was a little bit of cold bear-meat (out of the boys’ pockets), a lump of hard cheese, an onion, and a mug of water. But, from the way they fell to, anyone would have supposed it was delicious.

Chapter XIII

THE HIGH KING IN COMMAND

“Now,” said Peter, as they finished their meal, “Aslan and the girls (that’s Queen Susan and Queen Lucy, Caspian) are somewhere close. We don’t know when he will act. In his time, no doubt, not ours. In the meantime he would like us to do what we can on our own. You say, Caspian, we are not strong enough to meet Miraz in pitched battle.”

“I’m afraid not, High King,” said Caspian. He was liking Peter very much, but was rather tongue-tied. It was much stranger for him to meet the great Kings out of the old stories than it was for them to meet him.

“Very well, then,” said Peter, “I’ll send him a challenge to single combat.” No-one had thought of this before.

“Please,” said Caspian, “could it not be me? I want to avenge my father.”

“You’re wounded,” said Peter. “And anyway, wouldn’t he just laugh at a challenge from you? I mean, we have seen that you are a king and a warrior but he thinks of you as a kid.”

“But, Sire,” said the Badger, who sat very close to Peter and never took its eyes off him. “Will he accept a challenge even from you? He knows he has the stronger army.”

“Very likely he won’t,” said Peter, “but there’s always the chance. And even if he doesn’t, we shall spend the best part of the day sending heralds to and fro and all that. By then Aslan may have done something. And at least I can inspect the army and strengthen the position. I will send the challenge. In fact I will write it at once. Have you pen and ink, Master Doctor?”

“A scholar is never without them, your Majesty,” answered Doctor Cornelius.

“Very well, I will dictate,” said Peter. And while the Doctor spread out a parchment and opened his ink-horn and sharpened his pen, Peter lent back with half-closed eyes and recalled to his mind the language in which he had written such things long ago in Narnia’s golden age.

“Right,” he said at last. “And now, if you are ready, Doctor?”

Doctor Cornelius dipped his pen and waited. Peter dictated as follows:

“*Peter, by the gift of Aslan, by election, by prescription, and by conquest, High King over all Kings in Narnia, Emperor of the Lone Islands and Lord*

of Cair Paravel, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Lion, to Miraz, Son of Caspian the Eighth, sometime Lord Protector of Narnia and now styling himself King of Narnia, Greeting. Have you got that?"

"*Narnia, comma, greeting,*" muttered the Doctor. "Yes, Sire."

"Then begin a new paragraph," said Peter. "*For to prevent the effusion of blood, and for the avoiding all other inconveniences likely to grow from the wars now levied in our realm of Narnia, it is our pleasure to adventure our royal person on behalf of our trusty and well-beloved Caspian in clean wager of battle to prove upon your Lordship's body that the said Caspian is lawful King under us in Narnia both by our gift and by the laws of the Telmarines, and your Lordship twice guilty of treachery both in withholding the dominion of Narnia from the said Caspian and in the most abhominable,* — don't forget to spell it with an H, Doctor — *bloody, and unnatural murder of your kindly lord and brother King Caspian Ninth of that name. Wherefore we most heartily provoke, challenge and defy your Lordship to the said combat and monomachy, and have sent these letters by the hand of our well beloved and royal brother Edmund, sometime King under us in Narnia, Duke of Lantern Waste and Count of the Western March, Knight of the Noble Order of the Table, to whom we have given full power of determining with your Lordship all the conditions of the said battle. Given at our lodging in Aslan's How this XII day of the month Greenroof in the first year of Caspian Tenth of Narnia*.

"That ought to do," said Peter, drawing a deep breath. "And now we must send two others with King Edmund. I think the Giant ought to be one."

"He's — he's not very clever, you know," said Caspian.

"Of course not," said Peter. "But any giant looks impressive if only he will keep quiet. And it will cheer him up. But who for the other?"

"Upon my word," said Trumpkin, "if you want someone who can kill with looks, Reepicheep would be the best."

"He would indeed, from all I hear," said Peter with a laugh. "If only he wasn't so small. They wouldn't even see him till he was close!"

"Send Glenstorm, Sire," said Trufflehunter. "No one ever laughed at a Centaur."

An hour later two great lords in the army of Miraz, the Lord Glozelle and the Lord Sopespian, strolling along their lines and picking their teeth after breakfast, looked up and saw coming down to them from the wood the

Centaur and Giant Wimbleweather, whom they had seen before in battle, and between them a figure they could not recognise. Nor indeed would the other boys at Edmund's school have recognised him if they could have seen him at that moment. For Aslan had breathed on him at their meeting and a kind of greatness hung about him.

"What's to do?" said the Lord Glozelle. "An attack?"

"A parley, rather," said Sopespian. "See, they carry green branches. They are coming to surrender most likely."

"He that is walking between the Centaur and the Giant has no look of surrender in his face," said Glozelle. "Who can he be? It is not the boy Caspian."

"No indeed," said Sopespian. "This is a fell warrior, I warrant you, wherever the rebels have got him from. He is (in your Lordship's private ear) a kinglier man than ever Miraz was. And what mail he wears! None of our smiths can make the like."

"I'll wager my dappled Pomely he brings a challenge, not a surrender," said Glozelle.

"How then?" said Sopespian. "We hold the enemy in our fist here. Miraz would never be so hair-brained as to throw away his advantage on a combat."

"He might be brought to it," said Glozelle in a much lower voice.

"Softly," said Sopespian. "Step a little aside here out of earshot of those sentries. Now. Have I taken your Lordship's meaning aright?"

"If the King undertook wager of battle," whispered Glozelle, "why, either he would kill or be killed."

"So," said Sopespian, nodding his head.

"And if he killed we should have won this war."

"Certainly. And if not?"

"Why, if not, we should be as able to win it without the King's grace as with him. For I need not tell your Lordship that Miraz is no very great captain. And after that, we should be both victorious and kingless."

"And it is your meaning, my Lord, that you and I could hold this land quite as conveniently without a King as with one?"

Glozelle's face grew ugly. "Not forgetting," said he, "that it was we who first put him on the throne. And in all the years that he has enjoyed it, what fruits have come our way? What gratitude has he shown us?"

“Say no more,” answered Sopespian. “But look — here comes one to fetch us to the King’s tent.”

When they reached Miraz’s tent they saw Edmund and his two companions seated outside it and being entertained with cakes and wine, having already delivered the challenge, and withdrawn while the King was considering it. When they saw them thus at close quarters the two Telmarine lords thought all three of them very alarming.

Inside, they found Miraz, unarmed and finishing his breakfast. His face was flushed and there was a scowl on his brow.

“There!” he growled, flinging the parchment across the table to them. “See what a pack of nursery tales our jackanapes of a nephew has sent us.”

“By your leave, Sire,” said Glozelle. “If the young warrior whom we have just seen outside is the King Edmund mentioned in the writing, then I would not call him a nursery tale but a very dangerous knight.”

“King Edmund, pah!” said Miraz. “Does your Lordship believe those old wives’ fables about Peter and Edmund and the rest?”

“I believe my eyes, your Majesty,” said Glozelle.

“Well, this is to no purpose,” said Miraz, “but as touching the challenge, I suppose there is only one opinion between us?”

“I suppose so, indeed, Sire,” said Glozelle.

“And what is that?” asked the King.

“Most infallibly to refuse it,” said Glozelle. “For though I have never been called a coward, I must plainly say that to meet that young man in battle is more than my heart would serve me for. And if (as is likely) his brother, the High King, is more dangerous than he — why, on your life, my Lord King, have nothing to do with him.”

“Plague on you!” cried Miraz. “It was not that sort of council I wanted. Do you think I am asking you if I should be afraid to meet this Peter (if there is such a man)? Do you think I fear him? I wanted your counsel on the policy of the matter; whether we, having the advantage, should hazard it on a wager of battle.”

“To which I can only answer, your Majesty,” said Glozelle, “that for all reasons the challenge should be refused. There is death in the strange knight’s face.”

“There you are again!” said Miraz, now thoroughly angry. “Are you trying to make it appear that I am as great a coward as your Lordship?”

“Your Majesty may say your pleasure,” said Glozelle sulkily.

“You talk like an old woman, Glozelle,” said the King. “What say you, my Lord Sopespian?”

“Do not touch it, Sire,” was the reply. “And what your Majesty says of the policy of the thing comes in very happily. It gives your Majesty excellent grounds for a refusal without any cause for questioning your Majesty’s honour or courage.”

“Great Heaven!” exclaimed Miraz, jumping to his feet. “Are you also bewitched to-day? Do you think I am looking for grounds to refuse it? You might as well call me coward to my face.”

The conversation was going exactly as the two lords wished, so they said nothing.

“I see what it is,” said Miraz, after staring at them as if his eyes would start out of his head, “you are as lily-livered as hares yourselves and have the effrontery to imagine my heart after the likeness of yours! Grounds for a refusal, indeed! Excuses for not fighting! Are you soldiers? Are you Telmarines? Are you men? And if I do refuse it (as all good reasons of captaincy and martial policy urge me to do) you will think, and teach others to think, I was afraid. Is it not so?”

“No man of your Majesty’s age,” said Glozelle, “would be called coward by any wise soldier for refusing the combat with a great warrior in the flower of his youth.”

“So I’m to be a dotard with one foot in the grave, as well as a dastard,” roared Miraz. “I’ll tell you what it is, my Lords. With your womanish counsels (ever shying from the true point, which is one of policy) you have done the very opposite of your intent. I had meant to refuse it. But I’ll accept it. Do you hear, accept it! I’ll not be shamed because some witchcraft or treason has frozen both your bloods.”

“We beseech your Majesty — —” said Glozelle, but Miraz had flung out of the tent and they could hear him bawling out his acceptance to Edmund.

The two lords looked at one another and chuckled quietly.

“I knew he’d do it if he were properly chafed,” said Glozelle. “But I’ll not forget he called me coward. It shall be paid for.”

There was a great stirring at Aslan’s How when the news came back and was communicated to the various creatures. Edmund, with one of Miraz’s captains, had already marked out the place for the combat, and ropes and stakes had been put round it. Two Telmarines were to stand at two of the corners, and one in the middle of one side, as marshals of the lists. Three

marshals for the other two corners and the other side were to be furnished by the High King. Peter was just explaining to Caspian that he could not be one, because his right to the throne was what they were fighting about, when suddenly a thick, sleepy voice said, “Your Majesty, please.” Peter turned and there stood the eldest of the Bulgy Bears. “If you please, your Majesty,” he said, “I’m a bear, I am.”

“To be sure, so you are, and a good bear too, I don’t doubt,” said Peter.

“Yes,” said the Bear. “But it was always a right of the bears to supply one marshal of the lists.”

“Don’t let him,” whispered Trumpkin to Peter. “He’s a good creature, but he’ll shame us all. He’ll go to sleep and he will suck his paws. In front of the enemy too.”

“I can’t help that,” said Peter. “Because he’s quite right. The Bears had that privilege. I can’t imagine how it has been remembered all these years, when so many other things have been forgotten.”

“Please, your Majesty,” said the Bear.

“It is your right,” said Peter. “And you shall be one of the marshals. But you must remember not to suck your paws.”

“Of course not,” said the Bear in a very shocked voice.

“Why, you’re doing it this minute!” bellowed Trumpkin.

The Bear whipped his paw out of his mouth and pretended he hadn’t heard.

“Sire!” came a shrill voice from near the ground.

“Ah — Reepicheep!” said Peter after looking up and down and round as people usually did when addressed by the Mouse.

“Sire,” said Reepicheep. “My life is ever at your command, but my honour is my own. Sire, I have among my people the only trumpeter in your Majesty’s army. I had thought, perhaps, we might have been sent with the challenge. Sire, my people are grieved. Perhaps if it were your pleasure that I should be a marshal of the lists, it would content them.”

A noise not unlike thunder broke out from somewhere overhead at this point, as Giant Wimbleweather burst into one of those not very intelligent laughs to which the nicer sorts of Giant are so liable. He checked himself at once and looked as grave as a turnip by the time Reepicheep discovered where the noise came from.

“I am afraid it would not do,” said Peter very gravely. “Some humans are afraid of mice — —”

“I had observed it, Sire,” said Reepicheep.

“And it would not be quite fair to Miraz,” Peter continued, “to have in sight anything that might abate the edge of his courage.”

“Your Majesty is the mirror of honour,” said the Mouse with one of his admirable bows. “And on this matter we have but a single mind.... I thought I heard someone laughing just now. If anyone present wishes to make me the subject of his wit, I am very much at his service — with my sword — whenever he has leisure.”

An awful silence followed this remark, which was broken by Peter saying, “Giant Wimbleweather and the Bear and the Centaur Glenstorm shall be our marshals. The combat will be at two hours after noon. Dinner at noon precisely.”

“I say,” said Edmund as they walked away, “I suppose it is all right. I mean, I suppose you can beat him?”

“That’s what I’m fighting him to find out,” said Peter.

Chapter XIV

HOW ALL WERE VERY BUSY

A little before two o'clock Trumpkin and the Badger sat with the rest of the creatures at the wood's edge looking across at the gleaming line of Miraz's army which was about two arrow-shots away. In between, a square space of level grass had been staked for the combat. At the two far corners stood Glozelle and Sopespian with drawn swords. At the near corners were Giant Wimbleweather and the Bulgy Bear, who in spite of all their warnings was sucking his paws and looking, to tell the truth, uncommonly silly. To make up for this, Glenstorm on the right of the lists, stock-still except when he stamped a hind hoof occasionally on the turf, looked much more imposing than the Telmarine baron who faced him on the left. Peter had just shaken hands with Edmund and the Doctor, and was now walking down to the combat. It was like the moment before the pistol goes at an important race, but very much worse.

"I wish Aslan had turned up before it came to this," said Trumpkin.

"So do I," said Trufflehunter. "But look behind you."

"Crows and crockery!" muttered the Dwarf as soon as he had done so. "What are they? Huge people — beautiful people — like gods and goddesses and giants. Hundreds and thousands of them, closing in behind us. What are they?"

"It's the Dryads and Hamadryads and Silvans," said. Trufflehunter. "Aslan has waked them."

"Humph!" said the Dwarf. "That'll be very useful if the enemy try any treachery. But it won't help the High King very much if Miraz proves handier with his sword."

The Badger said nothing, for now Peter and Miraz were entering the lists from opposite ends, both on foot, both in chain shirts, with helmets and shields. They advanced till they were close together. Both bowed and seemed to speak, but it was impossible to hear what they said. Next moment the two swords flashed in the sunlight. For a second the clash could be heard but it was immediately drowned because both armies began shouting like crowds at a football match.

“Well done, Peter, oh, well done!” shouted Edmund as he saw Miraz reel back a whole pace and a half. “Follow it up, quick!” And Peter did, and for a few seconds it looked as if the fight might be won. But then Miraz pulled himself together — began to make real use of his height and weight. “Miraz! Miraz! The King! The King!” came the roar of the Telmarines. Caspian and Edmund grew white with sickening anxiety.

“Peter is taking some dreadful knocks,” said Edmund.

“Hullo!” said Caspian. “What’s happening now?”

“Both falling apart,” said Edmund. “A bit blown, I expect. Watch. Ah, now they’re beginning again, more scientifically this time. Circling round and round, feeling each other’s defences.”

“I’m afraid this Miraz knows his work,” muttered the Doctor. But hardly had he said this when there was such a clapping and baying and throwing up of hoods among the Old Narnians that it was nearly deafening.

“What was it? What was it?” asked the Doctor. “My old eyes missed it.”

“The High King has pricked him in the arm-pit,” said Caspian, still clapping. “Just where the arm-hole of the hauberk let the point through. First blood.”

“It’s looking ugly again now, though,” said Edmund. “Peter’s not using his shield properly. He must be hurt in the left arm.”

It was only too true. Everyone could see that Peter’s shield hung limp. The shouting of the Telmarines redoubled.

“You’ve seen more battles than I,” said Caspian. “Is there any chance now?”

“Precious little,” said Edmund. “I suppose he might *just* do it. With luck.”

“Oh, why did we let it happen at all?” said Caspian.

Suddenly all the shouting on both sides died down. Edmund was puzzled for a moment. Then he said, “Oh, I see. They’ve both agreed to a rest. Come on, Doctor. You and I may be able to do something for the High King.” They ran down to the lists and Peter came outside the ropes to meet them, his face red and sweaty, his chest heaving.

“Is your left arm wounded?” asked Edmund.

“It’s not exactly a wound,” Peter said. “I got the full weight of his shoulder on my shield — like a load of bricks — and the rim of the shield drove into my wrist. I don’t think it’s broken, but it might be a sprain. If you could tie it up very tight I think I could manage.”

While they were doing this, Edmund asked anxiously, “What do you think of him, Peter?”

“Tough,” said Peter. “Very tough. I have a chance if I can keep him on the hop till his weight and short wind come against him — in this hot sun too. To tell the truth, I haven’t much chance else. Give my love to — to everyone at home, Ed, if he gets me. Here he comes into the lists again. So long, old chap. Good-bye, Doctor. And I say, Ed, say something specially nice to Trumpkin. He’s been a brick.”

Edmund couldn’t speak. He walked back with the Doctor to his own lines with a sick feeling in his stomach.

But the new bout went well. Peter now seemed to be able to make some use of his shield, and he certainly made good use of his feet. He was almost playing Tig with Miraz now, keeping out of range, shifting his ground, making the enemy work.

“Coward!” booed the Telmarines. “Why don’t you stand up to him? Don’t you like it, eh? Thought you’d come to fight, not dance. Yah!”

“Oh, I do hope he won’t listen to them,” said Caspian.

“Not he,” said Edmund. “You don’t know him — Oh!” — for Miraz had got in a blow at last, on Peter’s helmet. Peter staggered, slipped sideways and fell on one knee. The roar of the Telmarines rose like the noise of the sea. “Now, Miraz,” they yelled. “Now. Quick! Quick! Kill him.” But indeed there was no need to egg the usurper on. He was on top of Peter already. Edmund bit his lips till the blood came, as the sword flashed down on Peter. It looked as if it would slash off his head. Thank heavens! it had glanced down his right shoulder. The Dwarf-wrought mail was sound and did not break.

“Great Scott!” cried Edmund. “He’s up again. Peter, go it, Peter.”

“I couldn’t see what happened,” said the Doctor. “How did he do it?”

“Grabbed Miraz’s arm as it came down,” said Trumpkin, dancing with delight. “There’s a man for you! Uses his enemy’s arm as a ladder. The High King! The High King! Up, Old Narnia!”

“Look,” said Trufflehunter. “Miraz is angry. It is good.”

They were certainly at it hammer and tongs now: such a flurry of blows that it seemed impossible for either not to be killed. As the excitement grew, the shouting almost died away. The spectators were holding their breath. It was most horrible and most magnificent.

A great shout arose from the Old Narnians. Miraz was down — not struck by Peter, but face downwards, having tripped on a tussock. Peter stepped back, waiting for him to rise.

"Oh bother, bother, bother," said Edmund to himself. "Need he be as gentlemanly as all that? I suppose he must. Comes of being a Knight *and* a High King. I suppose it is what Aslan would like. But that brute will be up again in a minute and then — —"

But "that brute" never rose. The Lords Glozelle and Sopespian had their own plans ready. As soon as they saw their King down they leaped into the lists crying, "Treachery! Treachery! The Narnian traitor has stabbed him in the back while he lay helpless. To arms! To arms, Telmar!"

Peter hardly understood what was happening. He saw two big men running towards him with drawn swords. Then the third Telmarine had leaped over the ropes on his left. "To arms, Narnia! Treachery!" Peter shouted. If all three had set upon him at once he would never have spoken again. But Glozelle stopped to stab his own King dead where he lay: "That's for your insult, this morning," he whispered as the blade went home. Peter swung to face Sopespian, slashed his legs from under him and, with the back-cut of the same stroke, walloped off his head. Edmund was now at his side crying, "Narnia, Narnia! The Lion!" The whole Telmarine army was rushing towards them. But now the Giant was stamping forward, stooping low and swinging his club. The Centaurs charged. *Twang, twang* behind and *hiss, hiss* overhead came the archery of Dwarfs. Trumpkin was fighting at his left. Full battle was joined.

"Come back, Reepicheep, you little ass!" shouted Peter. "You'll only be killed. This is no place for mice." But the ridiculous little creatures were dancing in and out among the feet of both armies, jabbing with their swords. Many a Telmarine warrior that day felt his foot suddenly pierced as if by a dozen skewers, hopped on one leg cursing the pain, and fell as often as not. If he fell, the mice finished him off; if he did not, someone else did.

But almost before the old Narnians were really warmed to their work they found the enemy giving way. Tough-looking warriors turned white, gazed in terror not on the Old Narnians but on something behind them, and then flung down their weapons, shrieking, "The Wood! The Wood! The end of the world!"

But soon neither their cries nor the sound of weapons could be heard any more, for both were drowned in the ocean-like roar of the Awakened Trees

as they plunged through the ranks of Peter's army, and then on, in pursuit of the Telmarines. Have you ever stood at the edge of a great wood on a high ridge when a wild south-wester broke over it in full fury on an autumn evening? Imagine that sound. And then imagine that the wood, instead of being fixed to one place, was rushing at you; and was no longer trees but huge people; yet still like trees because their long arms waved like branches and their heads tossed and leaves fell round them in showers. It was like that for the Telmarines. It was a little alarming even for the Narnians. In a few minutes all Miraz's followers were running down to the Great River in the hope of crossing the bridge to the town of Beruna and there defending themselves behind ramparts and closed gates.

They reached the river, but there was no bridge. It had disappeared since yesterday. Then utter panic and horror fell upon them and they all surrendered.

But what had happened to the bridge?

Early that morning, after a few hours' sleep, the girls had waked, to see Aslan standing over them and to hear his voice saying, "We will make holiday." They rubbed their eyes and looked round them. The trees had all gone but could still be seen moving away towards Aslan's How in a dark mass. Bacchus and the Maenads — his fierce, madcap girls — and Silenus were still with them. Lucy, fully rested, jumped up. Everyone was awake, everyone was laughing, flutes were playing, cymbals clashing. Animals, not Talking Animals, were crowding in upon them from every direction.

"What is it, Aslan?" said Lucy, her eyes dancing and her feet wanting to dance.

"Come, children," said he. "Ride on my back again to-day."

"Oh, lovely!" cried Lucy, and both girls climbed on to the warm golden back as they had done no-one knew how many years before. Then the whole party moved off — Aslan leading, Bacchus and his Maenads leaping, rushing, and turning somersaults, the beasts frisking round them, and Silenus and his donkey bringing up the rear.

They turned a little to the right, raced down a steep hill, and found the long Bridge of Beruna in front of them. Before they had begun to cross it, however, up out of the water came a great wet, bearded head, larger than a man's, crowned with rushes. It looked at Aslan and out of its mouth a deep voice came.

"Hail, Lord," it said. "Loose my chains."

“Who on earth is *that*?” whispered Susan.

“I think it’s the river-god, but hush,” said Lucy.

“Bacchus,” said Aslan. “Deliver him from his chains.”

“That means the bridge, I expect,” thought Lucy. And so it did. Bacchus and his people splashed forward into the shallow water, and a minute later the most curious things began happening. Great, strong trunks of ivy came curling up all the piers of the bridge, growing as quickly as a fire grows, wrapping the stones round, splitting, breaking, separating them. The walls of the bridge turned into hedges gay with hawthorn for a moment and then disappeared as the whole thing with a rush and a rumble collapsed into the swirling water. With much splashing, screaming, and laughter the revellers waded or swam or danced across the ford (“Hurrah! It’s the Ford of Beruna again now!” cried the girls) and up the bank on the far side and into the town.

Everyone in the streets fled before their faces. The first house they came to was a school: a girls’ school, where a lot of Narnian girls, with their hair done very tight and ugly tight collars round their necks and thick tickly stockings on their legs, were having a history lesson. The sort of “History” that was taught in Narnia under Miraz’s rule was duller than the truest history you ever read and less true than the most exciting adventure story.

“If you don’t attend, Gwendolen,” said the mistress, “and stop looking out of the window, I shall have to give you an order-mark.”

“But please, Miss Frizzle — —” began Gwendolen.

“Did you hear what I said, Gwendolen?” asked Miss Frizzle.

“But please, Miss Frizzle,” said Gwendolen, “there’s a LION!”

“Take two order-marks for talking nonsense,” said Miss Frizzle. “And now — —” A roar interrupted her. Ivy came curling in at the windows of the classroom. The walls became a mass of shimmering green, and leafy branches arched overhead where the ceiling had been. Miss Frizzle found she was standing on grass in a forest glade. She clutched at her desk to steady herself, and found that the desk was a rose-bush. Wild people such as she had never even imagined were crowding round her. Then she saw the Lion, screamed and fled, and with her fled her class, who were mostly dumpy, prim little girls with fat legs. Gwendolen hesitated.

“You’ll stay with us, sweetheart?” said Aslan.

“Oh, may I? Thank you, thank you,” said Gwendolen. Instantly she joined hands with two of the Maenads, who whirled her round in a merry

dance and helped her take off some of the unnecessary and uncomfortable clothes that she was wearing.

Wherever they went in the little town of Beruna it was the same. Most of the people fled, a few joined them. When they left the town they were a larger and a merrier company.

They swept on across the level fields on the north bank, or left bank, of the river. At every farm animals came out to join them. Sad old donkeys who had never known joy grew suddenly young again; chained dogs broke their chains; horses kicked their carts to pieces and came trotting along with them — clop-clop — kicking up the mud and whinnying.

At a well in a yard they met a man who was beating a boy. The stick burst into flower in the man's hand. He tried to drop it, but it stuck to his hand. His arm became a branch, his body the trunk of a tree, his feet took root. The boy, who had been crying a moment before, burst out laughing and joined them.

At a little town half-way to Beaversdam, where two rivers met, they came to another school, where a tired-looking girl was teaching arithmetic to a number of boys who looked very like pigs. She looked out of the window and saw the divine revellers singing up the street and a stab of joy went through her heart. Aslan stopped right under the window and looked up at her.

"Oh, don't, don't," she said. "I'd love to. But I mustn't. I must stick to my work. And the children would be frightened if they saw you."

"Frightened?" said the most pig-like of the boys. "Who's she talking to out of the window? Let's tell the inspector she talks to people out of the window when she ought to be teaching us."

"Let's go and see who it is," said another boy, and they all came crowding to the window. But as soon as their mean little faces looked out, Bacchus gave a great cry of *Euan, euoi-oi-oi-oi* and the boys all began howling with fright and trampling one another down to get out of the door and jumping out of the windows. And it was said afterwards (whether truly or not) that those particular little boys were never seen again, but that there were a lot of very fine little pigs in that part of the country which had never been there before.

"Now, Dear Heart," said Aslan to the Mistress: and she jumped down and joined them.

At Beaversdam they re-crossed the river and came east again along the southern bank. They came to a little cottage where a child stood in the doorway crying. “Why are you crying, my love?” asked Aslan. The child, who had never even seen a picture of a lion, was not afraid of him. “Auntie’s very ill,” she said. “She’s going to die.” Then Aslan went to go in at the door of the cottage, but it was too small for him. So, when he had got his head through, he pushed with his shoulders (Lucy and Susan fell off when he did this) and lifted the whole house up and it all fell backwards and apart. And there, still in her bed, though the bed was now in the open air, lay a little old woman who looked as if she had Dwarf blood in her. She was at death’s door, but when she opened her eyes and saw the bright, hairy head of the lion staring into her face, she did not scream or faint. She said, “Oh, Aslan! I knew it was true. I’ve been waiting for this all my life. Have you come to take me away?”

“Yes, dearest,” said Aslan. “But not the long journey yet.” And as he spoke, like the flush creeping along the underside of a cloud at sunrise, the colour came back to her white face and her eyes grew bright and she sat up and said, “Why, I do declare I feel *that* better. I think I could take a little breakfast this morning.”

“Here you are, mother,” said Bacchus, dipping a pitcher in the cottage well and handing it to her. But what was in it now was not water but the richest wine, red as red-currant jelly, smooth as oil, strong as beef, warming as tea, cool as dew.

“Eh, you’ve done something to our well,” said the old woman. “That makes a nice change, that does.” And she jumped out of bed.

“Ride on me,” said Aslan, and added to Susan and Lucy, “You two queens will have to run now.”

“But we’d like that just as well,” said Susan. And off they went again.

And so at last, with leaping and dancing and singing, with music and laughter and roaring and barking and neighing, they all came to the place where Miraz’s army stood flinging down their swords and holding up their hands, and Peter’s army, still holding their weapons and breathing hard, stood round them with stern and glad faces. And the first thing that happened was that the old woman slipped off Aslan’s back and ran across to Caspian and they embraced one another; for she was his old nurse.

Chapter XV

ASLAN MAKES A DOOR IN THE AIR

At the sight of Aslan the cheeks of the Telmarine soldiers became the colour of cold gravy, their knees knocked together, and many fell on their faces. They had not believed in lions and this made their fear greater. Even the Red Dwarfs, who knew that he came as a friend, stood with open mouths and could not speak. Some of the Black Dwarfs, who had been of Nikabrik's party, began to edge away. But all the Talking Beasts surged round the Lion, with purrs and grunts and squeaks and whinneys of delight, fawning on him with their tails, rubbing against him, touching him reverently with their noses and going to and fro under his body and between his legs. If you have ever seen a little cat loving a big dog whom it knows and trusts, you will have a pretty good picture of their behaviour. Then Peter, leading Caspian, forced his way through the crowd of animals.

"This is Caspian, Sir," he said. And Caspian knelt and kissed the Lion's paw.

"Welcome, Prince," said Aslan. "Do you feel yourself sufficient to take up the Kingship of Narnia?"

"I — I don't think I do, Sir," said Caspian. "I'm only a kid."

"Good," said Aslan. "If you had felt yourself sufficient, it would have been a proof that you were not. Therefore, under us and under the High King, you shall be King of Narnia, Lord of Cair Paravel and Emperor of the Lone Islands. You and your heirs while your race lasts. And your coronation — but what have we here?" For at that moment a curious little procession was approaching — eleven Mice, six of whom carried between them something on a litter made of branches, but the litter was no bigger than a large atlas. No-one has ever seen mice more woebegone than these. They were plastered with mud — some with blood too — and their ears were down and their whiskers drooped and their tails dragged in the grass, and their leader piped on his slender pipe a melancholy tune. On the litter lay what seemed little better than a damp heap of fur; all that was left of Reepicheep. He was still breathing, but more dead than alive, gashed with innumerable wounds, one paw crushed, and, where his tail had been, a bandaged stump.

“Now, Lucy,” said Aslan.

Lucy had her diamond bottle out in a moment. Though only a drop was needed on each of Reepicheep’s wounds, the wounds were so many that there was a long and anxious silence before she had finished and the Master Mouse sprang from the litter. His hand went at once to his sword hilt, with the other he twirled his whiskers. He bowed.

“Hail, Aslan!” came his shrill voice. “I have the honour — —” But then he suddenly stopped.

The fact was that he still had no tail — whether that Lucy had forgotten it or that her cordial, though it could heal wounds, could not make things grow again. Reepicheep became aware of his loss as he made his bow; perhaps it altered something in his balance. He looked over his right shoulder. Failing to see his tail, he strained his neck further till he had to turn his shoulders and his whole body followed. But by that time his hind quarters had turned too and were out of sight. Then he strained his neck looking over his shoulder again, with the same result. Only after he had turned completely round three times did he realise the dreadful truth.

“I am confounded,” said Reepicheep to Aslan. “I am completely out of countenance. I must crave your indulgence for appearing in this unseemly fashion.”

“It becomes you very well, Small One,” said Aslan.

“All the same,” replied Reepicheep, “if anything could be done ... Perhaps her Majesty?” and here he bowed to Lucy.

“But what do you want with a tail?” asked Aslan.

“Sir,” said the Mouse, “I can eat and sleep and die for my King without one. But a tail is the honour and glory of a Mouse.”

“I have sometimes wondered, friend,” said Aslan, “whether you do not think too much about your honour.”

“Highest of all High Kings,” said Reepicheep, “permit me to remind you that a very small size has been bestowed on us Mice, and if we did not guard our dignity, some (who weigh worth by inches) would allow themselves very unsuitable pleasantries at our expense. That is why I have been at some pains to make it known that no-one who does not wish to feel this sword as near his heart as I can reach shall talk in my presence about Traps or Toasted Cheese or Candles: no, Sir — not the tallest fool in Narnia!” Here he glared very fiercely up at Wimbleweather, but the Giant,

who was always a stage behind everyone else, had not yet discovered what was being talked about down at his feet, and so missed the point.

"Why have your followers all drawn *their* swords, may I ask?" said Aslan.

"May it please your High Majesty," said the second Mouse, whose name was Peepiceek, "we are all waiting to cut off our own tails if our Chief must go without his. We will not bear the shame of wearing an honour which is denied to the High Mouse."

"Ah!" roared Aslan. "You have conquered me. You have great hearts. Not for the sake of your dignity, Reepicheep, but for the love that is between you and your people, and still more for the kindness your people showed me long ago when you ate away the cords that bound me on the Stone Table (and it was then, though you have long forgotten it, that you began to be *Talking* Mice), you shall have your tail again."

Before Aslan had finished speaking the new tail was in its place. Then, at Aslan's command, Peter bestowed the Knighthood of the Order of the Lion on Caspian, and Caspian, as soon as he was knighted, himself bestowed it on Trufflehunter and Trumpkin and Reepicheep, and made Doctor Cornelius his Lord Chancellor, and confirmed the Bulgy Bear in his hereditary office of Marshal of the Lists. And there was great applause.

After this the Telmarine soldiers, firmly but without taunts or blows, were taken across the ford and all put under lock and key in the town of Beruna and given beef and beer. They made a great fuss about wading the river, for they all hated and feared running water just as much as they hated and feared woods and animals. But in the end the nuisance was over: and then the nicest part of that long day began.

Lucy, sitting close to Aslan and divinely comfortable, wondered what the trees were doing. At first she thought they were merely dancing; they were certainly going round slowly in two circles, one from left to right and the other from right to left. Then she noticed that they kept throwing something down in the centre of both circles. Sometimes she thought they were cutting off long strands of their hair; at other times it looked as if they were breaking off bits of their fingers — but, if so, they had plenty of fingers to spare and it did not hurt them. But whatever they were throwing down, when it reached the ground, it became brushwood or dry sticks. Then three or four of the Red Dwarfs came forward with their tinder boxes and set light to the pile, which first crackled, and then blazed, and finally roared as a

woodland bonfire on midsummer night ought to do. And everyone sat down in a wide circle around it.

Then Bacchus and Silenus and the Maenads began a dance, far wilder than the dance of the trees; not merely a dance for fun and beauty (though it was that too) but a magic dance of plenty, and where their hands touched, and where their feet fell, the feast came into existence — sides of roasted meat that filled the grove with delicious smell, and wheaten cakes and oaten cakes, honey and many-coloured sugars and cream as thick as porridge and as smooth as still water, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates, pears, grapes, strawberries, raspberries — pyramids and cataracts of fruit. Then, in great wooden cups and bowls and mazers, wreathed with ivy, came the wines; dark, thick ones like syrups of mulberry juice, and clear red ones like red jellies liquefied, and yellow wines and green wines and yellowy-green and greenish-yellow.

But for the tree people different fare was provided. When Lucy saw Clodsley Shovel and his moles scuffling up the turf in various places (which Bacchus had pointed out to them) and realised that the trees were going to eat *earth* it gave her rather a shudder. But when she saw the earths that were actually brought to them she felt quite different. They began with a rich brown loam that looked almost exactly like chocolate; so like chocolate, in fact, that Edmund tried a piece of it, but he did not find it at all nice. When the rich loam had taken the edge off their hunger, the trees turned to an earth of the kind you see in Somerset, which is almost pink. They said it was lighter and sweeter. At the cheese stage they had a chalky soil, and then went on to delicate confections of the finest gravels powdered with choice silver sand. They drank very little wine, and it made the Hollies very talkative: for the most part they quenched their thirst with deep draughts of mingled dew and rain, flavoured with forest flowers and the airy taste of the thinnest clouds.

Thus Aslan feasted the Narnians till long after the sunset had died away, and the stars had come out; and the great fire, now hotter but less noisy, shone like a beacon in the dark woods, and the frightened Telmarines saw it from far away and wondered what it might mean. The best thing of all about this feast was that there was no breaking up or going away, but as the talk grew quieter and slower, one after another would begin to nod and finally drop off to sleep with feet towards the fire and good friends on either side, till at last there was silence all round the circle, and the chattering of

water over stone at the Fords of Beruna could be heard once more. But all night Aslan and the Moon gazed upon each other with joyful and unblinking eyes.

Next day messengers (who were chiefly squirrels and birds) were sent all over the country with a proclamation to the scattered Telmarines — including, of course, the prisoners in Beruna. They were told that Caspian was now King and that Narnia would henceforth belong to the Talking Beasts and the Dwarfs and Dryads and Fauns and other creatures quite as much as to the men. Any who chose to stay under the new conditions might do so; but for those who did not like the idea, Aslan would provide another home. Anyone who wished to go there must come to Aslan and the Kings at the Fords of Beruna by noon on the fifth day. You may imagine that this caused plenty of head-scratching among the Telmarines. Some of them, chiefly the young ones, had, like Caspian, heard stories of the Old Days and were delighted that they had come back. They were already making friends with the creatures. These all decided to stay in Narnia. But most of the older men, especially those who had been important under Miraz, were sulky and had no wish to live in a country where they could not rule the roast. “Live here with a lot of blooming performing animals! No fear,” they said. “And ghosts too,” some added with a shudder. “That’s what those there Dryads really are. It’s not canny.” They were also suspicious. “I don’t trust ’em,” they said. “Not with that awful Lion and all. He won’t keep his claws off us long, *you’ll* see.” But then they were equally suspicious of his offer to give them a new home. “Take us off to his den and eat us one by one most likely,” they muttered. And the more they talked to one another the sulkier and more suspicious they became. But on the appointed day more than half of them turned up.

At one end of the glade Aslan had caused to be set up two stakes of wood, higher than a man’s head and about three feet apart. A third, and lighter, piece of wood was bound across them at the top uniting them, so that the whole thing looked like a doorway from nowhere into nowhere. In front of this stood Aslan himself with Peter on his right and Caspian on his left. Grouped round them were Susan and Lucy, Trumpkin and Trufflehunter, the Lord Cornelius, Glenstorm, Reepicheep and others. The children and the Dwarfs had made good use of the royal wardrobes in what had been the castle of Miraz and was now the castle of Caspian, and what with silk and cloth of gold, with snowy linen glancing through slashed

sleeves, with silver mail shirts and jewelled sword-hilts, with gilt helmets and feathered bonnets, they were almost too bright to look at. Even the beasts wore rich chains about their necks. Yet nobody's eyes were on them or the children. The living and strokable gold of Aslan's mane outshone them all. The rest of the Old Narnians stood down each side of the glade. At the far end stood the Telmarines. The sun shone brightly and pennants fluttered in the light wind.

"Men of Telmar," said Aslan, "you who seek a new land, hear my words. I will send you all to your own country, which I know and you do not."

"We don't remember Telmar. We don't know where it is. We don't know what it is like," grumbled the Telmarines.

"You came into Narnia out of Telmar," said Aslan. "But you came into Telmar from another place. You do not belong to this world at all. You came hither, certain generations ago, out of that same world to which the High King Peter belongs."

At this, half the Telmarines began whimpering, "There you are. Told you so. He's going to kill us all, send us right out of the world," and the other half began throwing out their chests and slapping one another on the back and whispering, "There you are. Might have guessed we didn't belong to this place with all its queer, nasty, unnatural creatures. We're of royal blood, you'll see." And even Caspian and Cornelius and the children turned to Aslan with looks of amazement on their faces.

"Peace," said Aslan in the low voice which was nearest to his growl. The earth seemed to shake a little and every living thing in the grove became still as stone.

"You, Sir Caspian," said Aslan, "might have known that you could be no true King of Narnia unless, like the Kings of old, you were a son of Adam and came from the world of Adam's sons. And so you are. Many years ago in that world, in a deep sea of that world which is called the South Sea, a shipload of pirates were driven by storm on an island. And there they did as pirates would: killed the natives and took the native women for wives, and made palm wine, and drank and were drunk, and lay in the shade of the palm trees, and woke up and quarrelled, and sometimes killed one another. And in one of these frays six were put to flight by the rest and fled with their women into the centre of the island and up a mountain, and went, as they thought, into a cave to hide. But it was one of the magical places of that world, one of the chinks or chasms between that world and this. There

were many chinks or chasms between worlds in old times, but they have grown rarer. This was one of the last: I do not say *the* last. And so they fell, or rose, or blundered, or dropped right through, and found themselves in this world, in the Land of Telmar which was then unpeopled. But why it was unpeopled is a long story: I will not tell it now. And in Telmar their descendants lived and became a fierce and proud people; and after many generations there was a famine in Telmar and they invaded Narnia, which was then in some disorder (but that also would be a long story), and conquered it and ruled it. Do you mark all this well, King Caspian?"

"I do indeed, Sir," said Caspian. "I was wishing that I came of a more honourable lineage."

"You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve," said Aslan. "And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth. Be content."

Caspian bowed.

"And now," said Aslan, "you men and women of Telmar, will you go back to that island in the world of men from which your fathers first came? It is no bad place. The race of those pirates who first found it has died out, and it is without inhabitants. There are good wells of fresh water, and fruitful soil, and timber for building, and fish in the lagoons; and the other men of that world have not yet discovered it. The chasm is open for your return; but this I must warn you, that once you have gone through, it will close behind you for ever. There will be no more commerce between the worlds by that door."

There was silence for a moment. Then a burly, decent-looking fellow among the Telmarine soldiers pushed forward and said:

"Well, I'll take the offer."

"It is well chosen," said Aslan. "And because you have spoken first, strong magic is upon you. Your future in that world shall be good. Come forth."

The man, now a little pale, came forward. Aslan and his court drew aside, leaving him free access to the empty doorway of the stakes.

"Go through it, my son," said Aslan, bending towards him and touching the man's nose with his own. As soon as the Lion's breath came about him, a new look came into the man's eyes — startled, but not unhappy — as if he were trying to remember something. Then he squared his shoulders and walked into the Door.

Everyone’s eyes were fixed on him. They saw the three pieces of wood, and through them the trees and grass and sky of Narnia. They saw the man between the doorposts: then, in one second, he had vanished utterly.

From the other end of the glade the remaining Telmarines set up a wailing. “Ugh! What’s happened to him? Do you mean to murder us? We won’t go that way.” And then one of the clever Telmarines said:

“We don’t see any other world through those sticks. If you want us to believe in it, why doesn’t one of *you* go? All your own friends are keeping well away from the sticks.”

Instantly Reepicheep stood forward and bowed. “If *my* example can be of any service, Aslan,” he said, “I will take eleven mice through that arch at your bidding without a moment’s delay.”

“Nay, little one,” said Aslan, laying his velvety paw ever so lightly on Reepicheep’s head. “They would do dreadful things to you in that world. They would show you at fairs. It is others who must lead.”

“Come on,” said Peter suddenly to Edmund and Lucy. “Our time’s up.”

“What do you mean?” said Edmund.

“This way,” said Susan, who seemed to know all about it. “Back into the trees. We’ve got to change.”

“Change what?” asked Lucy.

“Our clothes, of course,” said Susan. “Nice fools we’d look on the platform of an English station in *these*.”

“But our other things are at Caspian’s castle,” said Edmund.

“No, they’re not,” said Peter, still leading the way into the thickest wood. “They’re all here. They were brought down in bundles this morning. It’s all arranged.”

“Was that what Aslan was talking to you and Susan about this morning?” asked Lucy.

“Yes — that and other things,” said Peter, his face very solemn. “I can’t tell it to you all. There were things he wanted to say to Su and me because we’re not coming back to Narnia.”

“Never?” cried Edmund and Lucy in dismay.

“Oh, you two are,” answered Peter. “At least, from what he said, I’m pretty sure he means you to get back some day. But not Su and me. He says we’re getting too old.”

“Oh, Peter,” said Lucy. “What awful bad luck. Can you bear it?”

“Well, I think I can,” said Peter. “It’s all rather different from what I thought. You’ll understand when it comes to your last time. But, quick, here are our things.”

It was odd, and not very nice, to take off their royal clothes and to come back in their school things (not very fresh now) into that great assembly. One or two of the nastier Telmarines jeered. But the other creatures all cheered and rose up in honour of Peter the High King, and Queen Susan of the Horn, and King Edmund and Queen Lucy. There were affectionate and (on Lucy’s part) tearful farewells with all their old friends — animal kisses, and hugs from Bulgy Bears, and hands wrung by Trumpkin, and a last tickly, whiskerish embrace with Trufflehunter. And of course Caspian offered the Horn back to Susan and of course Susan told him to keep it. And then, wonderfully and terribly, it was farewell to Aslan himself, and Peter took his place with Susan’s hands on his shoulders and Edmund’s on hers and Lucy’s on his and the first of the Telmarine’s on Lucy’s, and so in a long line they moved forward to the Door. After that came a moment which is hard to describe, for the children seemed to be seeing three things at once. One was the mouth of a cave opening into the glaring green and blue of an island in the Pacific, where all the Telmarines would find themselves the moment they were through the Door. The second was a glade in Narnia, the faces of Dwarfs and Beasts, the deep eyes of Aslan, and the white patches on the Badger’s cheeks. But the third (which rapidly swallowed up the other two) was the grey, gravelly surface of a platform in a country station, and a seat with luggage round it, where they were all sitting as if they had never moved from it — a little flat and dreary for a moment after all they had been through, but also, unexpectedly, nice in its own way, what with the familiar railway smell and the English sky and the summer term before them.

“Well!” said Peter. “We *have* had a time.”

“Bother!” said Edmund. “I’ve left my new torch in Narnia.”

THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER (1952)



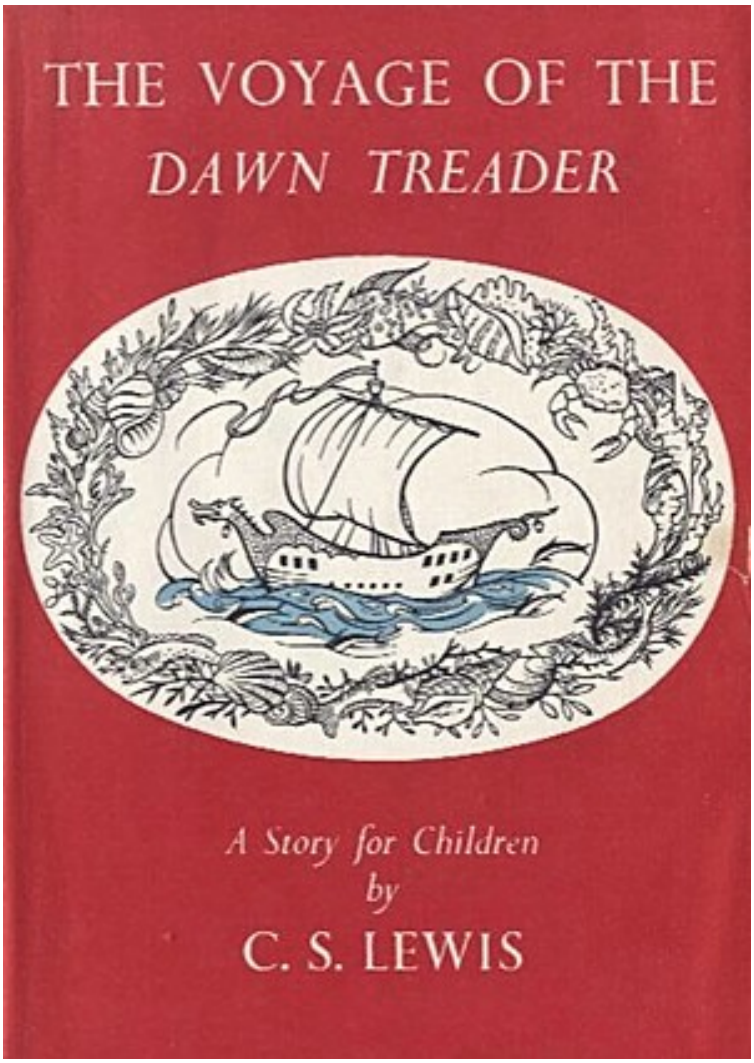
The Voyage of the Dawn Treader was initially published by Geoffrey Bles in 1952. It is volume five in recent editions, though the third to be released in publication order. Lewis dedicated the novel to Geoffrey Corbett, the foster-son of Owen Barfield, Lewis' friend, teacher, adviser and trustee.

The novel reveals Lewis' Irish background, being reminiscent of the Immram genre of Irish literature. However, unlike such voyages, the Dawn Treader travels East rather than West. The narrative concerns Edmund and Lucy Pevensie's second return to the Narnia world — three years later in Narnia and one year later in England. Lucy and Edmund, the younger two of the four English children featured in the first two books, are staying with their unpleasant cousin Eustace Scrubb. One day, Edmund, Lucy and Eustace are drawn into the Narnian world through a picture of a ship at sea hanging neglected in the guest bedroom in which Lucy is staying. The three children land in the ocean near the pictured vessel, the titular Dawn Treader, and are taken aboard.

The Dawn Treader is the ship of Caspian X, King of Narnia, who was the key character in the previous novel, *Prince Caspian*. Three years have passed and peace has been established in Narnia; Caspian has undertaken a quest in fulfilment of his coronation oath to find the seven lost Lords of Narnia. Lucy and Edmund are delighted to be back in the Narnian world, but Eustace is less enthusiastic, as he has never been there before and had taunted his cousins with his belief that this alternate universe had never existed.

Critics have identified how, in contrast to other Narnia books, *The Voyager Dawn Treader* has virtually no overt villains, other than the slavers in the very beginning. Instead, the plot confronts the protagonists again and again with the flaws of their own character. Eustace's greediness and general bad behaviour cause him to turn into a dragon and he must work hard to show himself worthy of becoming human again; Caspian is tempted to seize the magic pool which turns everything to gold – which would have turned Caspian himself into a greedy tyrant ready to kill in order to preserve

his power and wealth; later, Caspian faces the nobler but still wrong-headed temptation to go off to Aslan’s Country and abandon his responsibilities as a King; Lucy is tempted to make herself magically beautiful, which would have led to her becoming the focus of terrible wars, devastating Narnia and all its neighbours.



The first edition

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Chapter I

THE PICTURE IN THE BEDROOM

There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it. His parents called him Eustace Clarence and masters called him Scrubb. I can't tell you how his friends spoke to him, for he had none. He didn't call his Father and Mother "Father" and "Mother", but Harold and Alberta. They were very up-to-date and advanced people. They were vegetarians, non-smokers and teetotallers and wore a special kind of underclothes. In their house there was very little furniture and very few clothes on the beds and the windows were always open.

Eustace Clarence liked animals, especially beetles, if they were dead and pinned on a card. He liked books if they were books of information and had pictures of grain elevators or of fat foreign children doing exercises in model schools.

Eustace Clarence disliked his cousins the four Pevensies, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. But he was quite glad when he heard that Edmund and Lucy were coming to stay. For deep down inside him he liked bossing and bullying; and, though he was a puny little person who couldn't have stood up even to Lucy, let alone Edmund, in a fight, he knew that there are dozens of ways to give people a bad time if you are in your own home and they are only visitors.

Edmund and Lucy did not at all want to come and stay with Uncle Harold and Aunt Alberta. But it really couldn't be helped. Father had got a job lecturing in America for sixteen weeks that summer, and Mother was to go with him because she hadn't had a real holiday for ten years. Peter was working very hard for an exam and he was to spend the holidays being coached by old Professor Kirke in whose house these four children had had wonderful adventures long ago in the war years. If he had still been in that house he would have had them all to stay. But he had somehow become poor since the old days and was living in a small cottage with only one bedroom to spare. It would have cost too much money to take the other three all to America, and Susan had gone. Grown-ups thought her the pretty one of the family and she was no good at school work (though otherwise very old for her age) and Mother said she "would get far more out of a trip

to America than the youngsters". Edmund and Lucy tried not to grudge Susan her luck, but it was dreadful having to spend the summer holidays at their Aunt's. "But it's far worse for me," said Edmund, "because you'll at least have a room of your own and I shall have to share a bedroom with that record stinker, Eustace."

The story begins on an afternoon when Edmund and Lucy were stealing a few precious minutes alone together. And of course they were talking about Narnia, which was the name of their own private and secret country. Most of us, I suppose, have a secret country but for most of us it is only an imaginary country. Edmund and Lucy were luckier than other people in that respect. Their secret country was real. They had already visited it twice; not in a game or a dream, but in reality. They had got there of course by Magic, which is the only way of getting to Narnia. And a promise, or very nearly a promise, had been made them in Narnia itself that they would some day get back. You may imagine that they talked about it a good deal, when they got the chance.

They were in Lucy's room, sitting on the edge of her bed and looking at a picture on the opposite wall. It was the only picture in the house that they liked. Aunt Alberta didn't like it at all (that was why it was put away in a little back room upstairs), but she couldn't get rid of it because it had been a wedding present from someone she did not want to offend.

It was a picture of a ship — a ship sailing nearly straight towards you. Her prow was gilded and shaped like the head of a dragon with wide open mouth. She had only one mast and one large, square sail which was a rich purple. The sides of the ship — what you could see of them where the gilded wings of the dragon ended — were green. She had just run up to the top of one glorious blue wave, and the nearer slope of that wave came down towards you, with streaks and bubbles on it. She was obviously running fast before a gay wind, listing over a little on her port side. (By the way, if you are going to read this story at all, and if you don't know already, you had better get it into your head that the left of a ship when you are looking ahead, is *port*, and the right is *starboard*.) All the sunlight fell on her from that side, and the water on that side was full of greens and purples. On the other, it was darker blue from the shadow of the ship.

"The question is," said Edmund, "whether it doesn't make things worse, *looking* at a Narnian ship when you can't get there."

“Even looking is better than nothing,” said Lucy. “And she is such a very Narnian ship.”

“Still playing your old game?” said Eustace Clarence, who had been listening outside the door and now came grinning into the room. Last year, when he had been staying with the Pevensies, he had managed to hear them all talking of Narnia and he loved teasing them about it. He thought of course that they were making it all up; and as he was far too stupid to make anything up himself, he did not approve of that.

“You’re not wanted here,” said Edmund curtly.

“I’m trying to think of a limerick,” said Eustace. “Something like this:

“Some kids who played games about Narnia
Got gradually balmier and balmier — —”

“Well, *Narnia* and *balmier* don’t rhyme, to begin with,” said Lucy.

“It’s an assonance,” said Eustace.

“Don’t ask him what an assy-thingummy is,” said Edmund. “He’s only longing to be asked. Say nothing and perhaps he’ll go away.”

Most boys, on meeting a reception like this, would either have cleared out or flared up. Eustace did neither. He just hung about grinning, and presently began talking again.

“Do you like that picture?” he asked.

“For Heaven’s sake don’t let him get started about Art and all that,” said Edmund hurriedly, but Lucy, who was very truthful, had already said, “Yes, I do. I like it very much.”

“It’s a rotten picture,” said Eustace.

“You won’t see it if you step outside,” said Edmund.

“Why do you like it?” said Eustace to Lucy.

“Well, for one thing,” said Lucy, “I like it because the ship looks as if it was really moving. And the water looks as if it was really wet. And the waves look as if they were really going up and down.”

Of course Eustace knew lots of answers to this, but he didn’t say anything. The reason was that at that very moment he looked at the waves and saw that they did look very much indeed as if they were going up and down. He had only once been in a ship (and then only as far as the Isle of Wight) and had been horribly seasick. The look of the waves in the picture

made him feel sick again. He turned rather green and tried another look. And then all three children were staring with open mouths.

What they were seeing may be hard to believe when you read it in print, but it was almost as hard to believe when you saw it happening. The things in the picture were moving. It didn't look at all like a cinema either; the colours were too real and clean and out-of-door for that. Down went the prow of the ship into the wave and up went a great shock of spray. And then up went the wave behind her, and her stern and her deck became visible for the first time, and then disappeared as the next wave came to meet her and her bows went up again. At the same moment an exercise book which had been lying beside Edmund on the bed flapped, rose and sailed through the air to the wall behind him, and Lucy felt all her hair whipping round her face as it does on a windy day. And this was a windy day; but the wind was blowing out of the picture towards them. And suddenly with the wind came the noises — the swishing of waves and the slap of water against the ship's sides and the creaking and the over-all high, steady roar of air and water. But it was the smell, the wild, briny smell, which really convinced Lucy that she was not dreaming.

"Stop it," came Eustace's voice, squeaky with fright and bad temper. "It's some silly trick you two are playing. Stop it. I'll tell Alberta — ow!"

The other two were much more accustomed to adventures, but, just exactly as Eustace Clarence said "Ow," they both said "Ow" too. The reason was that a great cold, salt splash had broken right out of the frame and they were breathless from the smack of it, besides being wet through.

"I'll smash the rotten thing," cried Eustace; and then several things happened at the same time. Eustace rushed towards the picture. Edmund, who knew something about magic, sprang after him, warning him to look out and not to be a fool. Lucy grabbed at him from the other side and was dragged forward. And by this time either they had grown much smaller or the picture had grown bigger. Eustace jumped to try to pull it off the wall and found himself standing on the frame; in front of him was not glass but real sea, and wind and waves rushing up to the frame as they might to a rock. He lost his head and clutched at the other two who had jumped up beside him. There was a second of struggling and shouting, and just as they thought they had got their balance a great blue roller surged up round them, swept them off their feet, and drew them down into the sea. Eustace's despairing cry suddenly ended as the water got into his mouth.

Lucy thanked her stars that she had worked hard at her swimming last summer term. It is true that she would have got on much better if she had used a slower stroke, and also that the water felt a great deal colder than it had looked while it was only a picture. Still, she kept her head and kicked her shoes off, as everyone ought to do who falls into deep water in their clothes. She even kept her mouth shut and her eyes open. They were still quite near the ship; she saw its green side towering high above them, and people looking at her from the deck. Then, as one might have expected, Eustace clutched at her in a panic and down they both went.

When they came up again she saw a white figure diving off the ship's side. Edmund was close beside her now, treading water, and had caught the arms of the howling Eustace. Then someone else, whose face was vaguely familiar, slipped an arm under her from the other side. There was a lot of shouting going on from the ship, heads crowding together above the bulwarks, ropes being thrown. Edmund and the stranger were fastening ropes round her. After that followed what seemed a very long delay during which her face got blue and her teeth began chattering. In reality the delay was not very long; they were waiting till the moment when she could be got on board the ship without being dashed against its side. Even with all their best endeavours she had a bruised knee when she finally stood, dripping and shivering, on the deck. After her Edmund was heaved up, and then the miserable Eustace. Last of all came the stranger — a golden-headed boy some years older than herself.

"Ca — Ca — Caspian!" gasped Lucy as soon as she had breath enough. For Caspian it was; Caspian, the boy king of Narnia whom they had helped to set on the throne during their last visit. Immediately Edmund recognised him too. All three shook hands and clapped one another on the back with great delight.

"But who is your friend?" said Caspian almost at once, turning to Eustace with his cheerful smile. But Eustace was crying much harder than any boy of his age has a right to cry when nothing worse than a wetting has happened to him, and would only yell out, "Let me go. Let me go back. I don't *like* it."

"Let you go?" said Caspian. "But where?"

Eustace rushed to the ship's side, as if he expected to see the picture frame hanging above the sea, and perhaps a glimpse of Lucy's bedroom. What he saw was blue waves flecked with foam, and paler blue sky, both

spreading without a break to the horizon. Perhaps we can hardly blame him if his heart sank. He was promptly sick.

“Hey! Rynelf,” said Caspian to one of the sailors. “Bring spiced wine for their Majesties. You’ll need something to warm you after that dip.” He called Edmund and Lucy their Majesties because they and Peter and Susan had all been Kings and Queens of Narnia long before his time. Narnian time flows differently from ours. If you spent a hundred years in Narnia, you would still come back to our world at the very same hour of the very same day on which you left. And then, if you went back to Narnia after spending a week here, you might find that a thousand Narnian years had passed, or only a day, or no time at all. You never know till you get there. Consequently, when the Pevensie children had returned to Narnia last time for their second visit, it was (for the Narnians) as if King Arthur came back to Britain, as some people say he will. And I say the sooner the better.

Rynelf returned with the spiced wine steaming in a flagon and four silver cups. It was just what one wanted, and as Lucy and Edmund sipped it they could feel the warmth going right down to their toes. But Eustace made faces and spluttered and spat it out and was sick again and began to cry again and asked if they hadn’t any Plumptree’s Vitaminised Nerve Food and could it be made with distilled water and anyway he insisted on being put ashore at the next station.

“This is a merry shipmate you’ve brought us, Brother,” whispered Caspian to Edmund with a chuckle; but before he could say anything more Eustace burst out again.

“Oh! Ugh! What on earth’s *that*! Take it away, the horrid thing.”

He really had some excuse this time for feeling a little surprised. Something very curious indeed had come out of the cabin in the poop and was slowly approaching them. You might call it — and indeed it was — a Mouse. But then it was a Mouse on its hind legs and stood about two feet high. A thin band of gold passed round its head under one ear and over the other and in this was stuck a long crimson feather. (As the Mouse’s fur was very dark, almost black, the effect was bold and striking.) Its left paw rested on the hilt of a sword very nearly as long as its tail. Its balance, as it paced gravely along the swaying deck, was perfect, and its manners courtly. Lucy and Edmund recognised it at once — Reepicheep, the most valiant of all the Talking Beasts of Narnia and the Chief Mouse. It had won undying glory in the second Battle of Beruna. Lucy longed, as she had always done, to take

Reepicheep up in her arms and cuddle him. But this, as she well knew, was a pleasure she could never have: it would have offended him deeply. Instead, she went down on one knee to talk to him.

Reepicheep put forward his left leg, drew back his right, bowed, kissed her hand, straightened himself, twirled his whiskers, and said in his shrill, piping voice:

"My humble duty to your Majesty. And to King Edmund, too." (Here he bowed again.) "Nothing except your Majesties' presence was lacking to this glorious venture."

"Ugh, take it away," wailed Eustace. "I hate mice. And I never could bear performing animals. They're silly and vulgar and — and sentimental."

"Am I to understand," said Reepicheep to Lucy after a long stare at Eustace, "that this singularly discourteous person is under your Majesty's protection? Because, if not — —"

At this moment Lucy and Edmund both sneezed.

"What a fool I am to keep you all standing here in your wet things," said Caspian. "Come on below and get changed. I'll give you up my cabin of course, Lucy, but I'm afraid we have no women's clothes on board. You'll have to make do with some of mine. Lead the way, Reepicheep, like a good fellow."

"To the convenience of a lady," said Reepicheep, "even a question of honour must give way — at least for the moment — —" and here he looked very hard at Eustace. But Caspian hustled them on and in a few minutes Lucy found herself passing through the door into the stern cabin. She fell in love with it at once — the three square windows that looked out on the blue, swirling water astern, the low cushioned benches round three sides of the table, the swinging silver lamp overhead (Dwarfs' work, she knew at once by its exquisite delicacy) and the flat gold image of Aslan the Lion on the forward wall above the door. All this she took in in a flash, for Caspian immediately opened a door on the starboard side, and said, "This'll be your room, Lucy. I'll just get some dry things for myself" — he was rummaging in one of the lockers while he spoke— "and then leave you to change. If you'll fling your wet things outside the door I'll get them taken to the galley to be dried."

Lucy found herself as much at home as if she had been in Caspian's cabin for weeks, and the motion of the ship did not worry her, for in the old days when she had been a queen in Narnia she had done a good deal of

voyaging. The cabin was very tiny but bright with painted panels (all birds and beasts and crimson dragons and vines) and spotlessly clean. Caspian’s clothes were too big for her, but she could manage. His shoes, sandals and sea-boots were hopelessly big but she did not mind going barefoot on board ship. When she had finished dressing she looked out of her window at the water rushing past and took in long deep breath. She felt quite sure they were in for a lovely time.

Chapter II

ON BOARD THE DAWN TREADER

“Ah, there you are, Lucy,” said Caspian. “We were just waiting for you. This is my captain, the Lord Drinian.”

A dark-haired man went down on one knee and kissed her hand. The only others present were Reepicheep and Edmund.

“Where is Eustace?” asked Lucy.

“In bed,” said Edmund, “and I don’t think we can do anything for him. It only makes him worse if you try to be nice to him.”

“Meanwhile,” said Caspian, “we want to talk.”

“By Jove, we do,” said Edmund. “And first, about time. It’s a year ago by our time since we left you just before your coronation. How long has it been in Narnia?”

“Exactly three years,” said Caspian.

“All going well?” asked Edmund.

“You don’t suppose I’d have left my kingdom and put to sea unless all was well,” answered the King. “It couldn’t be better. There’s no trouble at all now between Telmarines, Dwarfs, Talking Beasts, Fauns and the rest. And we gave those troublesome giants on the frontier such a good beating last summer that they pay us tribute now. And I had an excellent person to leave as Regent while I’m away — Trumpkin, the Dwarf. You remember him?”

“Dear Trumpkin,” said Lucy, “of course I do. You couldn’t have made a better choice.”

“Loyal as a badger, Ma’am, and valiant as — as a Mouse,” said Drinian. He had been going to say “as a lion” but had noticed Reepicheep’s eyes fixed on him.

“And where are we heading for?” asked Edmund.

“Well,” said Caspian, “that’s rather a long story. Perhaps you remember that when I was a child my usurping uncle Miraz got rid of seven friends of my father’s (who might have taken my part) by sending them off to explore the unknown Eastern Seas beyond the Lone Islands.”

“Yes,” said Lucy, “and none of them ever came back.”

“Right. Well, on my coronation day, with Aslan’s approval, I swore an oath that, if once I established peace in Narnia, I would sail east myself for a year and a day to find my father’s friends or to learn of their deaths and avenge them if I could. These were their names — the Lord Revilian, the Lord Bern, the Lord Argoz, the Lord Mavramorn, the Lord Octesian, the Lord Restimar, and — oh, that other one who’s so hard to remember.”

“The Lord Rhoop, Sire,” said Drinian.

“Rhoop, Rhoop, of course,” said Caspian. “That is my main intention. But Reepicheep here has an even higher hope.” Everyone’s eyes turned to the Mouse.

“As high as my spirit,” it said. “Though perhaps as small as my stature. Why should we not come to the very eastern end of the world? And what might we find there? I expect to find Aslan’s own country. It is always from the east, across the sea, that the great Lion comes to us.”

“I say, that *is* an idea,” said Edmund in an awed voice.

“But do you think,” said Lucy, “Aslan’s country would be that sort of country — I mean, the sort you could ever *sail* to?”

“I do not know, Madam,” said Reepicheep. “But there is this. When I was in my cradle a wood woman, a Dryad, spoke this verse over me:

“Where sky and water meet,
Where the waves grow sweet,
Doubt not, Reepicheep,
To find all you seek,
There is the utter East.

“I do not know what it means. But the spell of it has been on me all my life.”

After a short silence Lucy asked, “And where are we now, Caspian?”

“The Captain can tell you better than I,” said Caspian, so Drinian got out his chart and spread it on the table.

“That’s our position,” he said, laying his finger on it. “Or was at noon today. We had a fair wind from Cair Paravel and stood a little north for Galma, which we made on the next day. We were in port for a week, for the Duke of Galma made a great tournament for His Majesty and there he unhorsed many knights — —”

“And got a few nasty falls myself, Drinian. Some of the bruises are there still,” put in Caspian.

“ — And unhorsed many knights,” repeated Drinian with a grin. “We thought the Duke would have been pleased if the King’s Majesty would have married his daughter, but nothing came of that — —”

“Squints, and has freckles,” said Caspian.

“Oh, poor girl,” said Lucy.

“And we sailed from Galma,” continued Drinian, “and ran into a calm for the best of two days and had to row, and then had wind again and did not make Terebinthia till the fourth day from Galma. And there their King sent out a warning not to land for there was sickness in Terebinthia, but we doubled the cape and put in at a little creek far from the city and watered. Then we had to lie off for three days before we got a south-east wind and stood out for Seven Isles. The third day out a pirate (Terebinthian by her rig) overhauled us, but when she saw us well armed she stood off after some shooting of arrows on either part — —”

“And we ought to have given her chase and boarded her and hanged every mother’s son of them,” said Reepicheep.

“ — And in five days more we were in sight of Muil which, as you know, is the westernmost of the Seven Isles. Then we rowed through the straits and came about sundown into Redhaven on the isle of Brenn, where we were very lovingly feasted and had victual and water at will. We left Redhaven six days ago and have made marvellously good speed, so that I hope to see the Lone Islands the day after to-morrow. The sum is, we are now nearly thirty days at sea and have sailed more than four hundred leagues from Narnia.”

“And after the Lone Islands?” said Lucy.

“No one knows, your Majesty,” answered Drinian. “Unless the Lone Islanders themselves can tell us.”

“They couldn’t in our days,” said Edmund.

“Then,” said Reepicheep, “it is after the Lone Islands that the adventure really begins.”

Caspian now suggested that they might like to be shown over the ship before supper, but Lucy’s conscience smote her and she said, “I think I really must go and see Eustace. Seasickness is horrid, you know. If I had my old cordial with me I could cure him.”

“But you have,” said Caspian. “I’d quite forgotten about it. As you left it behind I thought it might be regarded as one of the royal treasures and so I brought it — if you think it ought to be wasted on a thing like seasickness.”

“It’ll only take a drop,” said Lucy.

Caspian opened one of the lockers beneath the bench and brought out the beautiful little diamond flask which Lucy remembered so well. “Take back your own, Queen,” he said. They then left the cabin and went out into the sunshine.

In the deck there were two large, long hatches, fore and aft of the mast, and both open, as they always were in fair weather, to let light and air into the belly of the ship. Caspian led them down a ladder into the after hatch. Here they found themselves in a place where benches for rowing ran from side to side and the light came in through the oar-holes and danced on the roof. Of course Caspian’s ship was not that horrible thing, a galley rowed by slaves. Oars were used only when wind failed or for getting in and out of harbour and everyone (except Reepicheep whose legs were too short) had often taken a turn. At each side of the ship the space under the benches was left clear for the rowers’ feet, but all down the centre there was a kind of pit which went down to the very keel and this was filled with all kinds of things — sacks of flour, casks of water and beer, barrels of pork, jars of honey, skin bottles of wine, apples, nuts, cheeses, biscuits, turnips, sides of bacon. From the roof — that is, from the under side of the deck — hung hams and strings of onions, and also the men of the watch off-duty in their hammocks. Caspian led them aft, stepping from bench to bench; at least, it was stepping for him, and something between a step and a jump for Lucy, and a real long jump for Reepicheep. In this way they came to a partition with a door in it. Caspian opened the door and led them into a cabin which filled the stern underneath the deck cabins in the poop. It was of course not so nice. It was very low and the sides sloped together as they went down so that there was hardly any floor; and though it had windows of thick glass, they were not made to open because they were under water. In fact at this very moment, as the ship pitched they were alternately golden with sunlight and dim green with the sea.

“You and I must lodge here, Edmund,” said Caspian. “We’ll leave your kinsman the bunk and sling hammocks for ourselves.”

“I beseech your Majesty — —” said Drinian.

“No, no, shipmate,” said Caspian, “we have argued all that out already. You and Rhince” (Rhince was the mate) “are sailing the ship and will have cares and labours many a night when we are singing catches or telling stories, so you and he must have the port cabin above. King Edmund and I can lie very snug here below. But how is the stranger?”

Eustace, very green in the face, scowled and asked whether there was any sign of the storm getting less. But Caspian said, “What storm?” and Drinian burst out laughing.

“Storm, young master!” he roared. “This is as fair weather as a man could ask for.”

“Who’s that?” said Eustace irritably. “Send him away. His voice goes through my head.”

“I’ve brought you something that will make you feel better, Eustace,” said Lucy.

“Oh, go away and leave me alone,” growled Eustace. But he took a drop from her flask, and though he said it was beastly stuff (the smell in the cabin when she opened it was delicious) it is certain that his face came the right colour a few moments after he had swallowed it, and he must have felt better because, instead of wailing about the storm and his head, he began demanding to be put ashore and said that at the first port he would “lodge a disposition” against them all with the British Consul. But when Reepicheep asked what a disposition was and how you lodged it (Reepicheep thought it was some new way of arranging a single combat) Eustace could only reply, “Fancy not knowing that.” In the end they succeeded in convincing Eustace that they were already sailing as fast as they could towards the nearest land they knew, and that they had no more power of sending him back to Cambridge — which was where Uncle Harold lived — than of sending him to the moon. After that he sulkily agreed to put on the fresh clothes which had been put out for him and come on deck.

Caspian now showed them over the ship, though indeed they had seen most of it already. They went up on the forecastle and saw the look-out man standing on a little shelf inside the gilded dragon’s neck and peering through its open mouth. Inside the forecastle was the galley (or ship’s kitchen) and quarters for such people as the boatswain, the carpenter, the cook and the master-archer. If you think it odd to have the galley in the bows and imagine the smoke from its chimney streaming back over the ship, that is because you are thinking of steamships where there is always a

headwind. On a sailing ship the wind is coming from behind, and anything smelly is put as far forward as possible. They were taken up to the fighting top, and at first it was rather alarming to rock to and fro there and see the deck looking small and far away beneath. You realised that if you fell there was no particular reason why you should fall on board rather than in the sea. Then they were taken to the poop, where Rhince was on duty with another man at the great tiller, and behind that the dragon's tail rose up, covered with gilding, and round inside it ran a little bench. The name of the ship was *Dawn Treader*. She was only a little bit of a thing compared with one of our ships, or even with the cogs, dromonds, carracks and galleons which Narnia had owned when Lucy and Edmund had reigned there under Peter as the High King, for nearly all navigation had died out in the reigns of Caspian's ancestors. When his uncle, Miraz the usurper, had sent the seven lords to sea, they had had to buy a Galmian ship and man it with hired Galmian sailors. But now Caspian had begun to teach the Narnians to be once more sea-faring folk, and the *Dawn Treader* was the finest ship he had built yet. She was so small that, forward of the mast, there was hardly any deck room between the central hatch and the ship's boat on one side and the hen-coop (Lucy fed the hens) on the other. But she was a beauty of her kind, a "lady" as sailors say, her lines perfect, her colours pure, and every spar and rope and pin lovingly made. Eustace of course would be pleased with nothing, and kept on boasting about liners and motor-boats and aeroplanes and submarines ("As if *he* knew anything about them," muttered Edmund), but the other two were delighted with the *Dawn Treader*, and when they turned aft to the cabin and supper, and saw the whole western sky lit up with an immense crimson sunset, and felt the quiver of the ship, and tasted the salt on their lips, and thought of unknown lands on the Eastern rim of the world, Lucy felt that she was almost too happy to speak.

What Eustace thought had best be told in his own words, for when they all got their clothes back, dried, next morning, he at once got out a little black notebook and a pencil and started to keep a diary. He always had this notebook with him and kept a record of his marks in it, for though he didn't care much about any subject for its own sake, he cared a great deal about marks and would even go to people and say, "I got so much. What did you get?" But as he didn't seem likely to get many marks on the *Dawn Treader* he now started a diary. This was the first entry.

"*August 7th*. Have now been 24 hours on this ghastly boat if it isn't a dream. All the time a frightful storm has been raging (it's a good thing I'm not seasick). Huge waves keep coming in over the front and I have seen the boat nearly go under any number of times. All the others pretend to take no notice of this, either from swank or because Harold says one of the most cowardly things ordinary people do is to shut their eyes to Facts. It's madness to come out into the sea in a rotten little thing like this. Not much bigger than a lifeboat. And, of course, absolutely primitive indoors. No proper saloon, no radio, no bathrooms, no deck-chairs. I was dragged all over it yesterday evening and it would make anyone sick to hear Caspian showing off his funny little toy boat as if it was the *Queen Mary*. I tried to tell him what real ships are like, but he's too dense. E. and L., *of course*, didn't back me up. I suppose a kid like L. doesn't realise the danger and E. is buttering up C. as everyone does here. They call him a King. I said I was a Republican but he had to ask me what that meant! He doesn't seem to know anything at all. *Needless to say* I've been put in the worst cabin of the boat, a perfect dungeon, and Lucy has been given a whole room on deck to herself, almost a nice room compared with the rest of this place. C. says that's because she's a girl. I tried to make him see what Alberta says, that all that sort of thing is really lowering girls but he was too dense. Still, he might see that I shall be ill if I'm kept in that *hole* any longer. E. says we mustn't grumble because C. is sharing it with us himself to make room for L. As if that didn't make it more crowded and far worse. Nearly forgot to say that there is also a kind of Mouse thing that gives everyone the most frightful cheek. The others can put up with it if they like but I shall twist his tail pretty soon if he tries it on me. The food is frightful too."

The trouble between Eustace and Reepicheep arrived even sooner than might have been expected. Before dinner next day, when the others were sitting round the table waiting (being at sea gives one a magnificent appetite), Eustace came rushing in, wringing his hand and shouting out:

"That little brute has half killed me. I insist on it being kept under control. I could bring an action against you, Caspian. I could order you to have it destroyed."

At the same moment Reepicheep appeared. His sword was drawn and his whiskers looked very fierce but he was as polite as ever.

“I ask your pardons all,” he said, “and especially her Majesty’s. If I had known that he would take refuge here I would have awaited a more reasonable time for his correction.”

“What on earth’s up?” asked Edmund.

What had really happened was this. Reepicheep, who never felt that the ship was getting on fast enough, loved to sit on the bulwarks far forward just beside the dragon’s head, gazing out at the eastern horizon and singing softly in his little chirruping voice the song the Dryad had made for him. He never held on to anything, however the ship pitched, and kept his balance with perfect ease; perhaps his long tail, hanging down to the deck inside the bulwarks, made this easier. Everyone on board was familiar with this habit, and the sailors liked it because when one was on look-out duty it gave one somebody to talk to. Why exactly Eustace had slipped and reeled and stumbled all the way forward to the forecastle (he had not yet got his sea-legs) I never heard. Perhaps he hoped he would see land, or perhaps he wanted to hang about the galley and scrounge something. Anyway, as soon as he saw that long tail hanging down — and perhaps it was rather tempting — he thought it would be delightful to catch hold of it, swing Reepicheep round by it once or twice upside-down, then run away and laugh. At first the plan seemed to work beautifully. The Mouse was not much heavier than a very large cat. Eustace had him off the rail in a trice and very silly he looked (thought Eustace) with his little limbs all splayed out and his mouth open. But unfortunately Reepicheep, who had fought for his life many a time, never lost his head even for a moment. Nor his skill. It is not very easy to draw one’s sword when one is swinging round in the air by one’s tail, but he did. And the next thing Eustace knew was two agonising jabs in his hand which made him let go of the tail; and the next thing after that was that the Mouse had picked itself up again as if it were a ball bouncing off the deck, and there it was facing him, and a horrid long, bright, sharp thing like a skewer was waving to and fro within an inch of his stomach. (This doesn’t count as below the belt for mice in Narnia because they can hardly be expected to reach higher.)

“Stop it,” spluttered Eustace, “go away. Put that thing away. It’s not safe. Stop it, I say. I’ll tell Caspian. I’ll have you muzzled and tied up.”

“Why do you not draw your own sword, poltroon!” cheeped the Mouse. “Draw and fight or I’ll beat you black and blue with the flat.”

“I haven’t got one,” said Eustace. “I’m a pacifist. I don’t believe in fighting.”

“Do I understand,” said Reepicheep, withdrawing his sword for a moment and speaking very sternly, “that you do not intend to give me satisfaction?”

“I don’t know what you mean,” said Eustace, nursing his hand. “If you don’t know how to take a joke I shan’t bother my head about you.”

“Then take that,” said Reepicheep, “and that — to teach you manners — and the respect due to a knight — and a Mouse — and a Mouse’s tail — —” and at each word he gave Eustace a blow with the side of his rapier, which was thin, fine dwarf-tempered steel and as supple and effective as a birch rod. Eustace (of course) was at a school where they didn’t have corporal punishment, so the sensation was quite new to him. That was why, in spite of having no sea-legs, it took him less than a minute to get off that forecastle and cover the whole length of the deck and burst in at the cabin door — still hotly pursued by Reepicheep. Indeed it seemed to Eustace that the rapier as well as the pursuit was hot. It might have been red-hot by the feel.

There was not much difficulty in settling the matter once Eustace realised that everyone took the idea of a duel quite seriously and heard Caspian offering to lend him a sword, and Drinian and Edmund discussing whether he ought to be handicapped in some way to make up for his being so much bigger than Reepicheep. He apologised sulkily and went off with Lucy to have his hand bathed and bandaged and then went to his bunk. He was careful to lie on his side.

Chapter III

THE LONE ISLANDS

“Land in sight,” shouted the man in the bows.

Lucy, who had been talking to Rhince on the poop, came pattering down the ladder and raced forward. As she went she was joined by Edmund, and they found Caspian, Drinian and Reepicheep already on the forecastle. It was a coldish morning, the sky very pale and the sea very dark blue with little white caps of foam, and there, a little way off on the starboard bow, was the nearest of the Lone Islands, Felimath, like a low green hill in the sea, and behind it, further off, the grey slopes of its sister Doorn.

“Same old Felimath! Same old Doorn,” said Lucy, clapping her hands. “Oh — Edmund, how long it is since you and I saw them last!”

“I’ve never understood why they belong to Narnia,” said Caspian. “Did Peter the High King conquer them?”

“Oh no,” said Edmund. “They were Narnian before our time — in the days of the White Witch.”

(By the way, I have never yet heard how these remote islands became attached to the crown of Narnia; if I ever do, and if the story is at all interesting, I may put it in some other book.)

“Are we to put in here, Sire?” asked Drinian.

“I shouldn’t think it would be much good landing on Felimath,” said Edmund. “It was almost uninhabited in our days and it looks as if it was the same still. The people lived mostly on Doorn and a little on Avra — that’s the third one; you can’t see it yet. They only kept sheep on Felimath.”

“Then we’ll have to double that cape, I suppose,” said Drinian, “and land on Doorn. That’ll mean rowing.”

“I’m sorry we’re not landing on Felimath,” said Lucy. “I’d like to walk there again. It was so lonely — a nice kind of loneliness, and all grass and clover and soft sea air.”

“I’d love to stretch my legs too,” said Caspian. “I tell you what. Why shouldn’t we go ashore in the boat and send it back, and then we could walk across Felimath and let the *Dawn Treader* pick us up on the other side?”

If Caspian had been as experienced then as he became later on in this voyage he would not have made this suggestion; but at the moment it

seemed an excellent one. “Oh do let’s,” said Lucy.

“You’ll come, will you?” said Caspian to Eustace, who had come on deck with his hand bandaged.

“Anything to get off this blasted boat,” said Eustace.

“Blasted?” said Drinian. “How do you mean?”

“In a civilised country like where I come from,” said Eustace, “the ships are so big that when you’re inside you wouldn’t know you were at sea at all.”

“In that case you might just as well stay ashore,” said Caspian. “Will you tell them to lower the boat, Drinian.”

The King, the Mouse, the two Pevensies, and Eustace all got into the boat and were pulled to the beach of Felimath. When the boat had left them and was being rowed back they all turned and looked round. They were surprised at how small the *Dawn Treader* looked.

Lucy was of course barefoot, having kicked off her shoes while swimming, but that is no hardship if one is going to walk on downy turf. It was delightful to be ashore again and to smell the earth and grass, even if at first the ground seemed to be pitching up and down like a ship, as it usually does for a while if one has been at sea. It was much warmer here than it had been on board and Lucy found the sand pleasant to her feet as they crossed it. There was a lark singing.

They struck inland and up a fairly steep, though low, hill. At the top of course they looked back, and there was the *Dawn Treader* shining like a great bright insect and crawling slowly north-westward with her oars. Then they went over the ridge and could see her no longer.

Doorn now lay before them, divided from Felimath by a channel about a mile wide; behind it and to the left lay Avra. The little white town of Narrowhaven on Doorn was easily seen.

“Hullo! What’s this?” said Edmund suddenly.

In the green valley to which they were descending six or seven rough-looking men, all armed, were sitting by a tree.

“Don’t tell them who we are,” said Caspian.

“And pray, your Majesty, why not?” said Reepicheep who had consented to ride on Lucy’s shoulder.

“It just occurred to me,” replied Caspian, “that no one here can have heard from Narnia for a long time. It’s just possible they may not still

acknowledge our over-lordship. In which case it might not be quite safe to be known as the King."

"We have our swords, Sire," said Reepicheep.

"Yes, Reep, I know we have," said Caspian. "But if it is a question of re-conquering the three islands, I'd prefer to come back with a rather larger army."

By this time they were quite close to the strangers, one of whom — a big black-haired fellow — shouted out, "A good morning to you."

"And a good morning to you," said Caspian. "Is there still a Governor of the Lone Islands?"

"To be sure there is," said the man, "Governor Gumpas. His Sufficiency is at Narrowhaven. But you'll stay and drink with us."

Caspian thanked him, though neither he nor the others much liked the look of their new acquaintance, and all of them sat down. But hardly had they raised their cups to their lips when the black-haired man nodded to his companions and, as quick as lightning, all the five visitors found themselves wrapped in strong arms. There was a moment's struggle but all the advantages were on one side, and soon everyone was disarmed and had their hands tied behind their backs — except Reepicheep, writhing in his captor's grip and biting furiously.

"Careful with that beast, Tacks," said the Leader. "Don't damage him. He'll fetch the best price of the lot, I shouldn't wonder."

"Coward! Poltroon!" squeaked Reepicheep. "Give me my sword and free my paws if you dare."

"Whew!" whistled the slave merchant (for that is what he was). "It can talk! Well I never did. Blowed if I take less than two hundred crescents for him." The Calormen crescent, which is the chief coin in those parts, is worth about a third of a pound.

"So that's what you are," said Caspian. "A kidnapper and slaver. I hope you're proud of it."

"Now, now, now, now," said the slaver. "Don't you start any jaw. The easier you take it, the pleasanter all round, see? I don't do this for fun. I've got my living to make same as anyone else."

"Where will you take us?" asked Lucy, getting the words out with some difficulty.

"Over to Narrowhaven," said the slaver. "For market to-morrow."

"Is there a British Consul there?" asked Eustace.

“Is there a which?” said the man.

But long before Eustace was tired of trying to explain, the slaver simply said, “Well, I’ve had enough of this jabber. The Mouse is a fair treat but this one would talk the hind leg off a donkey. Off we go, mates.”

Then the four human prisoners were roped together, not cruelly but securely, and made to march down to the shore. Reepicheep was carried. He had stopped biting on a threat of having his mouth tied up, but he had a great deal to say, and Lucy really wondered how any man could bear to have the things said to him which were said to the slave dealer by the Mouse. But the slave dealer, far from objecting, only said “Go on” whenever Reepicheep paused for breath, occasionally adding, “It’s as good as a play”, or, “Blimey, you can’t help almost thinking it knows what it’s saying!” or “Was it one of you what trained it?” This so infuriated Reepicheep that in the end the number of things he thought of saying all at once nearly suffocated him and he became silent.

When they got down to the shore that looked towards Doorn they found a little village and a long-boat on the beach and, lying a little further out, a dirty bedraggled looking ship.

“Now, youngsters,” said the slave dealer, “let’s have no fuss and then you’ll have nothing to cry about. All aboard.”

At that moment a fine-looking bearded man came out of one of the houses (an inn, I think) and said:

“Well, Pug. More of your usual wares?”

The slaver, whose name seemed to be Pug, bowed very low, and said in a wheedling kind of voice, “Yes, please your Lordship.”

“How much do you want for that boy?” asked the other, pointing to Caspian.

“Ah,” said Pug, “I knew your Lordship would pick on the best. No deceiving your Lordship with anything second rate. That boy, now, I’ve taken a fancy to him myself. Got kind of fond of him, I have. I’m that tender-hearted I didn’t ever ought to have taken up this job. Still, to a customer like your Lordship — —”

“Tell me your price, carrion,” said the Lord sternly. “Do you think I want to listen to the rigmarole of your filthy trade?”

“Three hundred crescents, my Lord, to your honourable Lordship, but to anyone else — —”

“I’ll give you a hundred and fifty.”

“Oh please, please,” broke in Lucy. “Don’t separate us, whatever you do. You don’t know — —” But then she stopped for she saw that Caspian didn’t even now want to be known.

“A hundred and fifty, then,” said the Lord. “As for you, little maiden, I am sorry I cannot buy you all. Unrope my boy, Pug. And look — treat these others well while they are in your hands or it’ll be the worse for you.”

“Well!” said Pug. “Now who ever heard of a gentleman in my way of business who treated his stock better than what I do? Well? Why, I treat ’em like my own children.”

“That’s likely enough to be true,” said the other grimly.

The dreadful moment had now come. Caspian was untied and his new master said, “This way, lad,” and Lucy burst into tears and Edmund looked very blank. But Caspian looked over his shoulder and said, “Cheer up. I’m sure it will come all right in the end. So long.”

“Now, missie,” said Pug. “Don’t you start taking on and spoiling your looks for the market to-morrow. You be a good girl and then you won’t have nothing to cry about, see?”

Then they were rowed out to the slave-ship and taken below into a long, rather dark place, none too clean, where they found many other unfortunate prisoners; for Pug was of course a pirate and had just returned from cruising among the islands and capturing what he could. The children didn’t meet anyone whom they knew; the prisoners were mostly Galmians and Terebinthians. And there they sat in the straw and wondered what was happening to Caspian and tried to stop Eustace talking as if everyone except himself was to blame.

Meanwhile Caspian was having a much more interesting time. The man who had bought him led him down a little lane between two of the village houses and so out into an open place behind the village. Then he turned and faced him.

“You needn’t be afraid of me, boy,” he said. “I’ll treat you well. I bought you for your face. You reminded me of someone.”

“May I ask of whom, my Lord?” said Caspian.

“You remind me of my master, King Caspian of Narnia.”

Then Caspian decided to risk everything on one stroke.

“My Lord,” he said, “I am your master. I am Caspian, King of Narnia.”

“You make very free,” said the other. “How shall I know this is true?”

“Firstly by my face,” said Caspian. “Secondly because I know within six guesses who you are. You are one of those seven lords of Narnia whom my Uncle Miraz sent to sea and whom I have come out to look for — Argoz, Bern, Octesian, Restimar, Mavramorn, or — or — I have forgotten the other. And finally, if your Lordship will give me a sword I will prove on any man’s body in clean battle that I am Caspian the son of Caspian, lawful king of Narnia, Lord of Cair Paravel, and Emperor of the Lone Islands.”

“By heaven,” exclaimed the man, “it is his father’s very voice and trick of speech. My liege — your majesty — —” And there in the field he knelt and kissed the King’s hand.

“The moneys your Lordship disbursed for our person will be made good from our own treasury,” said Caspian.

“They’re not in Pug’s purse yet, Sire,” said the Lord Bern, for he it was. “And never will be, I trust. I have moved his Sufficiency the Governor a hundred times to crush this vile traffic in man’s flesh.”

“My Lord Bern,” said Caspian, “we must talk of the state of these Islands. But first what is your Lordship’s own story?”

“Short enough, Sire,” said Bern. “I came thus far with my six fellows, loved a girl of the islands, and felt I had had enough of the sea. And there was no purpose in returning to Narnia while your Majesty’s uncle held the reins. So I married and have lived here ever since.”

“And what is this governor, this Gumpas, like? Does he still acknowledge the King of Narnia for his lord?”

“In words, yes. All is done in the King’s name. But he would not be best pleased to find a real, live King of Narnia coming in upon him. And if your Majesty came before him alone and unarmed — well he would not deny his allegiance, but he would pretend to disbelieve you. Your Grace’s life would be in danger. What following has your Majesty in these waters?”

“There is my ship just rounding the point,” said Caspian. “We are about thirty swords if it came to fighting. Shall we not have my ship in and fall upon Pug and free my friends whom he holds captive?”

“Not by my counsel,” said Bern. “As soon as there was a fight two or three ships would put out from Narrowhaven to rescue Pug. Your Majesty must work by a show of more power than you really have, and by the terror of the King’s name. It must not come to plain battle. Gumpas is a chicken-hearted man and can be over-awed.”

After a little more conversation Caspian and Bern walked down to the coast a little west of the village and there Caspian winded his horn. (This was not the great magic horn of Narnia, Queen Susan's Horn: he had left that at home for his regent Trumpkin to use if any great need fell upon the land in the King's absence.) Drinian, who was on the look-out for a signal, recognised the royal horn at once and the *Dawn Treader* began standing in to shore. Then the boat put off again and in a few moments Caspian and the Lord Bern were on deck explaining the situation to Drinian. He, just like Caspian, wanted to lay the *Dawn Treader* alongside the slave-ship at once and board her, but Bern made the same objection.

"Steer straight down this channel, captain," said Bern, "and then round to Avra where my own estates are. But first run up the King's banner, hang out all the shields, and send as many men to the fighting top as you can. And about five bowshots hence, when you get open sea on your port bow, run up a few signals."

"Signals? To whom?" said Drinian.

"Why, to all the other ships we haven't got but which it might be well that Gumpas thinks we have."

"Oh, I see," said Drinian, rubbing his hands. "And they'll read our signals. What shall I say? *Whole fleet found the South of Avra and assemble at* —— ?"

"Bernstead," said the Lord Bern. "That'll do excellently. Their whole journey — if *there* were any ships — would be out of sight from Narrowhaven."

Caspian was sorry for the others languishing in the hold of Pug's slave ship, but he could not help finding the rest of that day enjoyable. Late in the afternoon (for they had to do all by oar), having turned to starboard round the north-east end of Doorn and port again round the point of Avra, they entered into a good harbour on Avra's southern shore where Bern's pleasant lands sloped down to the water's edge. Bern's people, many of whom they saw working in the fields, were all freemen and it was a happy and prosperous fief. Here they all went ashore and were royally feasted in a low, pillared house overlooking the bay. Bern and his gracious wife and merry daughters made them good cheer. But after dark Bern sent a messenger over by boat to Doorn to order some preparations (he did not say exactly what) for the following day.

Chapter IV

WHAT CASPIAN DID THERE

Next morning the Lord Bern called his guests early and after breakfast he asked Caspian to order every man he had into full armour. “And above all,” he added, “let everything be as trim and scoured as if it were the morning of the first battle in a great war between noble kings with all the world looking on.” This was done; and then in three boat-loads, Caspian and his people, and Bern with a few of his, put out for Narrowhaven. The king’s flag flew in the stern of his boat and his trumpeter was with him.

When they reached the jetty at Narrowhaven, Caspian found a considerable crowd assembled to meet them. “This is what I sent word about last night,” said Bern. “They are all friends of mine and honest people.” And as soon as Caspian stepped ashore the crowd broke out into hurrahs and shouts of, “Narnia! Narnia! Long live the king.” At the same moment — and this was also due to Bern’s messengers — bells began ringing from many parts of the town. Then Caspian caused his banner to be advanced and his trumpet to blow and every man drew his sword and set his face into a joyful sternness, and they marched up the street so that the street shook, and their armour shone (for it was a sunny morning) so that one could hardly look at it steadily.

At first the only people who cheered were those who had been warned by Bern’s messenger and knew what was happening and wanted it to happen. But then all the children joined in because they liked a procession and had seen very few. And then all the schoolboys joined in because they also liked processions and felt that the more noise and disturbance there was the less likely they would be to have any school that morning. And then all the old women put their heads out of doors and windows and began chattering and cheering because it was a king, and what is a governor compared with that? And all the young women joined in for the same reason and also because Caspian and Drinian and the rest were so handsome. And then all the young men came to see what the young women were looking at, so that by the time Caspian reached the castle gates, nearly the whole town was shouting; and where Gumpas sat in the castle,

muddling and messing about with accounts and forms and rules and regulations, he heard the noise.

At the castle gate Caspian's trumpeter blew a blast and cried, "Open for the king of Narnia, come to visit his trusty and well-beloved servant the governor of the Lone Islands." In those days everything in the islands was done in a slovenly, slouching manner. Only the little postern opened and out came a tousled fellow with a dirty old hat on his head instead of a helmet, and a rusty old pike in his hand. He blinked at the flashing figures before him. "Cam — seez — fishansy," he mumbled (which was his way of saying, "You can't see his Sufficiency"). "No interviews without 'pointments 'cept 'tween nine 'n' ten p.m. second Saturday every month."

"Uncover before Narnia, you dog," thundered the Lord Bern, and dealt him a rap with his gauntleted hand which sent his hat flying from his head.

"'Ere? Wot's it all about?" began the doorkeeper, but no one took any notice of him. Two of Caspian's men stepped through the postern and after some struggling with bars and bolts (for everything was rusty) flung both wings of the gate wide open. Then the king and his followers strode into the courtyard. Here a number of the governor's guards were lounging about and several more (they were mostly wiping their mouths) came tumbling out of various doorways. Though their armour was in a disgraceful condition, these were fellows who might have fought if they had been led or had known what was happening; so this was the dangerous moment. Caspian gave them no time to think.

"Where is the captain?" he asked.

"I am, more or less, if you know what I mean," said a languid and rather dandified young person without any armour at all.

"It is our wish," said Caspian, "that our royal visitation to our realm of the Lone Islands should, if possible, be an occasion of joy and not of terror to our loyal subjects. If it were not for that, I should have something to say about the state of your men's armour and weapons. As it is, you are pardoned. Command a cask of wine to be opened that your men may drink our health. But at noon to-morrow I wish to see them here in this courtyard looking like men at arms and not like vagabonds. See to it on pain of our extreme displeasure."

The captain gaped but Bern immediately cried, "Three cheers for the king", and the soldiers, who had understood about the cask of wine even if they understood nothing else, joined in. Caspian then ordered most of his

own men to remain in the courtyard. He, with Bern and Drinian and four others, went into the hall.

Behind a table at the far end with various secretaries about him sat his Sufficiency, the governor of the Lone Islands. Gumpas was a bilious looking man with hair that had once been red and was now mostly grey. He glanced up as the strangers entered and then looked down at his papers saying automatically, “No interviews without appointments except between nine and ten p.m. on second Saturdays.”

Caspian nodded to Bern and then stood aside. Bern and Drinian took a step forward and each seized one end of the table. They lifted it, and flung it on one side of the hall where it rolled over, scattering a cascade of letters, dossiers, ink-pots, pens, sealing-wax and documents. Then, not roughly but as firmly as if their hands were pincers of steel, they plucked Gumpas out of his chair and deposited him, facing it, about four feet away. Caspian at once sat down in the chair and laid his naked sword across his knees.

“My Lord,” said he, fixing his eyes on Gumpas, “you have not given us quite the welcome we expected. We are the King of Narnia.”

“Nothing about it in the correspondence,” said the governor. “Nothing in the minutes. We have not been notified of any such thing. All irregular. Happy to consider any applications — —”

“And we are come to inquire into your Sufficiency’s conduct of your office,” continued Caspian. “There are two points especially on which I require an explanation. Firstly I find no record that the tribute due from these Islands to the crown of Narnia has been received for about a hundred and fifty years.”

“That would be a question to raise at the Council next month,” said Gumpas. “If anyone moves that a commission of inquiry be set up to report on the financial history of the islands at the first meeting next year, why then...”

“I also find it very clearly written in our laws,” Caspian went on, “that if the tribute is not delivered the whole debt has to be paid by the governor of the Lone Islands out of his private purse.”

At this Gumpas began to pay real attention. “Oh, that’s quite out of the question,” he said. “It is an economic impossibility — er — your Majesty must be joking.”

Inside, he was wondering if there were any way of getting rid of these unwelcome visitors. Had he known that Caspian had only one ship and one

ship's company with him, he would have spoken soft words for the moment, and hoped to have them all surrounded and killed during the night. But he had seen a ship of war sail down the straits yesterday and seen it signalling, as he supposed, to its consorts. He had not then known it was the king's ship for there was not wind enough to spread the flag out and make the golden lion visible, so he had waited further developments. Now he imagined that Caspian had a whole fleet at Bernstead. It would never have occurred to Gumpas that anyone would walk into Narrowhaven to take the islands with less than fifty men; it was certainly not at all the kind of thing he could imagine doing himself.

"Secondly," said Caspian, "I want to know why you have permitted this abominable and unnatural traffic in slaves to grow up here, contrary to the ancient custom and usage of our dominions."

"Necessary, unavoidable," said his Sufficiency. "An essential part of the economic development of the islands, I assure you. Our present burst of prosperity depends on it."

"What need have you of slaves?"

"For export, your Majesty. Sell 'em to Calormen mostly; and we have other markets. We are a great centre of the trade."

"In other words," said Caspian, "you don't need them. Tell me what purpose they serve except to put money into the pockets of such as Pug?"

"Your Majesty's tender years," said Gumpas, with what was meant to be a fatherly smile, "hardly make it possible that you should understand the economic problem involved. I have statistics, I have graphs, I have — —"

"Tender as my years may be," said Caspian, "I believe I understand the slave trade from within quite as well as your Sufficiency. And I do not see that it brings into the islands meat or bread or beer or wine or timber or cabbages or books or instruments of music or horses or armour or anything else worth having. But whether it does or not, it must be stopped."

"But that would be putting the clock back," gasped the governor. "Have you no idea of progress, of development?"

"I have seen them both in an egg," said Caspian. "We call it Going Bad in Narnia. This trade must stop."

"I can take no responsibility for any such measure," said Gumpas.

"Very well, then," answered Caspian, "we relieve you of your office. My Lord Bern, come here." And before Gumpas quite realised what was happening, Bern was kneeling with his hands between the King's hands and

taking the oath to govern the Lone Islands in accordance with the old customs, rights, usages and laws of Narnia. And Caspian said, “I think we have had enough of governors,” and made Bern a Duke, the Duke of the Lone Islands.

“As for you, my Lord,” he said to Gumpas, “I forgive you your debt for the tribute. But before noon to-morrow you and yours must be out of the castle, which is now the Duke’s residence.”

“Look here, this is all very well,” said one of Gumpas’s secretaries, “but suppose all you gentlemen stop play-acting and we do a little business. The question before us really is — —”

“The question is,” said the Duke, “whether you and the rest of the rabble will leave without a flogging or with one. You may choose which you prefer.”

When all this had been pleasantly settled, Caspian ordered horses, of which there were a few in the castle, though very ill groomed, and he with Bern and Drinian and a few others rode out into the town and made for the slave market. It was a long low building near the harbour and the scene which they found going on inside was very much like any other auction; that is to say, there was a great crowd and Pug, on a platform, was roaring out in a raucous voice:

“Now, gentlemen, lot twenty-three. Fine Terebinthian agricultural labourer, suitable for the mines or the galleys. Under twenty-five years of age. Not a bad tooth in his head. Good, brawny fellow. Take off his shirt, Tacks, and let the gentlemen see. There’s muscle for you! Look at the chest on him. Ten crescents from the gentleman in the corner. You must be joking, sir. Fifteen! Eighteen! Eighteen is bidden for lot twenty-three. Any advance on eighteen? Twenty-one. Thank you, sir. Twenty-one is bidden — —”

But Pug stopped and gaped when he saw the mail-clad figures who had clanked up to the platform.

“On your knees, every man of you, to the King of Narnia,” said the Duke. Everyone heard the horses jingling and stamping outside and many had heard some rumour of the landing and the events at the castle. Most obeyed. Those who did not were pulled down by their neighbours. Some cheered.

“Your life is forfeit, Pug, for laying hands on our royal person yesterday,” said Caspian. “But your ignorance is pardoned. The slave trade

was forbidden in all our dominions quarter of an hour ago. I declare every slave in this market free."

He held up his hand to check the cheering of the slaves and went on, "Where are my friends?"

"That dear little gel and the nice young gentleman?" said Pug with an ingratiating smile. "Why, they were snapped up at once — —"

"We're here, we're here, Caspian," cried Lucy and Edmond together and, "At your service, Sire," piped Reepicheep from another corner. They had all been sold but the men who had bought them were staying to bid for other slaves and so they had not been taken away yet. The crowd parted to let the three of them out and there was great hand-clasping and greeting between them and Caspian. Two merchants of Calormen at once approached. The Calormenes have dark faces and long beards. They wear flowing robes and orange-coloured turbans, and they are a wise, wealthy, courteous, cruel and ancient people. They bowed most politely to Caspian and paid him long compliments, all about the fountains of prosperity irrigating the gardens of prudence and virtue — and things like that — but of course what they wanted was the money they had paid.

"That is only fair, sirs," said Caspian. "Every man who has bought a slave to-day must have his money back. Pug, bring out your takings to the last minim." (A minim is the fortieth part of a crescent.)

"Does your good Majesty mean to beggar me?" whined Pug.

"You have lived on broken hearts all your life," said Caspian, "and if you are beggared, it is better to be a beggar than a slave. But where is my other friend?"

"Oh him?" said Pug. "Oh take him and welcome. Glad to have him off my hands. I never see such a drug in the market in all my born days. Priced him at five crescents in the end and even so nobody'd have him. Threw him in free with other lots and still no one would have him. Wouldn't touch him. Wouldn't look at him. Tacks, bring out Sulky."

Thus Eustace was produced, and sulky he certainly looked; for though no one would want to be sold as a slave, it is perhaps even more galling to be a sort of utility slave whom no one will buy. He walked up to Caspian and said, "I see. As usual. Been enjoying yourself somewhere while the rest of us were prisoners. I suppose you haven't even found out about the British Consul. Of course not."

That night they had a great feast in the castle of Narrowhaven and then, “To-morrow for the beginning of our real adventures!” said Reepicheep when he had made his bows to everyone and went to bed. But it could not really be to-morrow or anything like it. For now they were preparing to leave all known lands and seas behind them and the fullest preparations had to be made. The *Dawn Treader* was emptied and drawn on land by eight horses over rollers and every bit of her was gone over by the most skilled shipwrights. Then she was launched again and victualled and watered as full as she could hold — that is to say for twenty-eight days. Even this, as Edmond noticed with disappointment, only gave them a fortnight’s eastward sailing before they had to abandon their quest.

While all this was being done Caspian missed no chance of questioning all the oldest sea captains whom he could find in Narrowhaven to learn if they had any knowledge or even any rumours of land further to the east. He poured out many a flagon of the castle ale to weather-beaten men with short grey beards and clear blue eyes, and many a tall yarn he heard in return. But those who seemed the most truthful could tell of no lands beyond the Lone Islands, and many thought that if you sailed too far east you would come into the surges of a sea without lands that swirled perpetually round the rim of the world— “And that, I reckon, is where your Majesty’s friends went to the bottom.” The rest had only wild stories of islands inhabited by headless men, floating islands, waterspouts, and a fire that burned along the water. Only one, to Reepicheep’s delight, said, “And beyond that, Aslan’s country. But that’s beyond the end of the world and you can’t get there.” But when they questioned him he could only say that he’d heard it from his father.

Bern could only tell them that he had seen his six companions sail away eastward and that nothing had ever been heard of them again. He said this when he and Caspian were standing on the highest point of Avra looking down on the eastern ocean. “I’ve often been up here of a morning,” said the Duke, “and seen the sun come up out of the sea, and sometimes it looked as if it were only a couple of miles away. And I’ve wondered about my friends and wondered what there really is behind that horizon. Nothing, most likely, yet I am always half ashamed that I stayed behind. But I wish your Majesty wouldn’t go. We may need your help here. This closing the slave market might make a new world; war with Calormen is what I foresee. My liege, think again.”

“I have an oath, my lord Duke,” said Caspian. “And anyway, what *could* I say to Reepicheep?”

Chapter V

THE STORM AND WHAT CAME OF IT

It was nearly three weeks after their landing that the *Dawn Treader* was towed out of Narrowhaven harbour. Very solemn farewells had been spoken and a great crowd had assembled to see her departure. There had been cheers, and tears too, when Caspian made his last speech to the Lone Islanders and parted from the Duke and his family, but as the ship, her purple sail still flapping idly, drew farther from the shore, and the sound of Caspian's trumpet from the poop came fainter across the water, everyone became silent. Then she came into the wind. The sail swelled out, the tug cast off and began rowing back, the first real wave ran up under the *Dawn Treader's* prow, and she was a live ship again. The men off duty went below, Drinian took the first watch on the poop, and she turned her head eastward round the south of Avra.

The next few days were delightful. Lucy thought she was the most fortunate girl in the world, as she woke each morning to see the reflections of the sunlit water dancing on the ceiling of her cabin and looked round on all the nice new things she had got in the Lone Island — sea-boots and buskins and cloaks and jerkins and scarves. And then she would go on deck and take a look from the forecastle at a sea which was a brighter blue each morning and drink in an air that was a little warmer day by day. After that came breakfast and such an appetite as one only has at sea.

She spent a good deal of time sitting on the little bench in the stern playing chess with Reepicheep. It was amusing to see him lifting the pieces, which were far too big for him, with both paws and standing on tiptoes if he made a move near the centre of the board. He was a good player and when he remembered what he was doing he usually won. But every now and then Lucy won because the Mouse did something quite ridiculous like sending a knight into the danger of a queen and castle combined. This happened because he had momentarily forgotten it was a game of chess and was thinking of a real battle and making the knight do what he would certainly have done in its place. For his mind was full of forlorn hopes, death or glory charges, and last stands.

But this pleasant time did not last. There came an evening when Lucy, gazing idly astern at the long furrow or wake they were leaving behind them, saw a great rack of clouds building itself up in the west with amazing speed. Then a gap was torn in it and a yellow sunset poured through the gap. All the waves behind them seemed to take on unusual shapes and the sea was a drab or yellowish colour like dirty canvas. The air grew cold. The ship seemed to move uneasily as if she felt danger behind her. The sail would be flat and limp one minute and wildly full the next. While she was noticing these things and wondering at a sinister change which had come over the very noise of the wind, Drinian cried, “All hands on deck.” In a moment everyone became frantically busy. The hatches were battened down, the galley fire was put out, men went aloft to reef the sail. Before they had finished the storm struck them. It seemed to Lucy that a great valley in the sea opened just before their bows, and they rushed down into it, deeper down than she would have believed possible. A great grey hill of water, far higher than the mast, rushed to meet them; it looked certain death but they were tossed to the top of it. Then the ship seemed to spin round. A cataract of water poured over the deck; the poop and forecastle were like two islands with a fierce sea between them. Up aloft the sailors were lying out along the yard desperately trying to get control of the sail. A broken rope stood out sideways in the wind as straight and stiff as if it was a poker.

“Get below, Ma’am,” bawled Drinian. And Lucy, knowing that landsmen — and landswomen — are a nuisance to the crew, began to obey. It was not easy. The *Dawn Treader* was listing terribly to starboard and the deck sloped like the roof of a house. She had to clamber round to the top of the ladder, holding on to the rail, and then stand by while two men climbed up it, and then get down it as best she could. It was well she was already holding on tight for at the foot of the ladder another wave roared across the deck, up to her shoulders. She was already almost wet through with spray and rain but this was colder. Then she made a dash for the cabin door and got in and shut out for a moment the appalling sight of the speed with which they were rushing into the dark, but not of course the horrible confusion of creakings, groanings, snappings, clatterings, roarings and boomings which only sounded more alarming below than they had done on the poop.

And all next day and all the next it went on. It went on till one could hardly even remember a time before it had begun. And there always had to be three men at the tiller and it was as much as three could do to keep any

kind of a course. And there always had to be men at the pump. And there was hardly any rest for anyone, and nothing could be cooked and nothing could be dried, and one man was lost overboard, and they never saw the sun.

When it was over Eustace made the following entry in his diary.

"*September 3*. The first day for ages when I have been able to write. We had been driven before a hurricane for thirteen days and nights. I know that because I kept a careful count, though the others all say it was only twelve. *Pleasant* to be embarked on a dangerous voyage with people who can't even count right! I have had a ghastly time, up and down enormous waves hour after hour, usually wet to the skin, and not even an *attempt* at giving us proper meals. Needless to say there's no wireless or even a rocket, so no chance of signalling anyone for help. It all proves what I keep on telling them, the madness of setting out in a rotten little tub like this. It would be bad enough even if one was with decent people instead of fiends in human form. Caspian and Edmund are simply brutal to me. The night we lost our mast (there's only a stump left now), though I was *not at all* well they forced me to come on deck and work like a slave. Lucy shoved her oar in by saying that Reepicheep was longing to go only he was too small. I wonder she doesn't see that everything that little beast does is all for the sake of *showing off*. Even at her age she ought to have that amount of sense. To-day the beastly boat is level at last and the sun's out and we have all been jawing about what to do. We have food enough, pretty beastly stuff most of it, to last for sixteen days. (The poultry were all washed overboard. Even if they hadn't been, the storm would have stopped them laying.) The real trouble is water. Two casks seem to have got a leak knocked in them and are empty (Narnian efficiency again). On short rations, half a pint a day each, we've got enough for twelve days. (There's still lots of rum and wine but even they realise that would only make them thirstier.)

"If we could, of course, the sensible thing would be to turn west at once and make for Lone Islands. But it took us eighteen days to get where we are, running like mad with a gale behind us. Even if we got an east wind it might take us far longer to get back. And at present there's no sign of an east wind — in fact there's no wind at all. As for rowing back, it would take far too long and Caspian says the men couldn't row on half a pint of water a day. I'm pretty sure this is wrong. I tried to explain that perspiration really cools people down, so the men would need less water if they were working.

He didn’t take any notice of this, which is always his way when he can’t think of an answer. The others all voted for going *on* in the hope of finding land. I felt it my duty to point out that we didn’t know there *was* any land ahead and tried to get them to see the dangers of *wishful thinking*. Instead of producing a better plan they had the cheek to ask me what I proposed. So I just explained coolly and quietly that I had been kidnapped and brought away on this *idiotic* voyage without my consent, and it was hardly *my* business to get *them* out of their scrape.

“*September 4*. Still becalmed. Very short rations for dinner and I got less than anyone. Caspian is very clever at helping and thinks I don’t see! Lucy for some reason tried to make up to me by offering me some of hers but that *interfering prig* Edmund wouldn’t let her. Pretty hot sun. Terribly thirsty all evening.

“*September 5*. Still becalmed and very hot. Feeling rotten all day and am sure I’ve got a temperature. Of course they haven’t the sense to keep a thermometer on board.

“*September 6*. A horrible day. Woke up in the night *knowing* I was feverish and *must* have a drink of water. Any doctor would have said so. Heaven knows I’m the last person to try to get any unfair advantage but I never *dreamed* that this water-rationing would be meant to apply to a sick man. In fact I would have woken the others up and asked for some only I thought it would be selfish to wake them. So I just got up and took my cup and tiptoed out of the Black Hole we sleep in, taking great care not to disturb Caspian and Edmund, for they’ve been sleeping badly since the heat and the short water began. I always try to consider others whether they are nice to me or not. I got out all right into the big room, if you can call it a room, where the rowing benches and the luggage are. The thing of water is at this end. All was going beautifully, but before I’d drawn a cupful who should catch me but that *little spy* Reep. I tried to explain that I was going on deck for a breath of air (the business about the water had nothing to do with him) and he asked me why I had a cup. He made such a noise that the whole ship was roused. They treated me scandalously. I asked, as I think anyone would have, why Reepicheep was sneaking about the water cask in the middle of the night. He said that as he was too small to be any use on deck, he did sentry over the water every night so that one more man could go to sleep. Now comes their rotten unfairness: they all believed *him*. Can you beat it?

“I had to apologise or the dangerous little brute would have been at me with his sword. And then Caspian showed up in his true colours as a brutal tyrant and said out loud for everyone to hear that anyone found ‘stealing’ water in future would ‘get two dozen’. I didn’t I know what this meant till Edmund explained to me. It comes in the sort of books those Pevensie kids read.

“After this cowardly threat Caspian changed his tune and started being *patronising*. Said he was sorry for me and that everyone felt just as feverish as I did and we must all make the best of it, etc., etc. Odious stuck-up prig. Stayed in bed all day to-day.

“*September 7.* A little wind to-day but still from the west. Made a few miles eastward with part of the sail, set on what Drinian calls the jury-mast — that means the bowsprit set upright and tied (they call it ‘lashed’) to the stump of the real mast. Still terribly thirsty.

“*September 8.* Still sailing east. I stay in my bunk all day now and see no one except Lucy till the two *fiends* come to bed. Lucy gives me a little of her water ration. She says girls don’t get as thirsty as boys. I had often thought this but it ought to be more generally known at sea.

“*September 9.* Land in sight; a very high mountain a long way off to the south-east.

“*September 10.* The mountain is bigger and clearer but still a long way off. Gulls again to-day for the first time since I don’t know how long.

“*September 11*. Caught some fish and had them for dinner. Dropped anchor at about 7 p.m. in three fathoms of water in a bay of this mountainous island. That idiot Caspian wouldn’t let us go ashore because it was getting dark and he was afraid of savages and wild beasts. Extra water ration to-night.”

What awaited them on this island was going to concern Eustace more than anyone else, but it cannot be told in his words because after September 11 he forgot about keeping his diary for a long time.

When morning came, with a low, grey sky but very hot, the adventurers found they were in a bay encircled by such cliffs and crags that it was like a Norwegian fjord. In front of them, at the head of the bay there was some level land heavily overgrown with trees that appeared to be cedars, through which a rapid stream came out. Beyond that was a steep ascent ending in a jagged ridge and behind that a vague darkness of mountains which ran up

into dull coloured clouds so that you could not see their tops. The nearer cliffs, at each side of the bay, were streaked here and there with lines of white which everyone knew to be waterfalls, though at that distance they did not show any movement or make any noise. Indeed the whole place was very silent and the water of the bay as smooth as glass. It reflected every detail of the cliffs. The scene would have been pretty in a picture but was rather oppressive in real life. It was not a country that welcomed visitors.

The whole ship's company went ashore in two boatloads and everyone drank and washed deliciously in the river and had a meal and a rest before Caspian sent four men back to keep the ship, and the day's work began. There was everything to be done. The casks must be brought ashore and the faulty ones mended if possible and all refilled; a tree — a pine if they could get it — must be felled and made into a new mast; sails must be repaired; a hunting party organised to shoot any game the land might yield; clothes to be washed and mended; and countless small breakages on board to be set right. For the *Dawn Treader* herself — and this was more obvious now that they saw her at a distance — could hardly be recognised as the same gallant ship which had left Narrowhaven. She looked a crippled, discoloured hulk which anyone might have taken for a wreck. And her officers and crew were no better — lean, pale, red-eyed from lack of sleep, and dressed in rags.

As Eustace lay under a tree and heard all these plans being discussed his heart sank. Was there going to be no rest? It looked as if their first day on the longed-for land was going to be quite as hard work as a day at sea. Then a delightful idea occurred to him. Nobody was looking — they were all chattering about their ship as if they actually liked the beastly thing. Why shouldn't he simply slip away? He would take a stroll inland, find a cool, airy place up in the mountains, have a good long sleep, and not rejoin the others till the day's work was over. He felt it would do him good. But he would take great care to keep the bay and the ship in sight so as to be sure of his way back. He wouldn't like to be left behind in this country.

He at once put his plan into action. He rose quietly from his place and walked away among the trees, taking care to go slowly and in an aimless manner so that anyone who saw him would think he was merely stretching his legs. He was surprised to find how quickly the noise of conversation died away behind him and how very silent and warm and dark green the

wood became. Soon he felt he could venture on a quicker and more determined stride.

This soon brought him out of the wood. The ground began sloping steeply up in front of him. The grass was dry and slippery but manageable if he used his hands as well as his feet, and though he panted and mopped his forehead a good deal, he plugged away steadily. This showed, by the way, that his new life, little as he suspected it, had already done him some good; the old Eustace, Harold's and Alberta's Eustace, would have given up the climb after about ten minutes.

Slowly, and with several rests, he reached the ridge. Here he had expected to have a view into the heart of the island, but the clouds had now come lower and nearer and a sea of fog was rolling to meet him. He sat down and looked back. He was now so high that the bay looked small beneath him and miles of sea were visible. Then the fog from the mountains closed in all round him, thick but not cold, and he lay down and turned this way and that to find the most comfortable position to enjoy himself.

But he didn't enjoy himself, or not for very long. He began, almost for the first time in his life, to feel lonely. At first this feeling grew very gradually. And then he began to worry about the time. There was not the slightest sound. Suddenly it occurred to him that he might have been lying there for hours. Perhaps the others had gone! Perhaps they had let him wander away on purpose simply in order to leave him behind! He leaped up in a panic and began the descent.

At first he tried to do it too quickly, slipped on the steep grass, and slid for several feet. Then he thought this had carried him too far to the left — and as he came up he had seen precipices on that side. So he clambered up again, as near as he could guess to the place he had started from, and began the descent afresh, bearing to his right. After that things seemed to be going better. He went very cautiously, for he could not see more than a yard ahead, and there was still perfect silence all around him. It is very unpleasant to have to go cautiously when there is a voice inside you saying all the time, "Hurry, hurry, hurry." For every moment the terrible idea of being left behind grew stronger. If he had understood Caspian and the Pevensies at all he would have known, of course, that there was not the least chance of their doing any such thing. But he had persuaded himself that they were all fiends in human form.

“At last!” said Eustace as he came slithering down a slide of loose stones (*scree*, they call it) and found himself on the level. “And now, where are those trees? There *is* something dark ahead. Why, I do believe the fog is clearing.”

It was. The light increased every moment and made him blink. The fog lifted. He was in an utterly unknown valley and the sea was nowhere in sight.

Chapter VI

THE ADVENTURES OF EUSTACE

At that very moment the others were washing hands and faces in the river and generally getting ready for dinner and a rest. The three best archers had gone up into the hills north of the bay and returned laden with a pair of wild goats which were now roasting over a fire. Caspian had ordered a cask of wine ashore, strong wine of Archenland which had to be mixed with water before you drank it, so there would be plenty for all. The work had gone well so far and it was a merry meal. Only after the second helping of goat did Edmund say, “Where’s that blighter Eustace?”

Meanwhile Eustace stared round the unknown valley. It was so narrow and deep, and the precipices which surrounded it so sheer, that it was like a huge pit or trench. The floor was grassy though strewn with rocks, and here and there Eustace saw black burnt patches like those you see on the sides of a railway embankment in a dry summer. About fifteen yards away from him was a pool of clear, smooth water. There was, at first, nothing else at all in the valley; not an animal, not a bird, not an insect. The sun beat down and grim peaks and horns of mountains peered over the valley’s edge.

Eustace realised of course that in the fog he had come down the wrong side of the ridge, so he turned at once to see about getting back. But as soon as he had looked he shuddered. Apparently he had by amazing luck found the only possible way down — a long green spit of land, horribly steep and narrow, with precipices on either side. There was no other possible way of getting back. But could he do it, now that he saw what it was really like? His head swam at the very thought of it.

He turned round again, thinking that at any rate he’d better have a good drink from the pool first. But as soon as he had turned and before he had taken a step forward into the valley he heard a noise behind him. It was only a small noise but it sounded loud in that immense silence. It froze him dead still where he stood for a second. Then he slewed round his head and looked.

At the bottom of the cliff a little on his left hand was a low, dark hole — the entrance to a cave perhaps. And out of this two thin wisps of smoke were coming. And the loose stones just beneath the dark hollow were

moving (that was the noise he had heard) just as if something were crawling in the dark behind them.

Something *was* crawling. Worse still, something was coming out. Edmund or Lucy or you would have recognised it at once, but Eustace had read none of the right books. The thing that came out of the cave was something he had never even imagined — a long lead-coloured snout, dull red eyes, no feathers or fur, a long lithe body that trailed on the ground, legs whose elbows went up higher than its back like a spider's, cruel claws, bat's wings that made a rasping noise on the stones, yards of tail. And the two lines of smoke were coming from its two nostrils. He never said the word *Dragon* to himself. Nor would it have made things any better if he had.

But perhaps if he had known something about dragons he would have been a little surprised at this dragon's behaviour. It did not sit up and clap its wings, nor did it shoot out a stream of flame from its mouth. The smoke from its nostrils was like the smoke of a fire that will not last much longer. Nor did it seem to have noticed Eustace. It moved very slowly towards the pool — slowly and with many pauses. Even in his fear Eustace felt that it was an old, sad creature. He wondered if he dared make a dash for the ascent. But it might look round if he made any noise. It might come more to life. Perhaps it was only shamming. Anyway, what was the use of trying to escape by climbing from a creature that could fly?

It reached the pool and slid its horrible scaly chin down over the gravel to drink: but before it had drunk there came from it a great croaking or clanging cry and after a few twitches and convulsions it rolled round on its side and lay perfectly still with one claw in the air. A little dark blood gushed from its wide-opened mouth. The smoke from its nostrils turned black for a moment and then floated away. No more came.

For a long time Eustace did not dare to move. Perhaps this was the brute's trick, the way it lured travellers to their doom. But one couldn't wait for ever. He took a step nearer, then two steps, and halted again. The dragon remained motionless; he noticed too that the red fire had gone out of its eyes. At last he came up to it. He was quite sure now that it was dead. With a shudder he touched it; nothing happened.

The relief was so great that Eustace almost laughed out loud. He began to feel as if he had fought and killed the dragon instead of merely seeing it die. He stepped over it and went to the pool for his drink, for the heat was getting unbearable. He was not surprised when he heard a peal of thunder.

Almost immediately afterwards the sun disappeared and before he had finished his drink big drops of rain were falling.

The climate of this island was a very unpleasant one. In less than a minute Eustace was wet to the skin and half blinded with such rain as one never sees in Europe. There was no use trying to climb out of the valley as long as this lasted. He bolted for the only shelter in sight — the dragon's cave. There he lay down and tried to get his breath.

Most of us know what we should expect to find in a dragon's lair, but, as I said before, Eustace had read only the wrong books. They had a lot to say about exports and imports and governments and drains, but they were weak on dragons. That is why he was so puzzled at the surface on which he was lying. Parts of it were too prickly to be stones and too hard to be thorns, and there seemed to be a great many round, flat things, and it all clinked when he moved. There was light enough at the cave's mouth to examine it by. And of course Eustace found it to be what any of us could have told him in advance — treasure. There were crowns (those were the prickly things), coins, rings, bracelets, ingots, cups, plates and gems.

Eustace (unlike most boys) had never thought much of treasure but he saw at once the use it would be in this new world which he had so foolishly stumbled into through the picture in Lucy's bedroom at home. "They don't have any tax here," he said. "And you don't have to give treasure to the government. With some of this stuff I could have quite a decent time here — perhaps in Calormen. It sounds the least phoney of these countries. I wonder how much I can carry? That bracelet now — those things in it are probably diamonds — I'll slip that on my own wrist. Too big, but not if I push it right up here above my elbow. Then fill my pockets with diamonds — that's easier than gold. I wonder when this infernal rain's going to let up?" He got into a less uncomfortable part of the pile, where it was mostly coins, and settled down to wait. But a bad fright, when once it is over, and especially a bad fright following a mountain walk, leaves you very tired. Eustace fell asleep.

By the time he was sound asleep and snoring the others had finished dinner and become seriously alarmed about him. They shouted, "Eustace! Eustace! Coo-ee!" till they were hoarse and Caspian blew his horn.

"He's nowhere near or he'd have heard that," said Lucy with a white face.

“Confound the fellow,” said Edmund. “What on earth did he want to slink away like this for?”

“But we must do something,” said Lucy. “He may have got lost, or fallen into a hole, or been captured by savages.”

“Or killed by wild beasts,” said Drinian.

“And a good riddance if he has, *I* say,” muttered Rhince.

“Master Rhince,” said Reepicheep, “you never spoke a word that became you less. The creature is no friend of mine but he is of the Queen’s blood, and while he is one of our fellowship it concerns our honour to find him and to avenge him if he is dead.”

“Of course we’ve got to find him (if we *can*)” said Caspian wearily. “That’s the nuisance of it. It means a search party and endless trouble. Bother Eustace.”

Meanwhile Eustace slept and slept — and slept. What woke him was a pain in his arm. The moon was shining in at the mouth of the cave, and the bed of treasures seemed to have grown much more comfortable: in fact he could hardly feel it at all. He was puzzled by the pain in his arm at first, but presently it occurred to him that the bracelet which he had shoved up above his elbow had become strangely tight. His arm must have swollen while he was asleep (it was his left arm).

He moved his right arm in order to feel his left, but stopped before he had moved it an inch and bit his lip in terror. For just in front of him, and a little on his right, where the moonlight fell clear on the floor of the cave, he saw a hideous shape moving. He knew that shape: it was a dragon’s claw. It had moved as he moved his hand and became still when he stopped moving his hand.

“Oh, what a fool I’ve been,” thought Eustace. “Of course, the brute had a mate and it’s lying beside me.”

For several minutes he did not dare to move a muscle. He saw two thin columns of smoke going up before his eyes, black against the moonlight; just as there had been smoke coming from the other dragon’s nose before it died. This was so alarming that he held his breath. The two columns of smoke vanished. When he could hold his breath no longer he let it out stealthily; instantly two jets of smoke appeared again. But even yet he had no idea of the truth.

Presently he decided that he would edge very cautiously to his left and try to creep out of the cave. Perhaps the creature was asleep — and anyway

it was his only chance. But of course before he edged to the left he looked to the left. Oh horror! there was a dragon's claw on that side too.

No one will blame Eustace if at this moment he shed tears. He was surprised at the size of his own tears as he saw them splashing on to the treasure in front of him. They also seemed strangely hot; steam went up from them.

But there was no good crying. He must try to crawl out from between the two dragons. He began extending his right arm. The dragon's fore-leg and claw on his right went through exactly the same motion. Then he thought he would try his left. The dragon limb on that side moved too.

Two dragons, one on each side, mimicking whatever he did! His nerve broke and he simply made a bolt for it.

There was such a clatter and rasping, and clinking of gold, and grinding of stones, as he rushed out of the cave that he thought they were both following him. He daren't look back. He rushed to the pool. The twisted shape of the dead dragon lying in the moonlight would have been enough to frighten anyone but now he hardly noticed it. His idea was to get into the water.

But just as he reached the edge of the pool two things happened. First of all it came over him like a thunder-clap that he had been running on all fours — and why on earth had he been doing that? And secondly, as he bent towards the water, he thought for a second that yet another dragon was staring up at him out of the pool. But in an instant he realised the truth. That dragon face in the pool was his own reflection. There was no doubt of it. It moved as he moved: it opened and shut its mouth as he opened and shut his.

He had turned into a dragon while he was asleep. Sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself.

That explained everything. There had been no two dragons beside him in the cave. The claws to right and left had been his own right and left claws. The two columns of smoke had been coming from his own nostrils. As for the pain in his left arm (or what had been his left arm) he could now see what had happened by squinting with his left eye. The bracelet which had fitted very nicely on the upper arm of a boy was far too small for the thick, stumpy foreleg of a dragon. It had sunk deeply into his scaly flesh and there was a throbbing bulge on each side of it. He tore at the place with his dragon's teeth but could not get it off.

In spite of the pain, his first feeling was one of relief. There was nothing to be afraid of any more. He was a terror himself now and nothing in the world but a knight (and not all of those) would dare to attack him. He could get even with Caspian and Edmund now ——

But the moment he thought this he realised that he didn't want to. He wanted to be friends. He wanted to get back among humans and talk and laugh and share things. He realised that he was a monster cut off from the whole human race. An appalling loneliness came over him. He began to see that the others had not really been fiends at all. He began to wonder if he himself had been such a nice person as he had always supposed. He longed for their voices. He would have been grateful for a kind word even from Reepicheep.

When he thought of this the poor dragon that had been Eustace lifted up its voice and wept. A powerful dragon crying its eyes out under the moon in a deserted valley is a sight and a sound hardly to be imagined.

At last he decided he would try to find his way back to the shore. He realised now that Caspian would never have sailed away and left him. And he felt sure that somehow or other he would be able to make people understand who he was.

He took a long drink and then (I know this sounds shocking, but it isn't if you think it over) he ate nearly all the dead dragon. He was half-way through it before he realised what he was doing; for, you see, though his mind was the mind of Eustace, his tastes and his digestion were dragonish. And there is nothing a dragon likes so well as fresh dragon. That is why you so seldom find more than one dragon in the same county.

Then he turned to climb out of the valley. He began the climb with a jump and as soon as he jumped he found that he was flying. He had quite forgotten about his wings and it was a great surprise to him — the first pleasant surprise he had had for a long time. He rose high into the air and saw innumerable mountain-tops spread out beneath him in the moonlight. He could see the bay like a silver slab and the *Dawn Treader* lying at anchor and camp fires twinkling in the woods beside the beach. From a great height he launched himself down towards them in a single glide.

Lucy was sleeping very sound for she had sat up till the return of the search party in hope of good news about Eustace. It had been led by Caspian and had come back late and weary. Their news was disquieting. They had found no trace of Eustace but had seen a dead dragon in a valley.

They tried to make the best of it and everyone assured everyone else that there were not likely to be more dragons about, and that one which was dead at about three o'clock that afternoon (which was when they had seen it) would hardly have been killing people a very few hours before.

"Unless it ate the little brat and died of him: he'd poison anything," said Rhince. But he said this under his breath and no one heard it.

But later in the night Lucy was waked, very softly, and found the whole company gathered close together and talking in whispers.

"What is it?" said Lucy.

"We must all show great constancy," Caspian was saying. "A dragon has just flown over the tree-tops and lighted on the beach. Yes, I am afraid it is between us and the ship. And arrows are no use against dragons. And they're not at all afraid of fire."

"With your Majesty's leave — —" began Reepicheep.

"No, Reepicheep," said the King very firmly, "you are not going to attempt a single combat with it. And unless you promise to obey me in this matter I'll have you tied up. We must just keep close watch and, as soon as it is light, go down to the beach and give it battle. I will lead. King Edmund will be on my right and the Lord Drinian on my left. There are no other arrangements to be made. It will be light in a couple of hours. In an hour's time let a meal be served out and what is left of the wine. And let everything be done silently."

"Perhaps it will go away," said Lucy.

"It'll be worse if it does," said Edmund, "because then we shan't know where it is. If there's a wasp in the room I like to be able to see it."

The rest of the night was dreadful, and when the meal came, though they knew they ought to eat, many found that they had very poor appetites. And endless hours seemed to pass before the darkness thinned and birds began chirping here and there and the world got colder and wetter than it had been all night and Caspian said, "Now for it, friends."

They got up, all with swords drawn, and formed themselves into a solid mass with Lucy in the middle and Reepicheep on her shoulder. It was nicer than the waiting about and everyone felt fonder of everyone else than at ordinary times. A moment later they were marching. It grew lighter as they came to the edge of the wood. And there on the sand, like a giant lizard, or a flexible crocodile, or a serpent with legs, huge and horrible and humpy, lay the dragon.

But when it saw them, instead of rising up and blowing fire and smoke, the dragon retreated — you could almost say it waddled — back into the shallows of the bay.

"What's it wagging its head like that for?" said Edmund.

"And now it's nodding," said Caspian,

"And there's something coming from its eyes," said Drinian.

"Oh, can't you see," said Lucy. "It's crying. Those are tears."

"I shouldn't trust to that, Ma'am," said Drinian. "That's what crocodiles do, to put you off your guard."

"It wagged its head when you said that," remarked Edmund. "Just as if it meant No. Look, there it goes again."

"Do you think it understands what we're saying?" asked Lucy.

The dragon nodded its head violently.

Reepicheep slipped off Lucy's shoulder and stepped to the front.

"Dragon," came his shrill voice, "can you understand speech?"

The dragon nodded.

"Can you speak?"

It shook its head.

"Then," said Reepicheep, "it is idle to ask you your business. But if you will swear friendship with us raise your left foreleg above your head."

It did so, but clumsily because that leg was sore and swollen with the golden bracelet.

"Oh look," said Lucy, "there's something wrong with its leg. The poor thing — that's probably what it was crying about. Perhaps it came to us to be cured like in Androcles and the lion."

"Be careful, Lucy," said Caspian. "It's a very clever dragon but it may be a liar."

Lucy had, however, already run forward, followed by Reepicheep, as fast as his short legs could carry him, and then of course the boys and Drinian came, too.

"Show me your poor paw," said Lucy, "I might be able to cure it."

The dragon-that-had-been-Eustace held out its sore leg gladly enough, remembering how Lucy's cordial had cured him of sea-sickness before he became a dragon. But he was disappointed. The magic fluid reduced the swelling and eased the pain a little but it could not dissolve the gold.

Everyone had now crowded round to watch the treatment, and Caspian suddenly exclaimed, "Look!" He was staring at the bracelet.

Chapter VII

HOW THE ADVENTURE ENDED

“Look at what?” said Edmund.

“Look at the device on the gold,” said Caspian.

“A little hammer with a diamond above it like a star,” said Drinian. “Why, I’ve seen that before.”

“Seen it!” said Caspian. “Why, of course you have. It is the sign of a great Narnian house. This is the Lord Octesian’s arm-ring.”

“Villain,” said Reepicheep to the dragon, “have you devoured a Narnian lord?” But the dragon shook his head violently.

“Or perhaps,” said Lucy, “this is the Lord Octesian, turned into a dragon — under an enchantment, you know.”

“It needn’t be either,” said Edmund. “All dragons collect gold. But I think it’s a safe guess that Octesian got no further than this island.”

“Are you the Lord Octesian?” said Lucy to the dragon, and then, when it sadly shook its head, “Are you someone enchanted — someone human, I mean?”

It nodded violently.

And then someone said — people disputed afterwards whether Lucy or Edmund said it first— “You’re not — not Eustace by any chance?”

And Eustace nodded his terrible dragon head and thumped his tail in the sea and everyone skipped back (some of the sailors with ejaculations I will not put down in writing) to avoid the enormous and boiling tears which flowed from his eyes.

Lucy tried hard to console him and even screwed up her courage to kiss the scaly face, and nearly everyone said “Hard luck” and several assured Eustace that they would all stand by him and many said there was sure to be some way of disenchanting him and they’d have him as right as rain in a day or two. And of course they were all very anxious to hear his story, but he couldn’t speak. More than once in the days that followed he attempted to write it for them on the sand. But this never succeeded. In the first place Eustace (never having read the right books) had no idea how to tell a story straight. And for another thing, the muscles and nerves of the dragon-claws that he had to use had never learned to write and were not built for writing

anyway. As a result he never got nearly to the end before the tide came in and washed away all the writing except the bits he had already trodden on or accidentally swished out with his tail. And all that anyone had seen would be something like this — the dots are for the bits he had smudged out —

I WNET TO SLEE ... RGOS AGRONS I MEAN DRANGONS CAVE CAUSE ITWAS DEAD AND AINIG SO HAR ... WOKE UP AND COU ... GET OFFF MI ARM OH BOTHER ...

It was, however, clear to everyone that Eustace's character had been rather improved by becoming a dragon. He was anxious to help. He flew over the whole island and found that it was all mountainous and inhabited only by wild goats and droves of wild swine. Of these he brought back many carcases as provisions for the ship. He was a very humane killer too, for he could dispatch a beast with one blow of his tail so that it didn't know (and presumably still doesn't know) it had been killed. He ate a few himself, of course, but always alone, for now that he was a dragon he liked his food raw but he could never bear to let the others see him at his messy meals. And one day, flying slowly and wearily but in great triumph, he bore back to camp a great tall pine tree which he had torn up by the roots in a distant valley and which could be made into a capital mast. And in the evening if it turned chilly, as it sometimes did after the heavy rains, he was a comfort to everyone, for the whole party would come and sit with their backs against his hot sides and get well warmed and dried; and one puff of his fiery breath would light the most obstinate fire. Sometimes he would take a select party for a fly on his back, so that they could see wheeling below them the green slopes, the rocky heights, the narrow pit-like valleys, and far out over the sea to the eastward a spot of darker blue on the blue horizon which might be land.

The pleasure (quite new to him) of being liked and, still more, of liking other people, was what kept Eustace from despair. For it was very dreary being a dragon. He shuddered whenever he caught sight of his own reflection as he flew over a mountain lake. He hated the huge batlike wings, the saw-edged ridge on his back, and the cruel curved claws. He was almost afraid to be alone with himself and yet he was ashamed to be with the others. On the evenings when he was not being used as a hot-water bottle he would slink away from the camp and lie curled up like a snake between the

wood and the water. On such occasions, greatly to his surprise, Reepicheep was his most constant comforter. The noble Mouse would creep away from the merry circle at the camp-fire and sit down by the dragon's head, well to the windward to be out of the way of his smoky breath. There he would explain that what had happened to Eustace was a striking illustration of the turn of Fortune's wheel, and that if he had Eustace at his own house in Narnia (it was really a hole not a house and the dragon's head, let alone his body, would not have fitted in) he could show him more than a hundred examples of emperors, kings, dukes, knights, poets, lovers, astronomers, philosophers, and magicians, who had fallen from prosperity into the most distressing circumstances, and of whom many had recovered and lived happily ever afterwards. It did not, perhaps, seem so very comforting at the time, but it was kindly meant and Eustace never forgot it.

But of course what hung over everyone like a cloud was the problem of what to do with their dragon when they were ready to sail. They tried not to talk of it when he was there, but he couldn't help overhearing things like, "Would he fit all along one side of the deck? And we'd have to shift all the stores to the other side down below so as to balance," or, "Would towing him be any good?" or "Would he be able to keep up by flying?" and (most often of all), "But how are we to feed him?" And poor Eustace realised more and more that since the first day he came on board he had been an unmitigated nuisance and that he was now a greater nuisance still. And this ate into his mind, just as that bracelet ate into his foreleg. He knew that it only made it worse to tear at it with his great teeth, but he couldn't help tearing now and then, especially on hot nights.

About six days after they had landed on Dragon Island Edmund happened to wake up very early one morning. It was just getting grey so that you could see the tree-trunks if they were between you and the bay but not in the other direction. As he woke he thought he heard something moving, so he raised himself on one elbow and looked about him: and presently he thought he saw a dark figure moving on the seaward side of the wood. The idea that at once occurred to his mind was, "Are we so sure there are no natives on this island after all?" Then he thought it was Caspian — it was about the right size — but he knew that Caspian had been sleeping next to him and could see that he hadn't moved. Edmund made sure that his sword was in its place and then rose to investigate.

He came down softly to the edge of the wood and the dark figure was still there. He saw now that it was too small for Caspian and too big for Lucy. It did not run away. Edmund drew his sword and was about to challenge the stranger when the stranger said in a low voice,

"Is that you, Edmund?"

"Yes. Who are you?" said he.

"Don't you know me?" said the other. "It's me — Eustace."

"By jove," said Edmund, "so it is. My dear chap — —"

"Hush," said Eustace and lurched as if he were going to fall.

"Hello!" said Edmund, steadying him. "What's up. Are you ill?"

Eustace was silent for so long that Edmund thought he was fainting; but at last he said, "It's been ghastly. You don't know ... but it's all right now. Could we go and talk somewhere? I don't want to meet the others just yet."

"Yes, rather, anywhere you like," said Edmund. "We can go and sit on the rocks over there. I say, I am glad to see you — er — looking yourself again. You must have had a pretty beastly time."

They went to the rocks and sat down looking out across the bay while the sky got paler and paler and the stars disappeared except for one very bright one low down and near the horizon.

"I won't tell you how I became a — a dragon till I can tell the others and get it all over," said Eustace. "By the way, I didn't even know it *was* a dragon till I heard you all using the word when I turned up here the other morning. I want to tell you how I stopped being one."

"Fire ahead," said Edmund.

"Well, last night I was more miserable than ever. And that beastly arm-ring was hurting like anything — —"

"Is that all right now?"

Eustace laughed — a different laugh from any Edmund had heard him give before — and slipped the bracelet easily off his arm. "There it is," he said, "and anyone who likes can have it as far as I'm concerned. Well, as I say, I was lying awake and wondering what on earth would become of me. And then — but, mind you, it may have been all a dream. I don't know."

"Go on," said Edmund, with considerable patience.

"Well, anyway, I looked up and saw the very last thing I expected: a huge lion coming slowly towards me. And one queer thing was that there was no moon last night, but there was moonlight where the lion was. So it came nearer and nearer. I was terribly afraid of it. You may think that, being

a dragon, I could have knocked any lion out easily enough. But it wasn't that kind of fear. I wasn't afraid of it eating me, I was just afraid of *it* — if you can understand. Well, it came close up to me and looked straight into my eyes. And I shut my eyes tight. But that wasn't any good because it told me to follow it."

"You mean it spoke?"

"I don't know. Now that you mention it, I don't think it did. But it told me all the same. And I knew I'd have to do what it told me, so I got up and followed it. And it led me a long way into the mountains. And there was always this moonlight over and round the lion wherever we went. So at last we came to the top of a mountain I'd never seen before and on the top of this mountain there was a garden — trees and fruit and everything. In the middle of it there was a well.

"I knew it was a well because you could see the water bubbling up from the bottom of it: but it was a lot bigger than most wells — like a very big, round bath with marble steps going down into it. The water was as clear as anything and I thought if I could get in there and bathe it would ease the pain in my leg. But the lion told me I must undress first. Mind you, I don't know if he said any words out loud or not.

"I was just going to say that I couldn't undress because I hadn't any clothes on when I suddenly thought that dragons are snaky sort of things and snakes can cast their skins. Oh, of course, thought I, that's what the lion means. So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper and, instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully, like it does after an illness, or as if I was a banana. In a minute or two I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bathe.

"But just as I was going to put my feet into the water I looked down and saw that they were all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as they had been before. Oh, that's all right, said I, it only means I had another smaller suit on underneath the first one, and I'll have to get out of it too. So I scratched and tore again and this under skin peeled off beautifully and out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down to the well for my bathe.

“Well, exactly the same thing happened again. And I thought to myself, oh dear, how ever many skins have I got to take off? For I was longing to bathe my leg. So I scratched away for the third time and got off a third skin, just like the two others, and stepped out of it. But as soon as I looked at myself in the water I knew it had been no good.

“Then the lion said — but I don’t know if it spoke — You will have to let me undress you. I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

“The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I’ve ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know — if you’ve ever picked the scab of a sore place. It hurts like billy-oh but it *is* such fun to see it coming away.”

“I know exactly what you mean,” said Edmund.

“Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off — just as I thought I’d done it myself the other three times, only they hadn’t hurt — and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobbly looking than the others had been. And there was I as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me — I didn’t like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I’d no skin on — and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I’d turned into a boy again. You’d think me simply phoney if I told you how I felt about my own arms. I know they’ve no muscle and are pretty mouldy compared with Caspian’s, but I was so glad to see them.

“After a bit the lion took me out and dressed me — —”

“Dressed you. With his paws?”

“Well, I don’t exactly remember that bit. But he did somehow or other: in new clothes — the same I’ve got on now, as a matter of fact. And then suddenly I was back here. Which is what makes me think it must have been a dream.”

“No. It wasn’t a dream,” said Edmund.

“Why not?”

“Well, there are the clothes, for one thing. And you have been — well, un-dragoned, for another.”

“What do you think it was, then?” asked Eustace.

“I think you’ve seen Aslan,” said Edmund.

“Aslan!” said Eustace. “I’ve heard that name mentioned several times since we joined the *Dawn Treader*. And I felt — I don’t know what — I hated it. But I was hating everything then. And by the way, I’d like to apologise. I’m afraid I’ve been pretty beastly.”

“That’s all right,” said Edmund. “Between ourselves, you haven’t been as bad as I was on my first trip to Narnia. You were only an ass, but I was a traitor.”

“Well, don’t tell me about it, then,” said Eustace. “But who is Aslan? Do you know him?”

“Well — he knows me,” said Edmund. “He is the great Lion, the son of the Emperor over Sea, who saved me and saved Narnia. We’ve all seen him. Lucy sees him most often. And it may be Aslan’s country we are sailing to.”

Neither said anything for a while. The last bright star had vanished and though they could not see the sunrise because of the mountains on their right they knew it was going on because the sky above them and the bay before them turned the colour of roses. Then some bird of the parrot kind screamed in the wood behind them, they heard movements among the trees, and finally a blast on Caspian’s horn. The camp was astir.

Great was the rejoicing when Edmund and the restored Eustace walked into the breakfast circle round the camp-fire. And now of course everyone heard the earlier part of his story. People wondered whether the other dragon had killed the Lord Octesian several years ago or whether Octesian himself had been the old dragon. The jewels with which Eustace had crammed his pockets in the cave had disappeared along with the clothes he had then been wearing: but no one, least of all Eustace himself, felt any desire to go back to that valley for more treasure.

In a few days now the *Dawn Treader*, re-masted, re-painted, and well stored, was ready to sail. Before they embarked Caspian caused to be cut on a smooth cliff facing the bay the words:

DRAGON ISLAND
DISCOVERED BY CASPIAN X, KING OF NARNIA, ETC.
IN THE FOURTH

YEAR OF HIS REIGN.
HERE, AS WE SUPPOSE, THE LORD OCTESIAN
HAD HIS DEATH

It would be nice, and fairly nearly true, to say that “from that time forth Eustace was a different boy”. To be strictly accurate, he began to be a different boy. He had relapses. There were still many days when he could be very tiresome. But most of those I shall not notice. The cure had begun.

The Lord Octesian’s arm ring had a curious fate. Eustace did not want it and offered it to Caspian and Caspian offered it to Lucy. She did not care about having it. “Very well, then, catch as catch can,” said Caspian and flung it up in the air. This was when they were all standing looking at the inscription. Up went the ring, flashing in the sunlight, and caught, and hung, as neatly as a well-thrown quoit, on a little projection in the rock. No one could climb up to get it from below and no one could climb down to get it from above. And there, for all I know, it is hanging still and may hang till that world ends.

Chapter VIII

TWO NARROW ESCAPES

Everyone was cheerful as the *Dawn Treader* sailed from Dragon Island. They had fair wind as soon as they were out of the bay and came early next morning to the unknown land which some of them had seen when flying over the mountains while Eustace was still a dragon. It was a low green island inhabited by nothing but rabbits and a few goats, but from the ruins of stone huts, and from blackened places where fires had been, they judged that it had been peopled not long before. There were also some bones and broken weapons.

"Pirates' work," said Caspian.

"Or the dragon's," said Edmund.

The only other thing they found here was a little skin boat or coracle on the sands. It was made of hide stretched over a wicker framework. It was a tiny boat, barely four feet long, and the paddle which still lay in it was in proportion. They thought that either it had been made for a child or else that the people of that country had been Dwarfs. Reepicheep decided to keep it, as it was just the right size for him; so it was taken on board. They called that land Burnt Island and sailed away before noon.

For some five days they ran before a south-south-east wind, out of sight of all lands and seeing neither fish nor gull. Then they had a day that rained hard till the afternoon. Eustace lost two games of chess to Reepicheep and began to get rather like his old and disagreeable self again, and Edmund said he wished they could have gone to America with Susan. Then Lucy looked out of the stern windows and said:

"Hello! I do believe it's stopping. And what's that?"

They all tumbled up on to the poop at this and found that the rain had stopped and that Drinian, who was on watch, was also staring hard at something astern. Or rather, at several things. They looked a little like smooth rounded rocks, a whole line of them with intervals of about forty feet in between.

"But they can't be rocks," Drinian was saying, "because they weren't there five minutes ago."

"And one's just disappeared," said Lucy.

“Yes, and there’s another one coming up,” said Edmund.

“And nearer,” said Eustace.

“Hang it!” said Caspian. “The whole thing is moving this way.”

“And moving a great deal quicker than we can sail, Sire,” said Drinian. “It’ll be up with us in a minute.”

They all held their breath, for it is not at all nice to be pursued by an unknown something either on land or sea. But what it turned out to be was far worse than anyone had suspected. Suddenly, only about the length of a cricket pitch from their port side, an appalling head reared itself out of the sea. It was all greens and vermilions with purple blotches — except where shell fish clung to it — and shaped rather like a horse’s, though without ears. It had enormous eyes, eyes made for staring through the dark depths of the ocean, and a gaping mouth filled with double rows of sharp fish-like teeth. It came up on what they first took to be a huge neck, but as more and more of it emerged everyone knew that this was not its neck but its body and that at last they were seeing what so many people have foolishly wanted to see — the great Sea Serpent. The folds of its gigantic tail could be seen far away, rising at intervals from the surface. And now its head was towering up higher than the mast.

Every man rushed to his weapon, but there was nothing to be done, the monster was out of reach. “Shoot! Shoot!” cried the Master Bowman, and several obeyed, but the arrows glanced off the Sea Serpent’s hide as if it was iron-plated. Then, for a dreadful minute, everyone was still, staring up at its eyes and mouth and wondering where it would pounce.

But it didn’t pounce. It shot its head forward across the ship on a level with the yard of the mast. Now its head was just beside the fighting-top. Still it stretched and stretched till its head was over the starboard bulwark. Then down it began to come — not on to the crowded deck but into the water, so that the whole ship was under an arch of serpent. And almost at once that arch began to get smaller: indeed on the starboard the Sea Serpent was now almost touching the *Dawn Treader’s* side.

Eustace (who had really been trying very hard to behave well, till the rain and the chess put him back) now did the first brave thing he had ever done. He was wearing a sword that Caspian had lent him. As soon as the serpent’s body was near enough on the starboard side he jumped up on the bulwark and began hacking at it with all his might. It is true that he

accomplished nothing beyond breaking Caspian's second best sword into bits, but it was a fine thing for a beginner to have done.

Others would have joined him if at that moment Reepicheep had not called out, "Don't fight! Push!" It was so unusual for the Mouse to advise anyone not to fight that, even in that terrible moment, every eye turned to him. And when he jumped up on the bulwark, forward of the snake, and set his little furry back against its huge scaly, slimy back, and began pushing as hard as he could, quite a number of people saw what he meant and rushed to both sides of the ship to do the same. And when, a moment later, the Sea Serpent's head appeared again, this time on the port side, and this time with its back to them, then everyone understood.

The brute had made a loop of itself round the *Dawn Treader* and was beginning to draw the loop tight. When it got quite tight — snap! — there would be floating matchwood where the ship had been and it could pick them out of the water one by one. Their only chance was to push the loop backward till it slid over the stern; or else (to put the same thing another way) to push the ship forward out of the loop.

Reepicheep alone had, of course, no more chance of doing this than of lifting up a cathedral, but he had nearly killed himself with trying before others shoved him aside. Very soon the whole ship's company except Lucy and the Mouse (which was fainting) was in two long lines along the two bulwarks, each man's chest to the back of the man in front, so that the weight of the whole line was in the last man, pushing for their lives. For a few sickening seconds (which seemed like hours) nothing appeared to happen. Joints cracked, sweat dropped, breath came in grunts and gasps. Then they felt that the ship was moving. They saw that the snake-loop was further from the mast than it had been. But they also saw that it was smaller. And now the real danger was at hand. Could they get it over the poop, or was it already too tight? Yes. It would just fit. It was resting on the poop rails. A dozen or more sprang up on the poop. This was far better. The Sea Serpent's body was so low now that they could make a line across the poop and push side by side. Hope rose high till everyone remembered the high carved stern, the dragon tail, of the *Dawn Treader*. It would be quite impossible to get the brute over that.

"An axe," cried Caspian hoarsely, "and still shove." Lucy, who knew where everything was, heard him where she was standing on the main deck staring up at the poop. In a few seconds she had been below, got the axe,

and was rushing up the ladder to the poop. But just as she reached the top there came a great crashing noise like a tree coming down and the ship rocked and darted forward. For at that very moment, whether because the Sea Serpent was being pushed so hard, or because it foolishly decided to draw the noose tight, the whole of the carved stern broke off and the ship was free.

The others were too exhausted to see what Lucy saw. There, a few yards behind them, the loop of Sea Serpent's body got rapidly smaller and disappeared into a splash. Lucy always said (but of course she was very excited at the moment, and it may have been only imagination) that she saw a look of idiotic satisfaction on the creature's face. What is certain is that it was a very stupid animal, for instead of pursuing the ship it turned its head round and began nosing all along its own body as if it expected to find the wreckage of the *Dawn Treader* there. But the *Dawn Treader* was already well away, running before a fresh breeze, and the men lay and sat panting and groaning all about the deck, till presently they were able to talk about it, and then to laugh about it. And when some rum had been served out they even raised a cheer; and everyone praised the valour of Eustace (though it hadn't done any good) and of Reepicheep.

After this they sailed for three days more and saw nothing but sea and sky. On the fourth day the wind changed to the north and the seas began to rise; by the afternoon it had nearly become a gale. But at the same time they sighted land on their port bow.

"By your leave, Sire," said Drinian, "we will try to get under the lee of that country by rowing and lie in harbour, maybe, till this is over." Caspian agreed, but a long row against the gale did not bring them to the land before evening. By the last light of that day they steered into a natural harbour and anchored, but no one went ashore that night. In the morning they found themselves in the green bay of a rugged, lonely-looking country which sloped up to a rocky summit. From the windy north beyond that summit clouds came streaming rapidly. They lowered the boat and loaded her with any of the water casks which were now empty.

"Which stream shall we water at, Drinian?" said Caspian as he took his seat in the stern-sheets of the boat. "There seem to be two coming down into the bay."

"It makes little odds, Sire," said Drinian. "But I think it's a shorter pull to that on the starboard — the eastern one."

“Here comes the rain,” said Lucy.

“I should think it does!” said Edmund, for it was already pelting hard. “I say, let’s go to the other stream. There are trees there and we’ll have some shelter.”

“Yes, let’s,” said Eustace. “No point in getting wetter than we need.”

But all the time Drinian was steadily steering to the starboard, like tiresome people in cars who continue at forty miles an hour while you are explaining to them that they are on the wrong road.

“They’re right, Drinian,” said Caspian. “Why don’t you bring her head round and make for the western stream?”

“As your Majesty pleases,” said Drinian a little shortly. He had had an anxious day with the weather yesterday, and he didn’t like advice from landsmen. But he altered course; and it turned out afterwards that it was a good thing he did.

By the time they had finished watering, the rain was over and Caspian, with Eustace, the Pevensies, and Reepicheep, decided to walk up to the top of the hill and see what could be seen. It was a stiffish climb through coarse grass and heather and they saw neither man nor beast, except sea-gulls. When they reached the top they saw that it was a very small island, not more than twenty acres; and from this height the sea looked larger and more desolate than it did from the deck, or even the fighting-top of the *Dawn Treader*.

“Crazy, you know,” said Eustace to Lucy in a low voice, looking at the eastern horizon. “Sailing on and on into that with no idea what we may get to.” But he only said it out of habit, not really nastily as he would have done at one time.

It was too cold to stay long on the ridge for the wind still blew freshly from the north.

“Don’t let us go back the same way,” said Lucy as they turned; “let’s go along a bit and come down by the other stream, the one Drinian wanted to go to.”

Everyone agreed to this and after about fifteen minutes they were at the source of the second river. It was a more interesting place than they had expected; a deep little mountain lake, surrounded by cliffs except for a narrow channel on the sea-ward side out of which the water flowed. Here at last they were out of the wind, and all sat down in the heather above the cliff for a rest.

All sat down, but one (it was Edmund) jumped up again very quickly.

“They go in for sharp stones on this island,” he said, groping about in the heather. “Where is the wretched thing? ... Ah, now I’ve got it.... Hullo! It wasn’t a stone, at all, it’s a sword-hilt. No, by jove, it’s a whole sword; what the rust has left of it. It must have lain here for ages.”

“Narnian, too, by the look of it,” said Caspian, as they all crowded round.

“I’m sitting on something too,” said Lucy. “Something hard.” It turned out to be the remains of a mail-shirt. By this time everyone was on hands and knees, feeling in the thick heather in every direction. Their search revealed, one by one, a helmet, a dagger, and a few coins; not Calormen crescents but genuine Narnian “Lions” and “Trees” such as you might see any day in the market place of Beaversdam or Beruna.

“Looks as if this might be all that’s left of one of our seven lords,” said Edmund.

“Just what I was thinking,” said Caspian. “I wonder which it was. There’s nothing on the dagger to show. And I wonder how he died.”

“And how we are to avenge him,” added Reepicheep.

Edmund, the only one of the party who had read several detective stories, had meanwhile been thinking.

“Look here,” he said, “there’s something very fishy about this. He can’t have been killed in a fight.”

“Why not?” asked Caspian.

“No bones,” said Edmund. “An enemy might take the armour and leave the body. But who ever heard of a chap who’d won a fight carrying away the body and leaving the armour?”

“Perhaps he was killed by a wild animal,” Lucy suggested.

“It’d be a clever animal,” said Edmund, “that would take a man’s mail shirt off.”

“Perhaps a dragon?” said Caspian.

“Nothing doing,” said Eustace. “A dragon couldn’t do it. I ought to know.”

“Well, let’s get away from the place, anyway,” said Lucy. She had not felt like sitting down again since Edmund had raised the question of bones.

“If you like,” said Caspian, getting up. “I don’t think any of this stuff is worth taking away.”

They came down and round to the little opening where the stream came out of the lake, and stood looking at the deep water within the circle of cliffs. If it had been a hot day, no doubt some would have been tempted to bathe and everyone would have had a drink. Indeed, even as it was, Eustace was on the very point of stooping down and scooping up some water in his hands when Reepicheep and Lucy both at the same moment cried, “Look”, so he forgot about his drink and looked.

The bottom of the pool was made of large greyish-blue stones and the water was perfectly clear, and on the bottom lay a life-size figure of a man, made apparently of gold. It lay face downwards with its arms stretched out above its head. And it so happened that as they looked at it, the clouds parted and the sun shone out. The golden shape was lit up from end to end. Lucy thought it was the most beautiful statue she had ever seen.

“Well!” whistled Caspian. “That was worth coming to see! I wonder, can we get it out?”

“We can dive for it, Sire,” said Reepicheep.

“No good at all,” said Edmund. “At least, if it’s really gold — solid gold — it’ll be far too heavy to bring up. And that pool’s twelve or fifteen feet deep if it’s an inch. Half a moment, though. It’s a good thing I’ve brought a hunting spear with me. Let’s see what the depth is like. Hold on to my hand, Caspian, while I lean out over the water a bit.” Caspian took his hand and Edmund, leaning forward, began to lower his spear into the water.

Before it was half-way in Lucy said, “I don’t believe the statue is gold at all. It’s only the light. Your spear looks just the same colour.”

“What’s wrong?” asked several voices at once; for Edmund had suddenly let go of the spear.

“I couldn’t hold it,” gasped Edmund, “it seemed so *heavy*.”

“And there it is on the bottom now,” said Caspian, “and Lucy is right. It looks just the same colour as the statue.”

But Edmund, who appeared to be having some trouble with his boots — at least he was bending down and looking at them — straightened himself all at once and shouted out in the sharp voice which people hardly ever disobey:

“Get back! Back from the water. All of you. At once!!”

They all did and stared at him.

“Look,” said Edmund, “look at the toes of my boots.”

“They look a bit yellow,” began Eustace.

“They’re gold, solid gold,” interrupted Edmund. “Look at them. Feel them. The leather’s pulled away from it already. And they’re as heavy as lead.”

“By Aslan!” said Caspian. “You don’t mean to say —— ?”

“Yes, I do,” said Edmund. “That water turns things into gold. It turned the spear into gold, that’s why it got so heavy. And it was just lapping against my feet (it’s a good thing I wasn’t barefoot) and it turned the toe-caps into gold. And that poor fellow on the bottom — well, you see.”

“So it isn’t a statue at all,” said Lucy in a low voice.

“No. The whole thing is plain now. He was here on a hot day. He undressed on top of the cliff — where we were sitting. The clothes have rotted away or been taken by birds to line nests with; the armour’s still there. Then he dived and — —”

“Don’t,” said Lucy. “What a horrible thing.”

“And what a narrow shave *we’ve* had,” said Edmund.

“Narrow indeed,” said Reepicheep. “Anyone’s finger, anyone’s foot, anyone’s whisker, or anyone’s tail, might have slipped into the water at any moment.”

“All the same,” said Caspian, “we may as well test it.” He stooped down and wrenched up a spray of heather. Then, very cautiously, he knelt beside the pool and dipped it in. It was heather that he dipped; what he drew out was a perfect model of heather made of the purest gold, heavy and soft as lead.

“The King who owned this island,” said Caspian slowly, and his face flushed as he spoke, “would soon be the richest of all the Kings of the world. I claim this land for ever as a Narnian possession. It shall be called Goldwater Island. And I bind all you to secrecy. No one must know of this. Not even Drinian — on pain of death, do you hear?”

“Who are you talking to?” said Edmund. “I’m no subject of yours. If anything it’s the other way round. I am one of the four ancient sovereigns of Narnia and you are under allegiance to the High King my brother.”

“So it has come to that, King Edmund, has it?” said Caspian, laying his hand on his sword-hilt.

“Oh, stop it, both of you,” said Lucy. “That’s the worst of doing anything with boys. You’re all such swaggering, bullying idiots — oooh! — —” Her voice died away into a gasp. And everyone else saw what she had seen.

Across the grey hillside above them — grey, for the heather was not yet in bloom — without noise, and without looking at them, and shining as if he were in bright sunlight though the sun had in fact gone in, passed with slow pace the hugest lion that human eyes have ever seen. In describing the scene Lucy said afterwards, “He was the size of an elephant,” though at another time she only said, “The size of a cart-horse.” But it was not the size that mattered. Nobody dared to ask what it was. They knew it was Aslan.

And nobody ever saw how or where he went. They looked at one another like people waking from sleep.

“What were we talking about?” said Caspian. “Have I been making rather an ass of myself?”

“Sire,” said Reepicheep, “this is a place with a curse on it. Let us get back on board at once. And if I might have the honour of naming this island, I should call it Deathwater.”

“That strikes me as a very good name, Reep,” said Caspian, “though now that I come to think of it, I don’t know why. But the weather seems to be settling and I dare say Drinian would like to be off. What a lot we shall have to tell him.”

But in fact they had not much to tell him for the memory of the last hour had all become confused.

“Their Majesties all seemed a bit bewitched when they came aboard,” said Drinian to Rhince some hours later when the *Dawn Treader* was once more under sail and Deathwater Island already below the horizon. “Something happened to them in that place. The only thing I could get clear was that they think they’ve found the body of one of these lords we’re looking for.”

“You don’t say so, Captain,” answered Rhince. “Well, that’s three. Only five more. At this rate we might be home soon after the New Year. And a good thing too. My baccy’s running a bit low. Good night, Sir.”

Chapter IX

THE ISLAND OF THE VOICES

And now the winds which had so long been from the north-west began to blow from the west itself and every morning when the sun rose out of the sea the curved prow of the *Dawn Treader* stood up right across the middle of the sun. Some thought that the sun looked larger than it looked from Narnia, but others disagreed. And they sailed and sailed before a gentle yet steady breeze and saw neither fish nor gull nor ship nor shore. And stores began to get low again, and it crept into their hearts that perhaps they might have come to a sea which went on for ever. But when the very last day on which they thought they could risk continuing their eastward voyage dawned, it showed, right ahead between them and the sunrise, a low land lying like a cloud.

They made harbour in a wide bay about the middle of the afternoon and landed. It was a very different country from any they had yet seen. For when they had crossed the sandy beach they found all silent and empty as if it were an uninhabited land, but before them there were level lawns in which the grass was as smooth and short as it used to be in the grounds of a great English house where ten gardeners were kept. The trees, of which there were many, all stood well apart from one another, and there were no broken branches and no leaves lying on the ground. Pigeons sometimes cooed but there was no other noise.

Presently they came to a long, straight, sanded path with not a weed growing on it and trees on either hand. Far off at the other end of this avenue they now caught sight of a house — very long and grey and quiet-looking in the afternoon sun.

Almost as soon as they entered this path Lucy noticed that she had a little stone in her shoe. In that unknown place it might have been wiser for her to ask the others to wait while she took it out. But she didn’t; she just dropped quietly behind and sat down to take off her shoe. Her lace had got into a knot.

Before she had undone the knot the others were a fair distance ahead. By the time she had got the stone out and was putting the shoe on again she

could no longer hear them. But almost at once she heard something else. It was not coming from the direction of the house.

What she heard was a thumping. It sounded as if dozens of strong workmen were hitting the ground as hard as they could with great wooden mallets. And it was very quickly coming nearer. She was already sitting with her back to a tree, and as the tree was not one she could climb, there was really nothing to do but to sit dead still and press herself against the tree and hope she wouldn't be seen.

Thump, thump, thump ... and whatever it was must be very close now for she could feel the ground shaking. But she could see nothing. She thought the thing — or things — must be just behind her. But then there came a thump on the path right in front of her. She knew it was on the path not only by the sound but because she saw the sand scatter as if it had been struck a heavy blow. But she could see nothing that had struck it. Then all the thumping noises drew together about twenty feet away from her and suddenly ceased. Then came the Voice.

It was really very dreadful because she could still see nobody at all. The whole of that park-like country still looked as quiet and empty as it had looked when they first landed. Nevertheless, only a few feet away from her, a voice spoke. And what it said was:

"Mates, now's our chance."

Instantly a whole chorus of other voices replied, "Hear him. Hear him. Now's our chance, he said. Well done, Chief. You never said a truer word."

"What I say," continued the first voice, "is, get down to the shore between them and their boat, and let every mother's son look to his weapons. Catch 'em when they try to put to sea."

"Eh, that's the way," shouted all the other voices. "You never made a better plan, Chief. Keep it up, Chief. You couldn't have a better plan than that."

"Lively, then, mates, lively," said the first voice. "Off we go."

"Right again, Chief," said the others. "Couldn't have a better order. Just what we were going to say ourselves. Off we go."

Immediately the thumping began again — very loud at first but soon fainter and fainter, till it died out in the direction of the sea.

Lucy knew there was no time to sit puzzling as to what these invisible creatures might be. As soon as the thumping noise had died away she got up

and ran along the path after the others as quickly as her legs would carry her. They must at all costs be warned.

While this had been happening the others had reached the house. It was a low building — only two stories high — made of a beautiful mellow stone, many windowed, and partially covered with ivy. Everything was so still that Eustace said, “I think it’s empty,” but Caspian silently pointed to the column of smoke which rose from one chimney.

They found a wide gateway open and passed through it into a paved courtyard. And it was here that they had their first indication that there was something odd about this island. In the middle of the courtyard stood a pump, and beneath the pump a bucket. There was nothing odd about that. But the pump handle was moving up and down, though there seemed to be no one moving it.

“There’s some magic at work here,” said Caspian.

“Machinery!” said Eustace. “I do believe we’ve come to a civilised country at last.”

At that moment Lucy, hot and breathless, rushed into the courtyard behind them. In a low voice she tried to make them understand what she had overheard. And when they had partly understood it even the bravest of them did not look very happy.

“Invisible enemies,” muttered Caspian. “And cutting us off from the boat. This is an ugly furrow to plough.”

“You’ve no idea what sort of creatures they are, Lu?” asked Edmund.

“How can I, Ed, when I couldn’t see them?”

“Did they sound like humans from their footsteps?”

“I didn’t hear any noise of feet — only voices and this frightful thudding and thumping — like a mallet.”

“I wonder,” said Reepicheep, “do they become visible when you drive a sword into them?”

“It looks as if we shall find out,” said Caspian. “But let’s get out of this gateway. There’s one of these gentry at that pump listening to all we say.”

They came out and went back into the path where the trees might possibly make them less conspicuous. “Not that it’s any good *really*,” said Eustace, “trying to hide from people you can’t see. They may be all round us.”

“Now, Drinian,” said Caspian. “How would it be if we gave up the boat for lost, went down to another part of the bay, and signalled to the *Dawn*

Treader to stand in and take us aboard?"

"Not depth for her, Sire," said Drinian.

"We could swim," said Lucy.

"Your Majesties all," said Reepicheep, "hear me. It is folly to think of avoiding an invisible enemy by any amount of creeping and skulking. If these creatures mean to bring us to battle, be sure they will succeed. And whatever comes of it I'd sooner meet them face to face than be caught by the tail."

"I really think Reep is in the right this time," said Edmund.

"Surely," said Lucy, "if Rhince and the others on the *Dawn Treader* see us fighting on the shore they'll be able to do *something*."

"But they won't see us fighting if they can't see any enemy," said Eustace miserably. "They'll think we're just swinging our swords in the air for fun."

There was an uncomfortable pause.

"Well," said Caspian at last, "let's get on with it. We must go and face them. Shake hands all round — arrow on the string, Lucy — swords out, everyone else — and now for it. Perhaps they'll parley."

It was strange to see the lawns and the great trees looking so peaceful as they marched back to the beach. And when they arrived there, and saw the boat lying where they had left her, and the smooth sand with no one to be seen on it, more than one doubted whether Lucy had not merely imagined all she had told them. But before they reached the sand, a voice spoke out of the air.

"No further, masters, no further now," it said. "We've got to talk with you first. There's fifty of us and more here with weapons in our fists."

"Hear him, hear him," came the chorus. "That's our Chief. You can depend on what he says. He's telling you the truth, he is."

"I do not see these fifty warriors," observed Reepicheep.

"That's right, that's right," said the Chief Voice. "You don't see us. And why not? Because we're invisible."

"Keep it up, Chief, keep it up," said the Other Voices. "You're talking like a book. They couldn't ask for a better answer than that."

"Be quiet, Reep," said Caspian, and then added in a louder voice, "You invisible people, what do you want with us? And what have we done to earn your enmity."

“We want something that little girl can do for us,” said the Chief Voice. (The others explained that this was just what they would have said themselves.)

“Little girl!” said Reepicheep. “The lady is a queen.”

“We don’t know about queens,” said the Chief Voice. (“No more we do, no more we do,” chimed in the others.) “But we want something she can do.”

“What is it?” said Lucy.

“And if it is anything against her Majesty’s honour or safety,” added Reepicheep, “you will wonder to see how many we can kill before we die.”

“Well,” said the Chief Voice. “It’s a long story. Suppose we all sit down?”

The proposal was warmly approved by the other voices but the Narnians remained standing.

“Well,” said the Chief Voice. “It’s like this. This island has been the property of a great magician time out of mind. And we all are — or perhaps in a manner of speaking, I might say, we were — his servants. Well, to cut a long story short, this magician that I was speaking about, he told us to do something we didn’t like. And why not? Because we didn’t want to. Well, then, this same magician he fell into a great rage; for I ought to tell you he owned the island and he wasn’t used to being crossed. He was terribly downright, you know. But let me see, where am I? Oh yes, this magician then, he goes upstairs (for you must know he kept all his magic things up there and we all lived down below), I say he goes upstairs and puts a spell on us. An uglifying spell. If you saw us now, which in my opinion you may thank your stars you can’t, you wouldn’t believe what we looked like before we were uglified. You wouldn’t really. So there we all were so ugly we couldn’t bear to look at one another. So then what did we do? Well, I’ll tell you what we did. We waited till we thought this same magician would be asleep in the afternoon and we creep upstairs and go to his magic book, as bold as brass, to see if we can do anything about this uglification. But we were all of a sweat and a tremble, so I won’t deceive you. But, believe me or believe me not, I do assure you that we couldn’t find anything in the way of a spell for taking off the ugliness. And what with time getting on and being afraid that the old gentleman might wake up any minute — I was all of a muck sweat, so I won’t deceive you — well, to cut a long story short, whether we did right or whether we did wrong, in the end we see a spell for

making people invisible. And we thought we'd rather be invisible than go on being as ugly as all that. And why? Because we'd like it better. So my little girl, who's just about your little girl's age, and a sweet child she was before she was uglified, though now — but least said soonest mended — I say, my little girl she says the spell, for it's got to be a little girl or else the magician himself, if you see my meaning, for otherwise it won't work. And why not? Because nothing happens. So my Clipsie says the spell, for I ought to have told you she reads beautifully, and there we all were as invisible as you could wish to see. And I do assure you it was a relief not to see one another's faces. At first, anyway. But the long and the short of it is we're mortal tired of being invisible. And there's another thing. We never reckoned on this magician (the one I was telling you about before) going invisible too. But we haven't ever seen him since. So we don't know if he's dead, or gone away, or whether he's just sitting upstairs being invisible, and perhaps coming down and being invisible there. And, believe me, it's no manner of use listening because he always did go about with his bare feet on, making no more noise than a great big cat. And I'll tell all you gentlemen straight, it's getting more than what our nerves can stand."

Such was the Chief Voice's story, but very much shortened, because I have left out what the other voices said. Actually he never got out more than six or seven words without being interrupted by their agreements and encouragements, which drove the Narnians nearly out of their minds with impatience. When it was over there was a very long silence.

"But," said Lucy at last, "what's all this got to do with us? I don't understand."

"Why, bless me, if I haven't gone and left out the whole point," said the Chief Voice.

"That you have, that you have," roared the Other Voices with great enthusiasm. "No one couldn't have left it out cleaner and better. Keep it up, Chief, keep it up."

"Well, I needn't go over the whole story again," began the Chief Voice.

"No. Certainly not," said Caspian and Edmund.

"Well, then, to put it in a nutshell," said the Chief Voice, "we've been waiting for ever so long for a nice little girl from foreign parts, like it might be you, Missie — that would go upstairs and go to the magic book and find the spell that takes off the invisibleness, and say it. And we all swore that the first strangers as landed on this island (having a nice little girl with

them, I mean, for if they hadn't it'd be another matter) we wouldn't let them go away alive unless they'd done the needful for us. And that's why, gentlemen, if your little girl doesn't come up to scratch, it will be our painful duty to cut all your throats. Merely in the way of business, as you might say, and no offence, I hope."

"I don't see all your weapons," said Reepicheep. "Are they invisible too?" The words were scarcely out of his mouth before they heard a whizzing sound and next moment a spear had stuck, quivering, in one of the trees behind them.

"That's a spear, that is," said the Chief Voice.

"That it is, Chief, that it is," said the others. "You couldn't have put it better."

"And it came from my hand," the Chief Voice continued. "They get visible when they leave us."

"But why do you want *me* to do this?" asked Lucy. "Why can't one of your own people? Haven't you got any girls?"

"We dursen't, we dursen't," said all the Voices. "We're not going upstairs again."

"In other words," said Caspian, "you are asking this lady to face some danger which you daren't ask your own sisters and daughters to face!"

"That's right, that's right," said all the Voices cheerfully. "You couldn't have said it better. Eh, you've had some education, you have. Anyone can see that."

"Well, of all the outrageous — —" began Edmund, but Lucy interrupted.

"Would I have to go upstairs at night, or would it do in daylight?"

"Oh, daylight, daylight, to be sure," said the Chief Voice. "Not at night. No one's asking you to do that. Go upstairs in the dark? Ugh."

"All right, then, I'll do it," said Lucy. "No," she said, turning to the others, "don't try to stop me. Can't you see it's no use? There are dozens of them there. We can't fight them. And the other way there *is* a chance."

"But a magician!" said Caspian.

"I know," said Lucy. "But he mayn't be as bad as they make out. Don't you get the idea that these people are not very brave?"

"They're certainly not very clever," said Eustace.

"Look here, Lu," said Edmund. "We really can't let you do a thing like this. Ask Reep, I'm sure he'll say just the same."

“But it’s to save my own life as well as yours,” said Lucy. “I don’t want to be cut to bits with invisible swords any more than anyone else.”

“Her Majesty is in the right,” said Reepicheep. “If we had any assurance of saving *her* by battle, our duty would be very plain. It appears to me that we have none. And the service they ask of her is in no way contrary to her Majesty’s honour, but a noble and heroical act. If the Queen’s heart moves her to risk the magician, I will not speak against it.”

As no one had ever known Reepicheep to be afraid of anything, he could say this without feeling at all awkward. But the boys who had all been afraid quite often, grew very red. None the less, it was such obvious sense that they had to give in. Loud cheers broke from the invisible people when their decision was announced, and the Chief Voice (warmly supported by all the others) invited the Narnians to come to supper and spend the night. Eustace didn’t want to accept, but Lucy said, “I’m sure they’re not treacherous. They’re not like that at all,” and the others agreed. And so, accompanied by an enormous noise of thumpings (which became louder when they reached the flagged and echoing courtyard) they all went back to the house.

Chapter X

THE MAGICIAN'S BOOK

The invisible people feasted their guests royally. It was very funny to see the plates and dishes coming to the table and not to see anyone carrying them. It would have been funny even if they had moved along level with the floor, as you would expect things to do in invisible hands. But they didn't. They progressed up the long dining-hall in a series of bounds or jumps. At the highest point of each jump a dish would be about fifteen feet up in the air; then it would come down and stop quite suddenly about three feet from the floor. When the dish contained anything like soup or stew the result was rather disastrous.

"I'm beginning to feel very inquisitive about these people," whispered Eustace to Edmund. "Do you think they're human at all? More like huge grasshoppers or giant frogs, I should say."

"It does look like it," said Edmund. "But don't put the idea of the grasshoppers into Lucy's head. She's not too keen on insects; specially big ones."

The meal would have been pleasanter if it had not been so exceedingly messy, and also if the conversation had not consisted entirely of agreements. The invisible people agreed about everything. Indeed most of their remarks were the sort it would not be easy to disagree with: "What I always say is, when a chap's hungry, he likes some victuals", or "Getting dark now; always does at night", or even "Ah, you've come over the water. Powerful wet stuff, ain't it?" And Lucy could not help looking at the dark yawning entrance to the foot of the staircase — she could see it from where she sat — and wondering what she would find when she went up those stairs next morning. But it was a good meal otherwise, with mushroom soup and boiled chickens and hot boiled ham and gooseberries, red currants, curds, cream, milk, and mead. The others liked the mead but Eustace was sorry afterwards that he had drunk any.

When Lucy woke up next morning it was like waking up on the day of an examination or a day when you are going to the dentist. It was a lovely morning with bees buzzing in and out of her open window and the lawn outside looking very like somewhere in England. She got up and dressed

and tried to talk and eat ordinarily at breakfast. Then, after being instructed by the Chief Voice about what she was to do upstairs, she bid good-bye to the others, said nothing, walked to the bottom of the stairs, and began going up them without once looking back.

It was quite light, that was one good thing. There was, indeed, a window straight ahead of her at the top of the first flight. As long as she was on that flight she could hear the *tick-tock-tick-tock* of a grandfather clock in the hall below. Then she came to the landing and had to turn to her left up the next flight; after that she couldn't hear the clock any more.

Now she had come to the top of the stairs. Lucy looked and saw a long, wide passage with a large window at the far end. Apparently the passage ran the whole length of the house. It was carved and panelled and carpeted and very many doors opened off it on each side. She stood still and couldn't hear the squeak of a mouse, or the buzzing of a fly, or the swaying of a curtain, or anything — except the beating of her own heart.

"The last doorway on the left," she said to herself. It did seem a bit hard that it should be the last. To reach it she would have to walk past room after room. And in any room there might be the magician — asleep, or awake, or invisible, or even dead. But it wouldn't do to think about that. She set out on her journey. The carpet was so thick that her feet made no noise.

"There's nothing whatever to be afraid of yet," Lucy told herself. And certainly it was a quiet, sunlit passage; perhaps a bit too quiet. It would have been nicer if there had not been strange signs painted in scarlet on the doors — twisty, complicated things which obviously had a meaning and it mightn't be a very nice meaning either. It would have been nicer still if there weren't those masks hanging on the wall. Not that they were exactly ugly — or not so very ugly — but the empty eye-holes did look queer, and if you let yourself you would soon start imagining that the masks were doing things as soon as your back was turned to them.

After about the sixth door she got her first real fright. For one second she felt almost certain that a wicked little bearded face had popped out of the wall and made a grimace at her. She forced herself to stop and look at it. And it was not a face at all. It was a little mirror just the size and shape of her own face, with hair on the top of it and a beard hanging down from it, so that when you looked in the mirror your own face fitted into the hair and beard and it looked as if they belonged to you. "I just caught my own reflection with the tail of my eye as I went past," said Lucy to herself. "That

was all it was. It's quite harmless." But she didn't like the look of her own face with that hair and beard, and went on. (I don't know what the Bearded Glass was for because I am not a magician.)

Before she reached the last door on the left Lucy was beginning to wonder whether the corridor had grown longer since she began her journey and whether this was part of the magic of the house. But she got to it at last. And the door was open.

It was a large room with three big windows and it was lined from floor to ceiling with books; more books than Lucy had ever seen before, tiny little books, fat and dumpy books, and books bigger than any church Bible you have ever seen, all bound in leather and smelling old and learned and magical. But she knew from her instructions that she need not bother about any of these. For the Book, the Magic Book, was lying on a reading-desk in the very middle of the room. She saw she would have to read it standing (and anyway there were no chairs) and also that she would have to stand with her back to the door while she read it. So at once she turned to shut the door.

It wouldn't shut.

Some people may disagree with Lucy about this, but I think she was quite right. She said she wouldn't have minded if she could have shut the door, but that it was unpleasant to have to stand in a place like that with an open doorway right behind your back. I should have felt just the same. But there was nothing else to be done.

One thing that worried her a good deal was the size of the Book. The Chief Voice had not been able to give her any idea whereabouts in the Book the spell for making things visible came. He even seemed rather surprised at her asking. He expected her to begin at the beginning and go on till she came to it; obviously he had never thought that there was any other way of finding a place in a book. "But it might take me days and weeks!" said Lucy, looking at the huge volume, "and I feel already as if I'd been in this place for hours."

She went up to the desk and laid her hand on the book; her fingers tingled when she touched it as if it were full of electricity. She tried to open it but couldn't at first; this, however, was only because it was fastened by two leaden clasps, and when she had undone these it opened easily enough. And what a book it was!

It was written, not printed; written in a clear, even hand, with thick downstrokes and thin upstrokes, very large, easier than print, and so beautiful that Lucy stared at it for a whole minute and forgot about reading it. The paper was crisp and smooth and a nice smell came from it; and in the margins, and round the big coloured capital letters at the beginning of each spell, there were pictures.

There was no title page or title; the spells began straight away, and at first there was nothing very important in them. They were cures for warts (by washing your hands in moonlight in a silver basin) and toothache and cramp, and a spell for taking a swarm of bees. The picture of the man with toothache was so lifelike that it would have set your own teeth aching if you looked at it too long, and the golden bees which were dotted all round the fourth spell looked for a moment as if they were really flying.

Lucy could hardly tear herself away from that first page, but when she turned over, the next was just as interesting. “But I must get on,” she told herself. And on she went for about thirty pages which, if she could have remembered them, would have taught her how to find buried treasure, how to remember things forgotten, how to forget things you wanted to forget, how to tell whether anyone was speaking the truth, how to call up (or prevent) wind, fog, snow, sleet or rain, how to produce enchanted sleeps and how to give a man an ass’s head (as they did to poor Bottom). And the longer she read the more wonderful and more real the pictures became.

Then she came to a page which was such a blaze of pictures that one hardly noticed the writing. Hardly — but she did notice the first words. They were, *An infallible spell to make beautiful her that uttereth it beyond the lot of mortals*. Lucy peered at the pictures with her face close to the page, and though they had seemed crowded and muddlesome before, she found she could now see them quite clearly. The first was a picture of a girl standing at a reading-desk reading in a huge book. And the girl was dressed exactly like Lucy. In the next picture Lucy (for the girl in the picture was Lucy herself) was standing up with her mouth open and a rather terrible expression on her face, chanting or reciting something. In the third picture the beauty beyond the lot of mortals had come to her. It was strange, considering how small the pictures had looked at first, that the Lucy in the picture now seemed quite as big as the real Lucy; and they looked into each other’s eyes and the real Lucy looked away after a few minutes because she was dazzled by the beauty of the other Lucy; though she could still see a

sort of likeness to herself in that beautiful face. And now the pictures came crowding on her thick and fast. She saw herself throned on high at a great tournament in Calormen and all the Kings of the world fought because of her beauty. After that it turned from tournaments to real wars, and all Narnia and Archenland, Telmar and Calormen, Galma and Terebinthia, were laid waste with the fury of the kings and dukes and great lords who fought for her favour. Then it changed and Lucy, still beautiful beyond the lot of mortals, was back in England. And Susan (who had always been the beauty of the family) came home from America. The Susan in the picture looked exactly like the real Susan only plainer and with a nasty expression. And Susan was jealous of the dazzling beauty of Lucy, but that didn't matter a bit because no one cared anything about Susan now.

"I *will* say the spell," said Lucy. "I don't care. I will." She said I *don't care* because she had a strong feeling that she mustn't.

But when she looked back at the opening words of the spell, there in the middle of the writing, where she felt quite sure there had been no picture before, she found the great face of a lion, of The Lion, Aslan himself, staring into hers. It was painted such a bright gold that it seemed to be coming towards her out of the page; and indeed she never was quite sure afterwards that it hadn't really moved a little. At any rate she knew the expression on his face quite well. He was growling and you could see most of his teeth. She became horribly afraid and turned over the page at once.

A little later she came to a spell which would let you know what your friends thought about you. Now Lucy had wanted very badly to try the other spell, the one that made you beautiful beyond the lot of mortals. So she felt that to make up for not having said it, she really would say this one. And all in a hurry, for fear her mind would change, she said the words (nothing will induce me to tell you what they were). Then she waited for something to happen.

As nothing happened she began looking at the pictures. And all at once she saw the very last thing she expected — a picture of a third class carriage in a train, with two schoolgirls sitting in it. She knew them at once. They were Marjorie Preston and Anne Featherstone. Only now it was much more than a picture. It was alive. She could see the telegraph posts flicking past outside the window. She could see the two girls laughing and talking. Then gradually (like when the radio is "coming on") she could hear what they were saying.

“Shall I see anything of you this term?” said Anne, “or are you still going to be all taken up with Lucy Pevensie.”

“Don’t know what you mean by *taken up*,” said Marjorie.

“Oh yes, you do,” said Anne. “You were crazy about her last term.”

“No, I wasn’t,” said Marjorie. “I’ve got more sense than that. Not a bad little kid in her way. But I was getting pretty tired of her before the end of term.”

“Well, you jolly well won’t have the chance any other term!” shouted Lucy. “Two-faced little beast.” But the sound of her own voice at once reminded her that she was talking to a picture and that the real Marjorie was far away in another world.

“Well,” said Lucy to herself, “I did think better of her than that. And I did all sorts of things for her last term, and I stuck to her when not many other girls would. And she knows it too. And to Anne Featherstone of all people! I wonder are all my friends the same? There are lots of other pictures. No. I won’t look at any more. I won’t, I won’t” — and with a great effort she turned over the page; but not before a large, angry tear had splashed on it.

On the next page she came to a spell “for the refreshment of the spirit”. The pictures were fewer here but very beautiful. And what Lucy found herself reading was more like a story than a spell. It went on for three pages and before she had read to the bottom of the page she had forgotten that she was reading at all. She was living in the story as if it were real, and all the pictures were real too. When she had got to the third page and come to the end, she said, “That is the loveliest story I’ve ever read or ever shall read in my whole life. Oh, I wish I could have gone on reading it for ten years. At least I’ll read it over again.”

But here part of the magic of the Book came into play. You couldn’t turn back. The right-hand pages, the ones ahead, could be turned; the left-hand pages could not.

“Oh, what a shame!” said Lucy. “I did so want to read it again. Well, at least, I must remember it. Let’s see ... it was about ... about ... oh dear, it’s all fading away again. And even this last page is going blank. This is a very queer book. How can I have forgotten? It was about a cup and a sword and a tree and a green hill, I know that much. But I can’t remember and what *shall* I do?”

And she never could remember; and ever since that day what Lucy means by a good story is a story which reminds her of the forgotten story in the Magician's Book.

She turned on and found to her surprise a page with no pictures at all; but the first words were *A Spell to make hidden things visible*. She read it through to make sure of all the hard words and then said it out loud. And she knew at once that it was working because as she spoke the colours came into the capital letters at the top of the page and the pictures began appearing in the margins. It was like when you hold to the fire something written in Invisible Ink and the writing gradually shows up; only instead of the dingy colour of lemon juice (which is the easiest Invisible Ink) this was all gold and blue and scarlet. They were odd pictures and contained many figures that Lucy did not much like the look of. And then she thought, "I suppose I've made everything visible, and not only the Thumpers. There might be lots of other invisible things hanging about a place like this. I'm not sure that I want to see them all."

At that moment she heard soft, heavy footfalls coming along the corridor behind her; and of course she remembered what she had been told about the Magician walking in his bare feet and making no more noise than a cat. It is always better to turn round than to have anything creeping up behind your back. Lucy did so.

Then her face lit up till, for a moment (but of course she didn't know it), she looked almost as beautiful as that other Lucy in the picture, and she ran forward with a little cry of delight and with her arms stretched out. For what stood in the doorway was Aslan himself, the Lion, the highest of all High Kings. And he was solid and real and warm and he let her kiss him and bury herself in his shining mane. And from the low, earthquake-like sound that came from inside him, Lucy even dared to think that he was purring.

"Oh, Aslan," said she, "it was kind of you to come."

"I have been here all the time," said he, "but you have just made me visible."

"Aslan!" said Lucy almost a little reproachfully. "Don't make fun of me. As if anything *I* could do would make *you* visible!"

"It did," said Aslan. "Do you think I wouldn't obey my own rules?"

After a little pause he spoke again.

"Child," he said, "I think you have been eavesdropping."

"Eavesdropping?"

“You listened to what your two schoolfellows were saying about you.”

“Oh that? I never thought that was eavesdropping, Aslan. Wasn’t it magic?”

“Spying on people by magic is the same as spying on them in any other way. And you have misjudged your friend. She is weak, but she loves you. She was afraid of the older girl and said what she does not mean.”

“I don’t think I’d ever be able to forget what I heard her say.”

“No, you won’t.”

“Oh dear,” said Lucy. “Have I spoiled everything? Do you mean we would have gone on being friends if it hadn’t been for this — and been really great friends — all our lives perhaps — and now we never shall.”

“Child,” said Aslan, “did I not explain to you once before that no one is ever told what *would have happened*?”

“Yes, Aslan, you did,” said Lucy. “I’m sorry. But please — —”

“Speak on, dear heart.”

“Shall I ever be able to read that story again; the one I couldn’t remember? Will you tell it to me, Aslan? Oh do, do, do.”

“Indeed, yes, I will tell it to you for years and years. But now, come. We must meet the master of this house.”

Chapter XI

THE DUFFLEPUDS MADE HAPPY

Lucy followed the great Lion out into the passage and at once she saw coming towards them an old man, barefoot, dressed in a red robe. His white hair was crowned with a chaplet of oakleaves, his beard fell to his girdle, and he supported himself with a curiously carved staff. When he saw Aslan he bowed low and said,

"Welcome, Sir, to the least of your houses."

"Do you grow weary, Coriakin, of ruling such foolish subjects as I have given you here?"

"No," said the Magician, "they are very stupid but there is no real harm in them. I begin to grow rather fond of the creatures. Sometimes, perhaps, I am a little impatient, waiting for the day when they can be governed by wisdom instead of this rough magic."

"All in good time, Coriakin," said Aslan.

"Yes, all in very good time, Sir," was the answer. "Do you intend to show yourself to them?"

"Nay," said the Lion, with a little half growl that meant (Lucy thought) the same as a laugh. "I should frighten them out of their senses. Many stars will grow old and come to take their rest in islands before your people are ripe for that. And to-day before sunset I must visit Trumpkin the Dwarf where he sits in the castle of Cair Paravel counting the days till his master Caspian comes home. I will tell him all your story, Lucy. Do not look so sad. We shall meet soon again."

"Please, Aslan," said Lucy, "what do you call soon?"

"I call all times soon," said Aslan; and instantly he was vanished away and Lucy was alone with the Magician.

"Gone!" said he, "and you and I quite crestfallen. It's always like that, you can't keep him; it's not as if he were a *tame* lion. And how did you enjoy my book?"

"Parts of it very much indeed," said Lucy. "Did you know I was there all the time?"

"Well, of course I knew when I let the Duffers make themselves invisible that you would be coming along presently to take the spell off. I wasn't

quite sure of the exact day. And I wasn't especially on the watch this morning. You see they had made me invisible too and being invisible always makes me so sleepy. Heigh-ho — there I'm yawning again. Are you hungry?"

"Well, perhaps I am a little," said Lucy. "I've no idea what the time is."

"Come," said the Magician. "All times may be soon to Aslan; but in my home all hungry times are one o'clock."

He led her a little way down the passage and opened a door. Passing in, Lucy found herself in a pleasant room full of sunlight and flowers. The table was bare when they entered, but it was of course a magic table, and at a word from the old man the tablecloth, silver, plates, glasses and food appeared.

"I hope that is what you would like," said he. "I have tried to give you food more like the food of your own land than perhaps you have had lately."

"It's lovely," said Lucy, and so it was; an omelette, piping hot, cold lamb and green peas, a strawberry ice, lemon-squash to drink with the meal and a cup of chocolate to follow. But the magician himself drank only wine and ate only bread. There was nothing alarming about him, and Lucy and he were soon chatting away like old friends.

"When will the spell work?" asked Lucy. "Will the Duffers be visible again at once?"

"Oh yes, they're visible now. But they're probably all asleep still; they always take a rest in the middle of the day."

"And now that they're visible, are you going to let them off being ugly? Will you make them as they were before?"

"Well, that's rather a delicate question," said the Magician. "You see, it's only *they* who think they were so nice to look at before. They say they've been uglified, but that isn't what I called it. Many people might say the change was for the better."

"Are they awfully conceited?"

"They are. Or at least the Chief Duffer is, and he's taught all the rest to be. They always believe every word he says."

"We'd noticed that," said Lucy.

"Yes — we'd get on better without him, in a way. Of course I could turn him into something else, or even put a spell on him which would make

them not believe a word he said. But I don't like to do that. It's better for them to admire him than to admire nobody."

"Don't they admire *you*?" asked Lucy.

"Oh, not *me*," said the Magician. "They wouldn't admire *me*."

"What was it you uglified them for — I mean, what they call *uglified*?"

"Well, they wouldn't do what they were told. Their work is to mind the garden and raise food — not for me, as they imagine, but for themselves. They wouldn't do it at all if I didn't make them. And of course for a garden you want water. There is a beautiful spring about half a mile away up the hill. And from that spring there flows a stream which comes right past the garden. All I asked them to do was to take their water from the stream instead of trudging up to the spring with their buckets two or three times a day and tiring themselves out besides spilling half of it on the way back. But they wouldn't see it. In the end they refused point blank."

"Are they as stupid as all that?" asked Lucy.

The Magician sighed. "You wouldn't believe the troubles I've had with them. A few months ago they were all for washing up the plates and knives before dinner: they said it saved time afterwards. I've caught them planting boiled potatoes to save cooking them when they were dug up. One day the cat got into the dairy and twenty of them were at work moving all the milk out; no one thought of moving the cat. But I see you've finished. Let's go and look at the Duffers now they can be looked at."

They went into another room which was full of polished instruments hard to understand — such as Astrolabes, Orreries, Chronoscopes, Poesimeters, Choriambuses and Theodolinds — and here, when they had come to the window the Magician said, "There. There are your Duffers."

"I don't see anybody," said Lucy. "And what are those mushroom things?"

The things she pointed at were dotted all over the level grass. They were certainly very like mushrooms, but far too big — the stalks about three feet high and the umbrellas about the same length from edge to edge. When she looked carefully she noticed too that the stalks joined the umbrellas not in the middle but at one side which gave an unbalanced look to them. And there was something — a sort of little bundle — lying on the grass at the foot of each stalk. In fact the longer she gazed at them the less like mushrooms they appeared. The umbrella part was not really round as she

had thought at first. It was longer than it was broad, and it widened at one end. There were a great many of them, fifty or more.

The clock struck three.

Instantly a most extraordinary thing happened. Each of the “mushrooms” suddenly turned upside-down. The little bundles which had lain at the bottom of the stalks were heads and bodies. The stalks themselves were legs. But not two legs to each body. Each body had a single thick leg right under it (not to one side like the leg of a one-legged man) and at the end of it, a single enormous foot — a broad-toed foot with the toes curling up a little so that it looked rather like a small canoe. She saw in a moment why they had looked like mushrooms. They had been lying flat on their backs each with its single leg straight up in the air and its enormous foot spread out above it. She learned afterwards that this was their ordinary way of resting; for the foot kept off both rain and sun and for a Monopod to lie under its own foot is almost as good as being in a tent.

“Oh, the funnies, the funnies,” cried Lucy, bursting into laughter. “Did *you* make them like that?”

“Yes, yes, I made the Duffers into Monopods,” said the Magician. He too was laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. “But watch,” he added.

It was worth watching. Of course these little one-footed men couldn’t walk or run as we do. They got about by jumping, like fleas or frogs. And what jumps they made! — as if each big foot were a mass of springs. And with what a bounce they came down; that was what made the thumping noise which had so puzzled Lucy yesterday. For now they were jumping in all directions and calling out to one another, “Hey, lads! We’re visible again.”

“Visible we are,” said one in a tasselled red cap who was obviously the Chief Monopod. “And what I say is, when chaps are visible, why they can see one another.”

“Ah, there it is, there it is, Chief,” cried all the others. “There’s the point. No one’s got a clearer head than you. You couldn’t have made it plainer.”

“She caught the old man napping, that little girl did,” said the Chief Monopod. “We’ve beaten him this time.”

“Just what we were going to say ourselves,” chimed the chorus. “You’re going stronger than ever to-day, Chief. Keep it up, keep it up.”

“But do they dare to talk about you like that?” said Lucy. “They seemed to be so afraid of you yesterday. Don’t they know you might be listening?”

“That’s one of the funny things about the Duffers,” said the Magician. “One minute they talk as if I ran everything and overheard everything and was extremely dangerous. The next moment they think they can take me in by tricks that a baby would see through — bless them!”

“Will they have to be turned back into their proper shapes?” asked Lucy. “Oh, I do hope it wouldn’t be unkind to leave them as they are. Do they really mind very much? They seem pretty happy. I say — look at that jump. What were they like before?”

“Common little dwarfs,” said he. “Nothing like so nice as the sort you have in Narnia.”

“It *would* be a pity to change them back,” said Lucy. “They’re so funny: and they’re rather nice. Do you think it would make any difference if I told them that?”

“I’m sure it would — if you could get it into their heads.”

“Will you come with me and try?”

“No, no. You’ll get on far better without me.”

“Thanks awfully for the lunch,” said Lucy and turned quickly away. She ran down the stairs which she had come up so nervously that morning and cannoned into Edmund at the bottom. All the others were there with him waiting, and Lucy’s conscience smote her when she saw their anxious faces and realised how long she had forgotten them.

“It’s all right,” she shouted. “Everything’s all right. The Magician’s a brick — and I’ve seen *him* — Aslan.”

After that she went from them like the wind and out into the garden. Here the earth was shaking with the jumps and the air ringing with the shouts of the Monopods. Both were redoubled when they caught sight of her.

“Here she comes, here she comes,” they cried. “Three cheers for the little girl. Ah! She put it across the old gentleman properly, she did.”

“And we’re extremely regrettable,” said the Chief Monopod, “that we can’t give you the pleasure of seeing us as we were before we were uglified, for you wouldn’t believe the difference, and that’s the truth, for there’s no denying we’re mortal ugly now, so we won’t deceive you.”

“Eh, that we are, Chief, that we are,” echoed the others, bouncing like so many toy balloons. “You’ve said it, you’ve said it.”

“But I don’t think you are at all,” said Lucy, shouting to make herself heard. “I think you look very nice.”

“Hear her, hear her,” said the Monopods. “True for you, Missie. Very nice we look. You couldn’t find a handsomer lot.” They said this without any surprise and did not seem to notice that they had changed their minds.

“She’s a-saying,” remarked the Chief Monopod, “as how we looked very nice before we were uglified.”

“True for you, Chief, true for you,” chanted the others. “That’s what she says. We heard her ourselves.”

“I did *not*,” bawled Lucy. “I said you’re very nice *now*.”

“So she did, so she did,” said the Chief Monopod, “said we were very nice then.”

“Hear ’em both, hear ’em both,” said the Monopods. “There’s a pair for you. Always right. They couldn’t have put it better.”

“But we’re saying just the opposite,” said Lucy, stamping her foot with impatience.

“So you are, to be sure, so you are,” said the Monopods. “Nothing like an opposite. Keep it up, both of you.”

“You’re enough to drive anyone mad,” said Lucy, and gave it up. But the Monopods seemed perfectly contented, and she decided that on the whole the conversation had been a success.

And before everyone went to bed that evening something else happened which made them even more satisfied with their one-legged condition. Caspian and all the Narnians went back as soon as possible to the shore to give their news to Rhince and the others on board the *Dawn Treader*, who were by now very anxious. And, of course, the Monopods went with them, bouncing like footballs and agreeing with one another in loud voices till Eustace said, “I wish the Magician would make them inaudible instead of invisible.” (He was soon sorry he had spoken because then he had to explain that an inaudible thing is something you can’t hear, and though he took a lot of trouble he never felt sure that the Monopods had really understood, and what especially annoyed him was that they said in the end, “Eh, he can’t put things the way our Chief does. But you’ll learn, young man. Hark to *him*. He’ll show you how to say things. There’s a speaker for you!”) When they reached the bay, Reepicheep had a brilliant idea. He had his little coracle lowered and paddled himself about in it till the Monopods were thoroughly interested. He then stood up in it and said, “Worthy and intelligent Monopods, you do not need boats. Each of you has a foot that

will do instead. Just jump as lightly as you can on the water and see what happens."

The Chief Monopod hung back and warned the others that they'd find the water powerful wet, but one or two of the younger ones tried it almost at once; and then a few others followed their example, and at last the whole lot did the same. It worked perfectly. The huge single foot of a Monopod acted as a natural raft or boat, and when Reepicheep had taught them how to cut rude paddles for themselves, they all paddled about the bay and round the *Dawn Treader*, looking for all the world like a fleet of little canoes with a fat dwarf standing up in the extreme stern of each. And they had races, and bottles of wine were lowered down to them from the ship as prizes, and the sailors stood leaning over the ship's sides and laughed till their own sides ached.

The Duffers were also very pleased with their new name of Monopods, which seemed to them a magnificent name though they never got it right. "That's what we are," they bellowed, "Moneypuds, Pomonods, Poddymons. Just what it was on the tips of our tongue to call ourselves." But they soon got it mixed up with their old name of Duffers and finally settled down to calling themselves the Dufflepuds; and that is what they will probably be called for centuries.

That evening all the Narnians dined upstairs with the Magician, and Lucy noticed how different the whole top floor looked now that she was no longer afraid of it. The mysterious signs on the doors were still mysterious but now looked as if they had kind and cheerful meanings and even the bearded mirror now seemed funny rather than frightening. At dinner everyone had by magic what everyone liked best to eat and drink. And after dinner the Magician did a very useful and beautiful piece of magic. He laid two blank sheets of parchment on the table and asked Drinian to give him an exact account of their voyage up to date: and as Drinian spoke, everything he described came out on the parchment in fine clear lines till at last each sheet was a splendid map of the Eastern Ocean, showing Galma, Terebinthia, the Seven Isles, the Lone Islands, Dragon Island, Burnt Island, Deathwater, and the land of the Duffers itself, all exactly the right sizes and in the right positions. They were the first maps ever made of those seas and better than any that have been made since without Magic. For on these, though the towns and mountains looked at first just as they would on an ordinary map, yet when the Magician lent them a magnifying glass you saw

that they were perfect little pictures of the real things, so that you could see the very castle and slave market and streets in Narrowhaven, all very clear though very distant, like things seen through the wrong end of a telescope. The only drawback was that the coastline of most of the islands was incomplete, for the map showed only what Drinian had seen with his own eyes. When they were finished the Magician kept one himself and presented the other to Caspian: it still hangs in his Chamber of Instruments at Cair Paravel. But the Magician could tell them nothing about seas or lands further east. He did, however, tell them that about seven years before a Narnian ship had put in at his waters and that she had on board the lords Revilian, Argoz, Mavramorn and Rhoop: so they judged that the golden man they had seen lying in Deathwater must be the Lord Restimar.

Next day the Magician magically mended the stern of the *Dawn Treader* where it had been damaged by the sea serpent and loaded her with useful gifts. There was a most friendly parting, and when she sailed, two hours after noon, all the Dufflepuds paddled out with her to the harbour mouth, and cheered until she was out of sound of their cheering.

Chapter XII

THE DARK ISLAND

After this adventure they sailed on south and a little east for twelve days with a gentle wind, the skies being mostly clear and the air warm, and saw no bird or fish, except that once there were whales spouting a long way to starboard. Lucy and Reepicheep played a good deal of chess at this time. Then on the thirteenth day Edmund, from the fighting-top, sighted what looked like a great dark mountain rising out of the sea on their port bow.

They altered course and made for this land, mostly by oar, for the wind would not serve them to sail north-east. When evening fell they were still a long way from it and rowed all night. Next morning the weather was fair but a flat calm. The dark mass lay ahead, much nearer and larger, but still very dim, so that some thought it was still a long way off and others thought they were running into a mist.

About nine that morning, very suddenly, it was so close that they could see that it was not land at all, nor even, in an ordinary sense, a mist. It was a Darkness. It is rather hard to describe, but you will see what it was like if you imagine yourself looking into the mouth of a railway tunnel — a tunnel either so long or so twisty that you cannot see the light at the far end. And you know what it would be like. For a few feet you would see the rails and sleepers and gravel in broad daylight; then there would come a place where they were in twilight; and then, pretty suddenly, but of course without a sharp dividing line, they would vanish altogether into smooth, solid blackness. It was just so here. For a few feet in front of their bows they could see the swell of the bright greenish-blue water. Beyond that, they could see the water looking pale and grey as it would look late in the evening. But beyond that again, utter blackness as if they had come to the edge of moonless and starless night.

Caspian shouted to the boatswain to keep her back, and all except the rowers rushed forward and gazed from the bows. But there was nothing to be seen by gazing. Behind them was the sea and the sun, before them the Darkness.

“Do we go into this?” asked Caspian at length.

“Not by my advice,” said Drinian.

“The Captain’s right,” said several sailors.

“I almost think he is,” said Edmund.

Lucy and Eustace didn’t speak but they felt very glad inside at the turn things seemed to be taking. But all at once the clear voice of Reepicheep broke in upon the silence.

“And why not?” he said. “Will someone explain to me why not.”

No one was anxious to explain, so Reepicheep continued:

“If I were addressing peasants or slaves,” he said, “I might suppose that this suggestion proceeded from cowardice. But I hope it will never be told in Narnia that a company of noble and royal persons in the flower of their age turned tail because they were afraid of the dark.”

“But what manner of use would it be ploughing through that blackness?” asked Drinian.

“Use?” replied Reepicheep. “Use, Captain? If by use you mean filling our bellies or our purses, I confess it will be no use at all. So far as I know we did not set sail to look for things useful but to seek honour and adventures. And here is as great an adventure as ever I heard of, and here, if we turn back, no little impeachment of all our honours.”

Several of the sailors said things under their breath that sounded like “Honour be blowed”, but Caspian said:

“Oh, *bother* you, Reepicheep. I almost wish we’d left you at home. All right! If you put it that way, I suppose we shall have to go on. Unless Lucy would rather not?”

Lucy felt that she would very much rather not, but what she said out loud was, “I’m game.”

“Your Majesty will at least order lights?” said Drinian.

“By all means,” said Caspian. “See to it, Captain.”

So the three lanterns, at the stern, and the prow and the masthead, were all lit, and Drinian ordered two torches amidships. Pale and feeble they looked in the sunshine. Then all the men except some who were left below at the oars were ordered on deck and fully armed and posted in their battle stations with swords drawn. Lucy and two archers were posted on the fighting-top with bows bent and arrows on the string. Rynelf was in the bows with his line ready to take soundings. Reepicheep, Edmund, Eustace and Caspian, glittering in mail, were with him. Drinian took the tiller.

“And now, in Aslan’s name, forward,” cried Caspian. “A slow, steady stroke. And let every man be silent and keep his ears open for orders.”

With a creak and a groan the *Dawn Treader* started to creep forward as the men began to row. Lucy, up in the fighting-top, had a wonderful view of the exact moment at which they entered the darkness. The bows had already disappeared before the sunlight had left the stern. She saw it go. At one minute the gilded stern, the blue sea, and the sky, were all in broad daylight: next minute the sea and sky had vanished, the stern lantern — which had been hardly noticeable before — was the only thing to show where the ship ended. In front of the lantern she could see the black shape of Drinian crouching at the tiller. Down below her the two torches made visible two small patches of deck and gleamed on swords and helmets, and forward there was another island of light on the forecastle. Apart from that the fighting-top, lit by the masthead light which was only just above her, seemed to be a little lighted world of its own floating in lonely darkness. And the lights themselves, as always happens with lights when you have to have them at the wrong time of day, looked lurid and unnatural. She also noticed that she was very cold.

How long this voyage into the darkness lasted, nobody knew. Except for the creak of the rowlocks and the splash of the oars there was nothing to show that they were moving at all. Edmund, peering from the bows, could see nothing except the reflection of the lantern in the water before him. It looked a greasy sort of reflection, and the ripple made by their advancing prow appeared to be heavy, small, and lifeless. As time went on everyone except the rowers began to shiver with cold.

Suddenly, from somewhere — no one's sense of direction was very clear by now — there came a cry, either of some inhuman voice or else a voice of one in such extremity of terror that he had almost lost his humanity.

Caspian was still trying to speak — his mouth was too dry — when the shrill voice of Reepicheep, which sounded louder than usual in that silence, was heard.

"Who calls?" it piped. "If you are a foe we do not fear you, and if you are a friend your enemies shall be taught the fear of us."

"Mercy!" cried the voice. "Mercy! Even if you are only one more dream, have mercy. Take me on board. Take me, even if you strike me dead. But in the name of all mercies do not fade away and leave me in this horrible land."

"Where are you?" shouted Caspian. "Come aboard and welcome."

There came another cry, whether of joy or terror, and then they knew that someone was swimming towards them.

“Stand by to heave him up, men,” said Caspian.

“Aye aye, your Majesty,” said the sailors. Several crowded to the port bulwark with ropes and one, leaning far out over the side, held the torch. A wild, white face appeared in the blackness of the water, and then, after some scrambling and pulling, a dozen friendly hands had heaved the stranger on board.

Edmund thought he had never seen a wilder looking man. Though he did not otherwise look very old, his hair was an untidy mop of white, his face was thin and drawn, and, for clothing, only a few wet rags hung about him. But what one mainly noticed were his eyes, which were so widely opened that he seemed to have no eyelids at all, and stared as if in an agony of pure fear. The moment his feet reached the deck he said:

“Fly! Fly! About with your ship and fly! Row, row, row for your lives away from this accursed shore.”

“Compose yourself,” said Reepicheep, “and tell us what the danger is. We are not used to flying.”

The stranger started horribly at the voice of the Mouse, which he had not noticed before.

“Nevertheless you will fly from here,” he gasped. “This is the Island where Dreams come true.”

“That’s the island I’ve been looking for this long time,” said one of the sailors. “I reckoned I’d find I was married to Nancy if we landed here.”

“And I’d find Tom alive again,” said another.

“Fools!” said the man, stamping his foot with rage. “That is the sort of talk that brought me here, and I’d better have been drowned or never born. Do you hear what I say? This is where dreams — dreams, do you understand — come to life, come real. Not daydreams: dreams.”

There was about half a minute’s silence and then, with a great clatter of armour, the whole crew were tumbling down the main hatch as quick as they could and flinging themselves on the oars to row as they had never rowed before; and Drinian was swinging round the tiller, and the boatswain was giving out the quickest stroke that had ever been heard at sea. For it had taken everyone just that half-minute to remember certain dreams they had had — dreams that make you afraid of going to sleep again — and to realise what it would mean to land on a country where dreams come true.

Only Reepicheep remained unmoved.

“Your Majesty, your Majesty,” he said, “are you going to tolerate this mutiny, this poltroonery? This is a panic, this is a rout.”

“Row, row,” bellowed Caspian. “Pull for all our lives. Is her head right, Drinian? You can say what you like, Reepicheep. There are some things no man can face.”

“It is, then, my good fortune not to be a man,” replied Reepicheep with a very stiff bow.

Lucy from up aloft had heard it all. In an instant that one of her own dreams which she had tried hardest to forget came back to her as vividly as if she had only just woken from it. So that was what was behind them, on the island, in the darkness! For a second she wanted to go down to the deck and be with Edmund and Caspian. But what was the use? If dreams began coming true, Edmund and Caspian themselves might turn into something horrible just as she reached them. She gripped the rail of the fighting-top and tried to steady herself. They were rowing back to the light as hard as they could: it would be all right in a few seconds. But oh, if only it could be all right now!

Though the rowing made a good deal of noise it did not quite conceal the total silence which surrounded the ship. Everyone knew it would be better not to listen, not to strain his ears for any sound from the darkness. But no one could help listening. And soon everyone was hearing things. Each one heard something different.

“Do you hear a noise like ... like a huge pair of scissors opening and shutting ... over there?” Eustace asked Rynelf.

“Hush!” said Rynelf. “I can hear *them* crawling up the sides of the ship.”

“*It’s* just going to settle on the mast,” said Caspian.

“Ugh!” said a sailor. “There are the gongs beginning. I knew they would.”

Caspian, trying not to look at anything (especially not to keep looking behind him), went aft to Drinian.

“Drinian,” he said in a very low voice. “How long did we take rowing in — I mean rowing to where we picked up the stranger.”

“Five minutes, perhaps,” whispered Drinian. “Why?”

“Because we’ve been more than that already trying to get out.”

Drinian’s hand shook on the tiller and a line of cold sweat ran down his face. The same idea was occurring to everyone on board. “We shall never

get out, never get out," moaned the rowers. "He's steering us wrong. We're going round and round in circles. We shall never get out." The stranger, who had been lying in a huddled heap on the deck, sat up and burst out into a horrible screaming laugh.

"Never get out!" he yelled. "That's it. Of course. We shall never get out. What a fool I was to have thought they would let me go as easily as that. No, no, we shall never get out."

Lucy leant her head on the edge of the fighting-top and whispered, "Aslan, Aslan, if ever you loved us at all, send us help now." The darkness did not grow any less, but she began to feel a little — a very, very little — better. "After all, nothing has really happened to us yet," she thought.

"Look!" cried Rynelf's voice hoarsely from the bows. There was a tiny speck of light ahead, and while they watched a broad beam of light fell from it upon the ship. It did not alter the surrounding darkness, but the whole ship was lit up as if by a searchlight. Caspian blinked, stared round, saw the faces of his companions all with wild, fixed expressions. Everyone was staring in the same direction: behind everyone lay his black, sharply-edged shadow.

Lucy looked along the beam and presently saw something in it. At first it looked like a cross, then it looked like an aeroplane, then it looked like a kite, and at last with a whirring of wings it was right overhead and was an albatross. It circled three times round the mast and then perched for an instant on the crest of the gilded dragon at the prow. It called out in a strong sweet voice what seemed to be words though no one understood them. After that it spread its wings, rose, and began to fly slowly ahead, bearing a little to starboard. Drinian steered after it not doubting that it offered good guidance. But no one except Lucy knew that as it circled the mast it had whispered to her, "Courage, dear heart", and the voice, she felt sure, was Aslan's, and with the voice a delicious smell breathed in her face.

In a few moments the darkness turned into a greyness ahead, and then, almost before they dared to begin hoping, they had shot out into the sunlight and were in the warm, blue world again. And all at once everybody realised that there was nothing to be afraid of and never had been. They blinked their eyes and looked about them. The brightness of the ship herself astonished them: they had half expected to find that the darkness would cling to the white and the green and the gold in the form of some grime or scum. And then first one, and then another, began laughing.

“I reckon we’ve made pretty good fools of ourselves,” said Rynelf.

Lucy lost no time in coming down to the deck, where she found the others all gathered round the newcomer. For a long time he was too happy to speak, and could only gaze at the sea and the sun and feel the bulwarks and the ropes, as if to make sure he was really awake, while tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Thank you,” he said at last. “You have saved me from ... but I won’t talk of that. And now let me know who you are. I am a Telmarine of Narnia, and when I was worth anything men called me the Lord Rhoop.”

“And I,” said Caspian, “am Caspian, King of Narnia, and I sail to find you and your companions who were my father’s friends.”

Lord Rhoop fell on his knees and kissed the King’s hand. “Sire,” he said, “you are the man in all the world I most wished to see. Grant me a boon.”

“What is it?” asked Caspian.

“Never to bring me back there,” he said. He pointed astern. They all looked. But they saw only bright blue sea and bright blue sky. The Dark Island and the darkness had vanished for ever.

“Why!” cried Lord Rhoop. “You have destroyed it!”

“I don’t think it was us,” said Lucy.

“Sire,” said Drinian, “this wind is fair for the south-east. Shall I have our poor fellows up and set sail? And after that, every man who can be spared, to his hammock.”

“Yes,” said Caspian, “and let there be grog all round. Heigh-ho, I feel I could sleep the clock round myself.”

So all afternoon with great joy they sailed south-east with a fair wind. But nobody noticed when the albatross had disappeared.

Chapter XIII

THE THREE SLEEPERS

The wind never failed but it grew gentler every day till at length the waves were little more than ripples, and the ship glided on hour after hour almost as if they were sailing on a lake. And every night they saw that there rose in the east new constellations which no one had ever seen in Narnia and perhaps, as Lucy thought with a mixture of joy and fear, no living eye had seen at all. Those new stars were big and bright and the nights were warm. Most of them slept on deck and talked far into the night or hung over the ship's side watching the luminous dance of the foam thrown up by their bows.

On an evening of startling beauty, when the sunset behind them was so crimson and purple and widely spread that the very sky itself seemed to have grown larger, they came in sight of land on their starboard bow. It came slowly nearer and the light behind them made it look as if the capes and headlands of this new country were all on fire. But presently they were sailing along its coast and its western cape now rose up astern of them, black against the red sky and sharp as if it was cut out of cardboard, and then they could see better what this country was like. It had no mountains but many gentle hills with slopes like pillows. An attractive smell came from it — what Lucy called "a dim, purple kind of smell", which Edmund said (and Rhince thought) was rot, but Caspian said, "I know what you mean."

They sailed on a good way, past point after point, hoping to find a nice deep harbour, but had to content themselves in the end with a wide and shallow bay. Though it had seemed calm out at sea there was of course surf breaking on the sand and they could not bring the *Dawn Treader* as far in as they would have liked. They dropped anchor a good way from the beach and had a wet and tumbling landing in the boat. The Lord Rhoop remained on board the *Dawn Treader*. He wished to see no more islands. All the time that they remained in this country the sound of the long breakers was in their ears.

Two men were left to guard the boat and Caspian led the others inland, but not far because it was too late for exploring and the light would soon go.

But there was no need to go far to find an adventure. The level valley which lay at the head of the bay showed no road or track or other sign of habitation. Underfoot was fine springy turf dotted here and there with a low bushy growth which Edmund and Lucy took for heather. Eustace, who was really rather good at botany, said it wasn't, and he was probably right; but it was something of very much the same kind.

When they had gone less than a bowshot from the shore, Drinian said, "Look! What's that?" and everyone stopped.

"Are they great trees?" said Caspian.

"Towers, I think," said Eustace.

"It might be giants," said Edmund in a lower voice.

"The way to find out is to go right in among them," said Reepicheep, drawing his sword and pattering off ahead of everyone else.

"I think it's a ruin," said Lucy when they had got a good deal nearer, and her guess was the best so far. What they now saw was a wide oblong space flagged with smooth stones and surrounded by grey pillars but unroofed. And from end to end of it ran a long table laid with a rich crimson cloth that came down nearly to the pavement. At either side of it were many chairs of stone richly carved and with silken cushions upon the seats. But on the table itself there was set out such a banquet as had never been seen, not even when Peter the High King kept his court at Cair Paravel. There were turkeys and geese and peacocks, there were boars' heads and sides of venison, there were pies shaped like ships under full sail or like dragons and elephants, there were ice puddings and bright lobsters and gleaming salmon, there were nuts and grapes, pineapples and peaches, pomegranates and melons and tomatoes. There were flagons of gold and silver and curiously wrought glass; and the smell of the fruit and the wine blew towards them like a promise of all happiness.

"I *say*," said Lucy.

They came nearer and nearer, all very quietly.

"But where are the guests?" asked Eustace.

"We can provide that, Sir," said Rhince.

"Look!" said Edmund sharply. They were actually within the pillars now and standing on the pavement. Everyone looked where Edmund had pointed. The chairs were not all empty. At the head of the table and in the two places beside it there was something — or possibly three somethings.

“What are *those*?” asked Lucy in a whisper. “It looks like three beavers sitting on the table.”

“Or a huge bird’s nest,” said Edmund.

“It looks more like a haystack to me,” said Caspian.

Reepicheep ran forward, jumped on a chair and thence on to the table, and ran along it, threading his way as nimbly as a dancer between jewelled cups and pyramids of fruit and ivory salt-cellars. He ran right up to the mysterious grey mass at the end: peered, touched, and then called out:

“These will not fight, I think.”

Everyone now came close and saw that what sat in those three chairs was three men, though hard to recognise as men till you looked closely. Their hair, which was grey, had grown over their eyes till it almost concealed their faces, and their beards had grown over the table, climbing round and entwining plates and goblets as brambles entwine a fence, until, all mixed in one great mat of hair, they flowed over the edge and down to the floor. And from their heads the hair hung over the backs of their chairs so that they were wholly hidden. In fact the three men were nearly all hair.

“Dead?” said Caspian.

“I think not, Sire,” said Reepicheep, lifting one of their hands out of its tangle of hair in his two paws. “This one is warm and his pulse beats.”

“This one, too, and this,” said Drinian.

“Why, they’re only asleep,” said Eustace.

“It’s been a long sleep, though,” said Edmund, “to let their hair grow like this.”

“It must be an enchanted sleep,” said Lucy. “I felt the moment we landed on this island that it was full of magic. Oh! do you think we have perhaps come here to break it?”

“We can try,” said Caspian, and began shaking the nearest of the three sleepers. For a moment everyone thought he was going to be successful, for the man breathed hard and muttered, “I’ll go eastward no more. Out oars for Narnia.” But he sank back almost at once into a yet deeper sleep than before: that is, his heavy head sagged a few inches lower towards the table and all efforts to rouse him again were useless. With the second it was much the same. “Weren’t born to live like animals. Get to the east while you’ve a chance — lands behind the sun,” and sank down. And the third only said, “Mustard, please,” and slept hard.

“*Out oars for Narnia*, eh?” said Drinian.

“Yes,” said Caspian, “you are right, Drinian. I think our quest is at an end. Let’s look at their rings. Yes, these are their devices. This is the Lord Revilian. This is the Lord Argoz: and this, the Lord Mavramorn.”

“But we can’t wake them,” said Lucy. “What are we to do?”

“Begging your Majesties’ pardons all,” said Rhince, “but why not fall to while you’re discussing it? We don’t see a dinner like this every day.”

“Not for your life!” said Caspian.

“That’s right, that’s right,” said several of the sailors. “Too much magic about here. The sooner we’re back on board the better.”

“Depend upon it,” said Reepicheep, “it was from eating this food that these three lords came by a seven years’ sleep.”

“I wouldn’t touch it to save my life,” said Drinian.

“The light’s going uncommon quick,” said Rynelf.

“Back to ship, back to ship,” muttered the men.

“I really think,” said Edmund, “they’re right. We can decide what to do with the three sleepers to-morrow. We daren’t eat the food and there’s no point in staying here for the night. The whole place smells of magic — and danger.”

“I am entirely of King Edmund’s opinion,” said Reepicheep, “as far as concerns the ship’s company in general. But I myself will sit at this table till sunrise.”

“Why on earth?” said Eustace.

“Because,” said the Mouse, “this is a very great adventure, and no danger seems to me so great as that of knowing when I get back to Narnia that I left a mystery behind me through fear.”

“I’ll stay with you, Reep,” said Edmund.

“And I too,” said Caspian.

“And me,” said Lucy. And then Eustace volunteered also. This was very brave of him because never having read of such things or even heard of them till he joined the *Dawn Treader* made it worse for him than for the others.

“I beseech your Majesty — —” began Drinian.

“No, my Lord,” said Caspian. “Your place is with the ship, and you have had a day’s work while we five have idled.” There was a lot of argument about this but in the end Caspian had his way. As the crew marched off to the shore in the gathering dusk none of the five watchers, except perhaps Reepicheep, could avoid a cold feeling in the stomach.

They took some time choosing their seats at the perilous table. Probably everyone had the same reason but no one said it out loud. For it was really a rather nasty choice. One could hardly bear to sit all night next to those three terrible hairy objects which, if not dead, were certainly not alive in the ordinary sense. On the other hand, to sit at the far end, so that you would see them less and less as the night grew darker, and wouldn't know if they were moving, and perhaps wouldn't see them at all by about two o'clock — no, it was not to be thought of. So they sauntered round and round the table saying, "What about here?" and "Or perhaps a bit further on", or, "Why not on this side?" till at last they settled down somewhere about the middle but nearer to the sleepers than to the other end. It was about ten by now and almost dark. Those strange new constellations burned in the east. Lucy would have liked it better if they had been the Leopard and the Ship and other old friends of the Narnian sky.

They wrapped themselves in their sea cloaks and sat still and waited. At first there was some attempt at talk but it didn't come to much. And they sat and sat. And all the time they heard the waves breaking on the beach.

After hours that seemed like ages there came a moment when they all knew they had been dozing a moment before but were all suddenly wide awake. The stars were all in quite different positions from those they had last noticed. The sky was very black except for the faintest possible greyness in the east. They were cold, though thirsty, and stiff. And none of them spoke because now at last something was happening.

Before them, beyond the pillars, there was the slope of a low hill. And now a door opened in the hillside, and light appeared in the doorway, and a figure came out, and the door shut behind it. The figure carried a light, and this light was really all that they could see distinctly. It came slowly nearer and nearer till at last it stood right at the table opposite to them. Now they could see that it was a tall girl, dressed in a single long garment of clear blue which left her arms bare. She was bareheaded and her yellow hair hung down her back. And when they looked at her they thought they had never before known what beauty meant.

The light which she had been carrying was a tall candle in a silver candlestick which she now set upon the table. If there had been any wind off the sea earlier in the night it must have died down by now, for the flame of the candle burned as straight and still as if it were in a room with the

windows shut and the curtains drawn. Gold and silver on the table shone in its light.

Lucy now noticed something lying lengthwise on the table which had escaped her attention before. It was a knife of stone, sharp as steel, a cruel-looking, ancient-looking thing.

No one had yet spoken a word. Then — Reepicheep first, and Caspian next — they all rose to their feet, because they felt that she was a great lady.

"Travellers who have come from far to Aslan's table," said the girl. "Why do you not eat and drink?"

"Madam," said Caspian, "we feared the food because we thought it had cast our friends into an enchanted sleep."

"They have never tasted it," she said.

"Please," said Lucy, "what happened to them?"

"Seven years ago," said the girl, "they came here in a ship whose sails were rags and her timbers ready to fall apart. There were a few others with them, sailors, and when they came to this table one said, 'Here is the good place. Let us set sail and reef sail and row no longer but sit down and end our days in peace!' And the second said, 'No, let us re-embark and sail for Narnia and the west; it may be that Miraz is dead.' But the third, who was a very masterful man, leaped up and said, 'No, by heaven. We are men and Telmarines, not brutes. What should we do but seek, adventure after adventure? We have not long to live in any event. Let us spend what is left in seeking the unpeopled world behind the sunrise.' And as they quarrelled he caught up the Knife of Stone which lies there on the table and would have fought with his comrades. But it is a thing not right for him to touch. And as his fingers closed upon the hilt, deep sleep fell upon all the three. And till the enchantment is undone they will never wake."

"What is this Knife of Stone?" asked Eustace.

"Do none of you know it?" said the girl.

"I — I think," said Lucy, "I've seen something like it before. It was a knife like it that the White Witch used when she killed Aslan at the Stone Table long ago."

"It was the same," said the girl, "and it was brought here to be kept in honour while the world lasts."

Edmund, who had been looking more and more uncomfortable for the last few minutes, now spoke.

“Look here,” he said, “I hope I’m not a coward — about eating this food, I mean — and I’m sure I don’t mean to be rude. But we have had a lot of queer adventures on this voyage of ours and things aren’t always what they seem. When I look in your face I can’t help believing all you say: but then that’s just what might happen with a witch too. How are we to know you’re a friend?”

“You can’t know,” said the girl. “You can only believe — or not.”

After a moment’s pause Reepicheep’s small voice was heard.

“Sire,” he said to Caspian, “of your courtesy fill my cup with wine from that flagon: it is too big for me to lift. I will drink to the lady.”

Caspian obeyed and the Mouse, standing on the table, held up a golden cup between its tiny paws and said, “Lady, I pledge you.” Then it fell to on cold peacock, and in a short while everyone else followed its example. All were very hungry and the meal, if not quite what you wanted for a very early breakfast, was excellent as a very late supper.

“Why is it called Aslan’s table?” asked Lucy presently.

“It is set here by his bidding,” said the girl, “for those who come so far. Some call this island the World’s End, for though you can sail further, this is the beginning of the end.”

“But how does the food *keep*?” asked the practical Eustace.

“It is eaten, and renewed, every day,” said the girl. “This you will see.”

“And what are we to do about the Sleepers?” asked Caspian. “In the world from which my friends come” (here he nodded at Eustace and the Pevensies) “they have a story of a prince or a king coming to a castle where all the people lay in an enchanted sleep. In that story he could not dissolve the enchantment until he had kissed the Princess.”

“But here,” said the girl, “it is different. Here he cannot kiss the Princess till he has dissolved the enchantment.”

“Then,” said Caspian, “in the name of Aslan, show me how to set about that work at once.”

“My father will teach you that,” said the girl.

“Your father!” said everyone. “Who is he? And where?”

“Look,” said the girl, turning round and pointing at the door in the hillside. They could see it more easily now, for while they had been talking the stars had grown fainter and great gaps of white light were appearing in the greyness of the eastern sky.

Chapter XIV

THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE WORLD

Slowly the door opened again and out there came a figure as tall and straight as the girl's but not so slender. It carried no light but light seemed to come from it. As it came nearer, Lucy saw that it was like an old man. His silver beard came down to his bare feet in front and his silver hair hung down to his heels behind and his robe appeared to be made from the fleece of silver sheep. He looked so mild and grave that once more all the travellers rose to their feet and stood in silence.

But the old man came on without speaking to the travellers and stood on the other side of the table opposite to his daughter. Then both of them held up their arms before them and turned to face the east. In that position they began to sing. I wish I could write down the song, but no one who was present could remember it. Lucy said afterwards that it was high, almost shrill, but very beautiful, "A cold kind of song, an early morning kind of song." And as they sang, the grey clouds lifted from the eastern sky and the white patches grew bigger and bigger till it was all white, and the sea began to shine like silver. And long afterwards (but those two sang all the time) the east began to turn red and at last, unclouded, the sun came up out of the sea and its long level ray shot down the length of the table on the gold and silver and on the Stone Knife.

Once or twice before, the Narnians had wondered whether the sun at its rising did not look bigger in these seas than it had looked at home. This time they were certain. There was no mistaking it. And the brightness of its ray on the dew and on the table was far beyond any morning brightness they had ever seen. And as Edmund said afterwards, "Though lots of things happened on that trip which sound more exciting, that moment was really the most exciting." For now they knew that they had truly come to the beginning of the End of the World.

Then something seemed to be flying at them out of the very centre of the rising sun: but of course one couldn't look steadily in that direction to make sure. But presently the air became full of voices — voices which took up the same song that the Lady and her Father were singing, but in far wilder tones and in a language which no one knew. And soon after that the owners

of these voices could be seen. They were birds, large and white, and they came by hundreds and thousands and alighted on everything; on the grass, and the pavement, on the table, on your shoulders, your hands, and your head, till it looked as if heavy snow had fallen. For, like snow, they not only made everything white but blurred and blunted all shapes. But Lucy, looking out from between the wings of the birds that covered her, saw one bird fly to the Old Man with something in its beak that looked like a little fruit, unless it was a little live coal, which it might have been, for it was too bright to look at. And the bird laid it in the Old Man's mouth.

Then the birds stopped their singing and appeared to be very busy about the table. When they rose from it again everything on the table that could be eaten or drunk had disappeared. These birds rose from their meal in their thousands and hundreds and carried away all the things that could not be eaten or drunk, such as bones, rinds, and shells, and took their flight back to the rising sun. But now, because they were not singing, the whir of their wings seemed to set the whole air a-tremble. And there was the table pecked clean and empty, and the three old Lords of Narnia still fast asleep.

Now at last the Old Man turned to the travellers and bade them welcome.

"Sir," said Caspian, "will you tell us how to undo the enchantment which holds these three Narnian Lords asleep."

"I will gladly tell you that, my son," said the Old Man. "To break this enchantment you must sail to the World's End, or as near as you can come to it, and you must come back having left at least one of your company behind."

"And what is to happen to that one?" asked Reepicheep.

"He must go on into the utter east and never return into the world."

"That is my heart's desire," said Reepicheep.

"And are we near the World's End now, Sir?" asked Caspian. "Have you any knowledge of the seas and lands farther east than this?"

"I saw them long ago," said the Old Man, "but it was from a great height. I cannot tell you such things as sailors need to know."

"Do you mean you were flying in the air?" Eustace blurted out.

"I was a long way above the air, my son," replied the Old Man. "I am Ramandu. But I see that you stare at one another and have not heard this name. And no wonder, for the days when I was a star had ceased long before any of you knew this world, and all the constellations have changed."

“Golly,” said Edmund under his breath. “He’s a *retired* star.”

“Aren’t you a star any longer?” asked Lucy.

“I am a star at rest, my daughter,” answered Ramandu. “When I set for the last time, decrepit and old beyond all that you can reckon, I was carried to this island. I am not so old now as I was then. Every morning a bird brings me a fire-berry from the valleys in the Sun, and each fire-berry takes away a little of my age. And when I have become as young as the child that was born yesterday, then I shall take my rising again (for we are at earth’s eastern rim) and once more tread the great dance.”

“In our world,” said Eustace, “a star is a huge ball of flaming gas.”

“Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of. And in this world you have already met a star: for I think you have been with Koriakin.”

“Is he a retired star, too?” said Lucy.

“Well, not quite the same,” said Ramandu. “It was not quite as a rest that he was set to govern the Duffers. You might call it a punishment. He might have shone for thousands of years more in the southern winter sky if all had gone well.”

“What did he do, Sir?” asked Caspian.

“My son,” said Ramandu, “it is not for you, a son of Adam, to know what faults a star can commit. But come, we waste time in such talk. Are you yet resolved? Will you sail farther east and come again, leaving one to return no more, and so break the enchantment? Or will you sail westward?”

“Surely, Sire,” said Reepicheep, “there is no question about that? It is very plainly part of our quest to rescue these three lords from enchantment.”

“I think the same, Reepicheep,” replied Caspian. “And even if it were not so, it would break my heart not to go as near the World’s End as the *Dawn Treader* will take us. But I am thinking of the crew. They signed on to seek the seven lords, not to reach the rim of the Earth. If we sail east from here we sail to find the edge, the utter east. And no one knows how far it is. They’re brave fellows, but I see signs that some of them are weary of the voyage and long to have our prow pointing to Narnia again. I don’t think I should take them farther without their knowledge and consent. And then there’s the poor Lord Rhoop. He’s a broken man.”

“My son,” said the star, “it would be no use, even though you wished it, to sail for the World’s End with men unwilling or men deceived. That is not

how great unenchantments are achieved. They must know where they go and why. But who is this broken man you speak of?"

Caspian told Ramandu the story of Rhoop.

"I can give him what he needs most," said Ramandu. "In this island there is sleep without stint or measure, and sleep in which no faintest footfall of a dream was ever heard. Let him sit beside these other three and drink oblivion till your return."

"Oh, do let's do that, Caspian," said Lucy. "I'm sure it's just what he would love."

At that moment they were interrupted by the sound of many feet and voices: Drinian and the rest of the ship's company were approaching. They halted in surprise when they saw Ramandu and his daughter; and then, because these were obviously great people, every man uncovered his head. Some sailors eyed the empty dishes and flagons on the table with regret.

"My lord," said the King to Drinian, "pray send two men back to the *Dawn Treader* with a message to the Lord Rhoop. Tell him that the last of his old shipmates are here asleep — a sleep without dreams — and that he can share it."

When this had been done, Caspian told the rest to sit down and laid the whole situation before them. When he had finished there was a long silence and some whispering until presently the Master Bowman got to his feet, and said:

"What some of us have been wanting to ask for a long time, your Majesty, is how we're ever to get home when we do turn, whether we turn here or somewhere else. It's been west and north-west winds all the way, barring an occasional calm. And if that doesn't change, I'd like to know what hopes we have of seeing Narnia again. There's not much chance of supplies lasting while we row all that way."

"That's landsman's talk," said Drinian. "There's always a prevailing west wind in these seas all through the late summer, and it always changes after the new year. We'll have plenty of wind for sailing westward; more than we shall like from all accounts."

"That's true, Master," said an old sailor who was a Galmian by birth. "You get some ugly weather rolling up from the east in January and February. And by your leave, Sir, if I was in command of this ship I'd say to winter here and begin the voyage home in March."

"What'd you eat while you were wintering here?" asked Eustace.

“This table,” said Ramandu, “will be filled with a king’s feast every day at sunset.”

“Now you’re talking!” said several sailors.

“Your Majesties and gentlemen and ladies all,” said Rynelf, “there’s just one thing I want to say. There’s not one of us chaps as was pressed on this journey. We’re volunteers. And there’s some here that are looking very hard at that table and thinking about king’s feasts who were talking very loud about adventures on the day we sailed from Cair Paravel, and swearing they wouldn’t come home till we’d found the end of the world. And there were some standing on the quay who would have given all they had to come with us. It was thought a finer thing then to have a cabin-boy’s berth on the *Dawn Treader* than to wear a knight’s belt. I don’t know if you get the hang of what I’m saying. But what I mean is that I think chaps who set out like us will look as silly as — as those Dufflepuds — if we come home and say we got to the beginning of the world’s end and hadn’t the heart to go farther.”

Some of the sailors cheered at this but some said that that was all very well.

“This isn’t going to be much fun,” whispered Edmund to Caspian. “What are we to do if half those fellows hang back?”

“Wait,” Caspian whispered back. “I’ve still a card to play.”

“Aren’t you going to say anything, Reep?” whispered Lucy.

“No. Why should your Majesty expect it?” answered Reepicheep in a voice that most people heard. “My own plans are made. While I can, I sail east in the *Dawn Treader*. When she fails me, I paddle east in my coracle. When she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan’s country, or shot over the edge of the world in some vast cataract, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise and Peepiceek will be head of the talking mice in Narnia.”

“Hear, hear,” said a sailor, “I’ll say the same, barring the bit about the coracle, which wouldn’t bear me.” He added in a lower voice, “I’m not going to be outdone by a mouse.”

At this point Caspian jumped to his feet. “Friends,” he said, “I think you have not quite understood our purpose. You talk as if we had come to you with our hat in our hand, begging for shipmates. It isn’t like that at all. We and our royal brother and sister and their kinsman and Sir Reepicheep, the good knight, and the Lord Drinian have an errand to the world’s edge. It is our pleasure to choose from among such of you as are willing those whom

we deem worthy of so high an enterprise. We have not said that any can come for the asking. That is why we shall now command the Lord Drinian and Master Rhince to consider carefully what men among you are the hardest in battle, the most skilled seamen, the purest in blood, the most loyal to our person, and the cleanest of life and manners; and to give their names to us in a schedule." He paused and went on in a quicker voice, "Aslan's mane!" he exclaimed. "Do you think that the privilege of seeing the last things is to be bought for a song? Why, every man that comes with us shall bequeath the title of *Dawn Treader* to all his descendants and when we land at Cair Paravel on the homeward voyage he shall have either gold or land enough to make him rich all his life. Now — scatter over the island, all of you. In half an hour's time I shall receive the names that Lord Drinian brings me."

There was rather a sheepish silence and then the crew made their bows and moved away, one in this direction and one in that, but mostly in little knots or bunches, talking.

"And now for the Lord Rhoop," said Caspian.

But turning to the head of the table he saw that Rhoop was already there. He had arrived, silent and unnoticed, while the discussion was going on, and was seated beside the Lord Argoz. The daughter of Ramandu stood beside him as if she had just helped him into his chair; Ramandu stood behind him and laid both his hands on Rhoop's grey head. Even in daylight a faint silver light came from the hands of the star. There was a smile on Rhoop's haggard face. He held out one of his hands to Lucy and the other to Caspian. For a moment it looked as if he were going to say something. Then his smile brightened as if he were feeling some delicious sensation, a long sigh of contentment came from his lips, his head fell forward, and he slept.

"Poor Rhoop," said Lucy. "I *am* glad. He must have had terrible times."

"Don't let's even think of it," said Eustace.

Meanwhile Caspian's speech, helped perhaps by some magic of the island, was having just the effect he intended. A good many who had been anxious enough to *get* out of the voyage felt quite differently about being *left* out of it. And of course whenever any one sailor announced that he had made up his mind to ask for permission to sail, the ones who hadn't said this felt that they were getting fewer and more uncomfortable. So that before the half-hour was nearly over several people were positively "sucking up" to Drinian and Rhince (at least that was what they called it at

my school) to get a good report. And soon there were only three left who didn't want to go, and those three were trying very hard to persuade others to stay with them. And very shortly after that there was only one left. And in the end he began to be afraid of being left behind all on his own and changed his mind.

At the end of the half-hour they all came trooping back to Aslan's Table and stood at one end while Drinian and Rhince went and sat down with Caspian and made their report; and Caspian accepted all the men but that one who had changed his mind at the last moment. His name was Pittencream and he stayed on the Island of the Star all the time the others were away looking for the World's End, and he very much wished he had gone with them. He wasn't the sort of man who could enjoy talking to Ramandu and Ramandu's daughter (nor they to him), and it rained a good deal, and though there was a wonderful feast on the Table every night, he didn't very much enjoy it. He said it gave him the creeps sitting there alone (and in the rain as likely as not) with those four Lords asleep at the end of the Table. And when the others returned he felt so out of things that he deserted on the voyage home at the Lone Islands, and went and lived in Calormen, where he told wonderful stories about his adventures at the End of the World, until at last he came to believe them himself. So you may say, in a sense, that he lived happily ever after. But he could never bear mice.

That night they all ate and drank together at the great Table between the pillars where the feast was magically renewed: and next morning the *Dawn Treader* set sail once more just when the great birds had come and gone again.

"Lady," said Caspian, "I hope to speak with you again when I have broken the enchantments." And Ramandu's daughter looked at him and smiled.

Chapter XV

THE WONDERS OF THE LAST SEA

Very soon after they had left Ramandu's country they began to feel that they had already sailed beyond the world. All was different. For one thing they all found that they were needing less sleep. One did not want to go to bed nor to eat much, nor even to talk except in low voices. Another thing was the light. There was too much of it. The sun when it came up each morning looked twice, if not three times, its usual size. And every morning (which gave Lucy the strangest feeling of all) the huge white birds, singing their song with human voices in a language no one knew, streamed overhead and vanished astern on their way to their breakfast at Aslan's Table. A little later they came flying back and vanished into the east.

"How beautifully clear the water is!" said Lucy to herself, as she leaned over the port side early in the afternoon of the second day.

And it was. The first thing that she noticed was a little black object, about the size of a shoe, travelling along at the same speed as the ship. For a moment she thought it was something floating on the surface. But then there came floating past a bit of stale bread which the cook had just thrown out of the galley. And the bit of bread looked as if it were going to collide with the black thing, but it didn't. It passed above it, and Lucy now saw that the black thing could not be on the surface. Then the black thing suddenly got very much bigger and flicked back to normal size a moment later.

Now Lucy knew she had seen something just like that happen somewhere else — if only she could remember where. She held her hand to her head and screwed up her face and put out her tongue in the effort to remember. At last she did. Of course! It was like what you saw from a train on a bright sunny day. You saw the black shadow of your own coach running along the fields at the same pace as the train. Then you went into a cutting; and immediately the same shadow flicked close up to you and got big, racing along the grass of the cutting-bank. Then you came out of the cutting and — flick! — once more the black shadow had gone back to its normal size and was running along the fields.

"It's our shadow! — the shadow of the *Dawn Treader*" said Lucy. "Our shadow running along on the bottom of the sea. That time when it got

bigger it went over a hill. But in that case the water must be clearer than I thought! Good gracious, I must be seeing the bottom of the sea; fathoms and fathoms down."

As soon as she had said this she realised that the great silvery expanse which she had been seeing (without noticing) for some time was really the sand on the sea-bed and that all sorts of darker or brighter patches were not lights and shadows on the surface but real things on the bottom. At present, for instance, they were passing over a mass of soft purply green with a broad, winding strip of pale grey in the middle of it. But now that she knew it was on the bottom she saw it much better. She could see that bits of the dark stuff were much higher than other bits and were waving gently. "Just like trees in a wind," said Lucy. "And I do believe that's what they are. It's a submarine forest."

They passed on above it and presently the pale streak was joined by another pale streak. "If I was down there," thought Lucy, "that streak would be just like a road through the wood. And that place where it joins the other would be a crossroads. Oh, I do wish I was. Hallo! the forest is coming to an end. And I do believe the streak really was a road! I can still see it going on across the open sand. It's a different colour. And it's marked out with something at the edges — dotted lines. Perhaps they are stones. And now it's getting wider."

But it was not really getting wider, it was getting nearer. She realised this because of the way in which the shadow of the ship came rushing up towards her. And the road — she felt sure it was a road now — began to go in zigzags. Obviously it was climbing up a steep hill. And when she held her head sideways and looked back, what she saw was very like what you see when you look down a winding road from the top of a hill. She could even see the shafts of sunlight falling through the deep water on to the wooded valley; and, in the extreme distance, everything melting away into a dim greenness. But some places — the sunny ones, she thought — were ultramarine blue.

She could not, however, spend much time looking back; what was coming into view in the forward direction was too exciting. The road had apparently now reached the top of the hill and ran straight forward. Little specks were moving to and fro on it. And now something most wonderful, fortunately in full sunlight — or as full as it can be when it falls through fathoms of water — flashed into sight. It was knobbly and jagged and of a

pearly, or perhaps an ivory, colour. She was so nearly straight above it that at first she could hardly make out what it was. But everything became plain when she noticed its shadow. The sunlight was falling across Lucy's shoulders, so the shadow of the thing lay stretched out on the sand behind it. And by its shape she saw clearly that it was a shadow of towers and pinnacles, minarets and domes.

"Why! — it's a city or a huge castle," said Lucy to herself. "But I wonder why they've built it on top of a high mountain?"

Long afterwards when she was back in England and talked all these adventures over with Edmund, they thought of a reason and I am pretty sure it is the true one. In the sea, the deeper you go, the darker and colder it gets, and it is down there, in the dark and cold, that dangerous things live — the squid and the Sea Serpent and the Kraken. The valleys are the wild, unfriendly places. The sea-people feel about their valleys as we do about mountains, and feel about their mountains as we feel about valleys. It is on the heights (or, as we would say, "in the shallows") that there is warmth and peace. The reckless hunters and brave knights of the sea go down into the depths on quests and adventures, but return home to the heights for rest and peace, courtesy and council, the sports, the dances and the songs.

They had passed the city and the sea-bed was still rising. It was only a few hundred feet below the ship now. The road had disappeared. They were sailing above an open park-like country, dotted with little groves of brightly coloured vegetation. And then — Lucy nearly squealed aloud with excitement — she had seen People.

There were between fifteen and twenty of them, and all mounted on sea-horses — not the tiny little sea-horses which you may have seen in museums but horses rather bigger than themselves. They must be noble and lordly people, Lucy thought, for she could catch the gleam of gold on some of their foreheads and streamers of emerald or orange coloured stuff fluttered from their shoulders in the current. Then:

"Oh, bother these fish!" said Lucy, for a whole shoal of small fat fish, swimming quite close to the surface, had come between her and the Sea People. But though this spoiled her view it led to the most interesting thing of all. Suddenly a fierce little fish of a kind she had never seen before came darting up from below, snapped, grabbed, and sank rapidly with one of the fat fish in its mouth. And all the Sea People were sitting on their horses staring up at what had happened. They seemed to be talking and laughing.

And before the hunting fish had got back to them with its prey, another of the same kind came up from the Sea People. And Lucy was almost certain that one big Sea Man who sat on his sea-horse in the middle of the party had sent it or released it; as if he had been holding it back till then in his hand or on his wrist.

"Why, I do declare," said Lucy, "it's a hunting party. Or more like a hawking party. Yes, that's it. They ride out with these little fierce fish on their wrists just as we used to ride out with falcons on our wrists when we were Kings and Queens at Cair Paravel long ago. And then they fly them — or I suppose I should say *swim* them — at the others. How — —"

She stopped suddenly because the scene was changing. The Sea People had noticed the *Dawn Treader*. The shoal of fish had scattered in every direction: the People themselves were coming up to find out the meaning of this big, black thing which had come between them and the sun. And now they were so close to the surface that if they had been in air, instead of water, Lucy could have spoken to them. There were men and women both. All wore coronets of some kind and many had chains of pearls. They wore no other clothes. Their bodies were the colour of old ivory, their hair dark purple. The King in the centre (no one could mistake him for anything but the king) looked proudly and fiercely into Lucy's face and shook a spear in his hand. His knights did the same. The faces of the ladies were filled with astonishment. Lucy felt sure they had never seen a ship or a human before — and how should they, in seas beyond the world's end where no ship ever came?

"What are you staring at, Lu?" said a voice close beside her.

Lucy had been so absorbed in what she was seeing that she started at the sound, and when she turned she found that her arm had gone "dead" from leaning so long on the rail in one position. Drinian and Edmund were beside her.

"Look," she said.

They both looked, but almost at once Drinian said in a low voice:

"Turn round at once, your Majesties — that's right, with our backs to the sea. And don't look as if we were talking about anything important."

"Why, what's the matter?" said Lucy as she obeyed.

"It'll never do for the sailors to see *all that*," said Drinian. "We'll have men falling in love with a sea-woman, or falling in love with the under-sea

country itself, and jumping overboard. I've heard of that kind of thing happening before in strange seas. It's always unlucky to see *these* people."

"But we used to know them," said Lucy. "In the old days at Cair Paravel when my brother Peter was High King. They came to the surface and sang at our coronation."

"I think that must have been a different kind, Lu," said Edmund. "They could live in the air as well as under water. I rather think these can't. By the look of them they'd have surfaced and started attacking us long ago if they could. They seem very fierce."

"At any rate," began Drinian, but at that moment two sounds were heard. One was a plop. The other was a voice from the fighting-top shouting, "Man overboard!" Then everyone was busy. Some of the sailors hurried aloft to take in the sail: others hurried below to get to the oars; and Rhince, who was on duty on the poop, began to put the helm hard over so as to come round and back to the man who had gone overboard. But by now everyone knew that it wasn't strictly a man. It was Reepicheep.

"Drat that mouse!" said Drinian. "It's more trouble than all the rest of the ship's company put together. If there is any scrape to be got into, in it will get! It ought to be put in irons — keel-hauled — marooned — have its whiskers cut off. Can any one see the little blighter?"

All this didn't mean that Drinian really disliked Reepicheep. On the contrary he liked him very much and was therefore frightened about him, and being frightened put him in a bad temper — just as your mother is much angrier with you for running out into the road in front of a car than a stranger would be. No one, of course, was afraid of Reepicheep's drowning, for he was an excellent swimmer; but the three who knew what was going on below the water were afraid of those long, cruel spears in the hands of the Sea People.

In a few minutes the *Dawn Treader* had come round and every one could see the black blob in the water which was Reepicheep. He was chattering with the greatest excitement but as his mouth kept on getting filled with water nobody could understand what he was saying.

"He'll blurt the whole thing out if we don't shut him up," cried Drinian. To prevent this he rushed to the side and lowered a rope himself, shouting to the sailors, "All right, all right. Back to your places. I hope I can heave a mouse up without help." And as Reepicheep began climbing up the rope —

not very nimbly because his wet fur made him heavy — Drinian leaned over and whispered to him,

“Don’t tell. Not a word.”

But when the dripping Mouse had reached the deck it turned out not to be at all interested in the Sea People.

“Sweet!” he cheeped. “Sweet, sweet!”

“What are you talking about?” asked Drinian crossly. “And you needn’t shake yourself all over *me*, either.”

“I tell you the water’s sweet,” said the Mouse. “Sweet, fresh. It isn’t salt.”

For a moment no one quite took in the importance of this. But then Reepicheep once more repeated the old prophecy:

“Where the waves grow sweet,
Doubt not, Reepicheep,
There is the utter East.”

Then at last everyone understood.

“Let me have a bucket, Rynelf,” said Drinian.

It was handed him and he lowered it and up it came again. The water shone in it like glass.

“Perhaps your Majesty would like to taste it first,” said Drinian to Caspian.

The King took the bucket in both hands, raised it to his lips, sipped, then drank deeply and raised his head. His face was changed. Not only his eyes but everything about him seemed to be brighter.

“Yes,” he said, “it is sweet. That’s real water, that. I’m not sure that it isn’t going to kill me. But it is the death I would have chosen — if I’d known about it till now.”

“What do you mean?” asked Edmund.

“It — it’s like light more than anything else,” said Caspian.

“That is what it is,” said Reepicheep. “Drinkable light. We must be very near the end of the world now.”

There was a moment’s silence and then Lucy knelt down on the deck and drank from the bucket.

“It’s the loveliest thing I have ever tasted,” she said with a kind of gasp. “But oh — it’s strong. We shan’t need to eat anything now.”

And one by one everybody on board drank. And for a long time they were all silent. They felt almost too well and strong to bear it; and presently they began to notice another result. As I have said before, there had been too much light ever since they left the island of Ramandu — the sun too large (though not too hot), the sea too bright, the air too shining. Now, the light grew no less — if anything, it increased — but they could bear it. They could look straight up at the sun without blinking. They could see more light than they had ever seen before. And the deck and the sail and their own faces and bodies became brighter and brighter and every rope shone. And next morning, when the sun rose, now five or six times its old size, they stared hard into it and could see the very feathers of the birds that came flying from it.

Hardly a word was spoken on board all that day, till about dinner-time (no one wanted any dinner, the water was enough for them) Drinian said:

“I can’t understand this. There is not a breath of wind. The sail hangs dead. The sea is as flat as a pond. And yet we drive on as fast as if there were a gale behind us.”

“I’ve been thinking that, too,” said Caspian. “We must be caught in some strong current.”

“H’m,” said Edmund. “That’s not so nice if the World really has an edge and we’re getting near it.”

“You mean,” said Caspian, “that we might be just — well, poured over it?”

“Yes, yes,” cried Reepicheep, clapping his paws together. “That’s how I’ve always imagined it — the World like a great round table and the waters of all the oceans endlessly pouring over the edge. The ship will tip up — stand on her head — for one moment we shall see over the edge — and then, down, down, the rush, the speed — —”

“And what do you think will be waiting for us at the bottom, eh?” said Drinian.

“Aslan’s country perhaps,” said the Mouse, its eyes shining. “Or perhaps there isn’t any bottom. Perhaps it goes down for ever and ever. But whatever it is, won’t it be worth anything just to have looked for one moment beyond the edge of the world.”

“But look here,” said Eustace, “this is all rot. The world’s round — I mean, round like a ball, not like a table.”

“Our world is,” said Edmund. “But is this?”

“Do you mean to say,” asked Caspian, “that you three come from a round world (round like a ball) and you’ve never told me! It’s really too bad of you. Because we have fairy-tales in which there are round worlds and I always loved them. I never believed there were any real ones. But I’ve always wished there were and I’ve always longed to live in one. Oh, I’d give anything — I wonder why you can get into our world and we never get into yours? If only I had the chance! It must be exciting to live on a thing like a ball. Have you ever been to the parts where people walk about upside-down?”

Edmund shook his head. “And it isn’t like that,” he added. “There’s nothing particularly exciting about a round world when you’re there.”

Chapter XVI

THE VERY END OF THE WORLD

Reepicheep was the only person on board besides Drinian and the two Pevensies who had noticed the Sea People. He had dived in at once when he saw the Sea King shaking his spear, for he regarded this as a sort of threat or challenge and wanted to have the matter out there and then. The excitement of discovering that the water was now fresh had distracted his attention, and before he remembered the Sea People again Lucy and Drinian had taken him aside and warned him not to mention what he had seen.

As things turned out they need hardly have bothered, for by this time the *Dawn Treader* was gliding over a part of the sea which seemed to be uninhabited. No one except Lucy saw anything more of the People and even she had only one short glimpse. All morning on the following day they sailed in fairly shallow water and the bottom was weedy. Just before midday Lucy saw a large shoal of fishes grazing on the weed. They were all eating steadily and all moving in the same direction. “Just like a flock of sheep,” thought Lucy. Suddenly she saw a little Sea Girl of about her own age in the middle of them — a quiet, lonely-looking girl with a sort of crook in her hand. Lucy felt sure that this girl must be a shepherdess — or perhaps a fish-herdess — and that the shoal was really a flock at pasture. Both the fishes and the girl were quite close to the surface. And just as the girl, gliding in the shallow water, and Lucy, leaning over the bulwark, came opposite to one another, the girl looked up and stared straight into Lucy’s face. Neither could speak to the other and in a moment the Sea Girl dropped astern. But Lucy will never forget her face. It did not look frightened or angry like those of the other Sea People. Lucy had liked that girl and she felt certain the girl had liked her. In that one moment they had somehow become friends. There does not seem to be much chance of their meeting again in that world or any other. But if ever they do they will rush together with their hands held out.

After that for many days, without wind in her shrouds or foam at her bows, across a waveless sea, the *Dawn Treader* glided smoothly east. Every day and every hour the light became more brilliant and still they could bear it. No one ate or slept and no one wanted to, but they drew buckets of

dazzling water from the sea, stronger than wine and somehow wetter, more liquid, than ordinary water, and pledged one another silently in deep draughts of it. And one or two of the sailors who had been oldish men when the voyage began now grew younger every day. Everyone on board was filled with joy and excitement, but not an excitement that made one talk. The further they sailed the less they spoke, and then almost in a whisper. The stillness of that last sea laid hold on them.

"My Lord," said Caspian to Drinian one day, "what do you see ahead?"

"Sire," said Drinian, "I see whiteness. All along the horizon from north to south, as far as my eyes can reach."

"That is what I see too," said Caspian, "and I cannot imagine what it is."

"If we were in higher latitudes, your Majesty," said Drinian, "I would say it was ice. But it can't be that; not here. All the same, we'd better get men to the oars and hold the ship back against the current. Whatever the stuff is, we don't want to crash into it at this speed!"

They did as Drinian said, and so continued to go slower and slower. The whiteness did not get any less mysterious as they approached it. If it was land it must be a very strange land, for it seemed just as smooth as the water and on the same level with it. When they got very close to it Drinian put the helm hard over and turned the *Dawn Treader* south so that she was broadside on to the current and rowed a little way southward along the edge of the whiteness. In so doing they accidentally made the important discovery that the current was only about forty feet wide and the rest of the sea as still as a pond. This was good news for the crew, who had already begun to think that the return journey to Ramandu's land, rowing against stream all the way, would be pretty poor sport. (It also explained why the shepherd girl had dropped so quickly astern. She was not in the current. If she had been she would have been moving east at the same speed as the ship.)

And still no one could make out what the white stuff was. Then the boat was lowered and it put off to investigate. Those who remained on the *Dawn Treader* could see that the boat pushed right in amidst the whiteness. Then they could hear the voices of the party in the boat (clear across the still water) talking in a shrill and surprised way. Then there was a pause while Rynelf in the bows of the boat took a sounding; and when, after that, the boat came rowing back there seemed to be plenty of the white stuff inside her. Everyone crowded to the side to hear the news.

“Lilies, your Majesty!” shouted Rynelf, standing up in the bows.

“*What* did you say?” asked Caspian.

“Blooming lilies, your Majesty,” said Rynelf. “Same as in a pool in a garden at home.”

“Look!” said Lucy, who was in the stern of the boat. She held up her wet arms full of white petals and broad flat leaves.

“What’s the depth, Rynelf?” asked Drinian.

“That’s the funny thing, Captain,” said Rynelf. “It’s still deep. Three and a half fathoms clear.”

“They can’t be real lilies — not what we call lilies,” said Eustace.

Probably they were not, but they were very like them. And when, after some consultation, the *Dawn Treader* turned back into the current and began to glide eastward through the Lily Lake or the Silver Sea (they tried both these names but it was the Silver Sea that stuck and is now on Caspian’s map) the strangest part of their travels began. Very soon the open sea which they were leaving was only a thin rim of blue on the western horizon. Whiteness, shot with faintest colour of gold, spread round them on every side, except just astern where their passage had thrust the lilies apart and left an open lane of water that shone like dark green glass. To look at, this last sea was very like the Arctic; and if their eyes had not by now grown as strong as eagles’ the sun on all that whiteness — especially at early morning when the sun was hugest — would have been unbearable. And every evening the same whiteness made the daylight last longer. There seemed no end to the lilies. Day after day from all those miles and leagues of flowers there rose a smell which Lucy found it very hard to describe; sweet — yes, but not at all sleepy or overpowering, a fresh, wild, lonely smell that seemed to get into your brain and make you feel that you could go up mountains at a run or wrestle with an elephant. She and Caspian said to one another, “I feel that I can’t stand much more of this, yet I don’t want it to stop.”

They took soundings very often but it was only several days later that the water became shallower. After that it went on getting shallower. There came a day when they had to row out of the current and feel their way forward at a snail’s pace, rowing. And soon it was clear that the *Dawn Treader* could sail no further east. Indeed it was only by very clever handling that they saved her from grounding.

“Lower the boat,” cried Caspian, “and then call the men aft. I must speak to them.”

“What’s he going to do?” whispered Eustace to Edmund. “There’s a queer look in his eyes.”

“I think we probably all look the same,” said Edmund.

They joined Caspian on the poop and soon all the men were crowded together at the foot of the ladder to hear the King’s speech.

“Friends,” said Caspian, “we have now fulfilled the quest on which you embarked. The seven lords are all accounted for and as Sir Reepicheep has sworn never to return, when you reach Ramandu’s Land you will doubtless find the Lords Revilian and Argoz and Mavramorn awake. To you, my Lord Drinian, I entrust this ship, bidding you sail to Narnia with all the speed you may, and above all not to land on the Island of Deathwater. And instruct my regent, the Dwarf Trumpkin, to give to all these, my shipmates, the rewards I promised them. They have been earned well. And if I come not again it is my will that the Regent, and Master Cornelius, and Trufflehunter the Badger, and the Lord Drinian choose a King of Narnia with the consent —

“But, Sire,” interrupted Drinian, “are you abdicating?”

“I am going with Reepicheep to see the World’s End,” said Caspian.

A low murmur of dismay ran through the sailors.

“We will take the boat,” said Caspian. “You will have no need of it in these gentle seas and you must build a new one in Ramandu’s island. And now — —”

“Caspian,” said Edmund suddenly and sternly, “you can’t do this.”

“Most certainly,” said Reepicheep, “his Majesty cannot.”

“No indeed,” said Drinian.

“Can’t?” said Caspian sharply, looking for a moment not unlike his uncle Miraz.

“Begging your Majesty’s pardon,” said Rynelf from the deck below, “but if one of us did the same it would be called deserting.”

“You presume too much on your long service, Rynelf,” said Caspian.

“No, Sire! He’s perfectly right,” said Drinian.

“By the Mane of Aslan,” said Caspian, “I had thought you were all my subjects here, not my schoolmasters.”

“I’m not,” said Edmund, “and I say you can *not* do this.”

“Can’t again,” said Caspian. “What do you mean?”

“If it please your Majesty, we mean *shall not*,” said Reepicheep with a very low bow. “You are the King of Narnia. You break faith with all your subjects, and especially with Trumpkin, if you do not return. You shall not please yourself with adventures as if you were a private person. And if your Majesty will not hear reason it will be the truest loyalty of every man on board to follow me in disarming and binding you till you come to your senses.”

“Quite right,” said Edmund. “Like they did with Ulysses when he wanted to go near the Sirens.”

Caspian’s hand had gone to his sword hilt, when Lucy said, “And you’ve almost promised Ramandu’s daughter to go back.”

Caspian paused. “Well, yes. There is that,” he said. He stood irresolute for a moment and then shouted out to the ship in general.

“Well, have your way. The quest is ended. We all return. Get the boat up again.”

“Sire,” said Reepicheep, “we do not *all* return. I, as I explained before — —”

“Silence!” thundered Caspian. “I’ve been lessoned but I’ll not be baited. Will no one silence that Mouse?”

“Your Majesty promised,” said Reepicheep, “to be good lord to the Talking Beasts of Narnia.”

“Talking beasts, yes,” said Caspian. “I said nothing about beasts that never stop talking.” And he flung down the ladder in a temper and went into the cabin, slamming the door.

But when the others rejoined him a little later they found him changed; he was white and there were tears in his eyes.

“It’s no good,” he said. “I might as well have behaved decently for all the good I did with my temper and swagger. Aslan has spoken to me. No — I don’t mean he was actually here. He wouldn’t fit into the cabin, for one thing. But that gold lion’s head on the wall came to life and spoke to me. It was terrible — his eyes. Not that he was at all rough with me — only a bit stern at first. But it was terrible all the same. And he said — he said — oh, I can’t bear it. The worst thing he could have said. You’re to go on — Reep and Edmund, and Lucy, and Eustace; and I’m to go back. Alone. And at once. And what is the good of anything?”

“Caspian, dear,” said Lucy. “You knew we’d have to go back to our own world sooner or later.”

“Yes,” said Caspian with a sob, “but this is sooner.”

“You’ll feel better when you get back to Ramandu’s Land,” said Lucy.

He cheered up a little later on, but it was a grievous parting on both sides and I will not dwell on it. About two o’clock in the afternoon, well victualled and watered (though they thought they would need neither food nor drink) and with Reepicheep’s coracle on board, the boat pulled away from the *Dawn Treader* to row through the endless carpet of lilies. The *Dawn Treader* flew all her flags and hung out her shields to honour their departure. Tall and big and homelike she looked from their low position with the lilies all round them. And even before she was out of sight they saw her turn and begin rowing slowly westward. Yet though Lucy shed a few tears she could not feel it as much as you might have expected. The light, the silence, the tingling smell of the Silver Sea, even (in some odd way) the loneliness itself, were too exciting.

There was no need to row, for the current drifted them steadily to the east. None of them slept nor ate. All that night and all next day they glided eastward, and when the third day dawned — with a brightness you or I could not bear even if we had dark glasses on — they saw a wonder ahead. It was as if a wall stood up between them and the sky, a greenish-grey, trembling, shimmering wall. Then up came the sun, and at its first rising they saw it through the wall and it turned into wonderful rainbow colours. Then they knew that the wall was really a long, tall wave — a wave endlessly fixed in one place as you may often see at the edge of a waterfall. It seemed to be about thirty feet high, and the current was gliding them swiftly towards it. You might have supposed they would have thought of their danger. They didn’t. I don’t think anyone could have in their position. For now they saw something not only behind the wave but behind the sun. They could not have seen even the sun if their eyes had not been strengthened by the water of the Last Sea. But now they could look at the rising sun and see it clearly and see things beyond it. What they saw — eastward, beyond the sun — was a range of mountains. It was so high that either they never saw the top of it or they forgot it. None of them remembers seeing any sky in that direction. And the mountains must really have been outside the world. For any mountains even a quarter or a twentieth of that height ought to have had ice and snow on them. But these were warm and green and full of forests and waterfalls however high you looked. And suddenly there came a breeze from the east, tossing the top of

the wave into foamy shapes and ruffling the smooth water all round them. It lasted only a second or so but what it brought them in that second none of those three children will ever forget. It brought both a smell and a sound, a musical sound. Edmund and Eustace would never talk about it afterwards. Lucy could only say, “It would break your heart.” “Why,” said I, “was it so sad?” “Sad!! No,” said Lucy.

No one in that boat doubted that they were seeing beyond the End of the World into Aslan’s country.

At that moment, with a crunch, the boat ran aground. The water was too shallow now even for it. “This,” said Reepicheep, “is where I go on alone.”

They did not even try to stop him, for everything now felt as if it had been fated or had happened before. They helped him to lower his little coracle. Then he took off his sword (“I shall need it no more,” he said) and flung it far away across the lilied sea. Where it fell it stood upright with the hilt above the surface. Then he bade them good-bye, trying to be sad for their sakes; but he was quivering with happiness. Lucy, for the first and last time, did what she had always wanted to do, taking him in her arms and caressing him. Then hastily he got into his coracle and took his paddle, and the current caught it and away he went, very black against the lilies. But no lilies grew on the wave; it was a smooth green slope. The coracle went more and more quickly, and beautifully it rushed up the wave’s side. For one split second they saw its shape and Reepicheep’s on the very top. Then it vanished, and since that moment no one can truly claim to have seen Reepicheep the Mouse. But my belief is that he came safe to Aslan’s country and is alive there to this day.

As the sun rose the sight of those mountains outside the world faded away. The wave remained but there was only blue sky behind it.

The children got out of the boat and waded — not towards the wave but southward with the wall of water on their left. They could not have told you why they did this; it was their fate. And though they had felt — and been — very grown up on the *Dawn Treader*, they now felt just the opposite and held hands as they waded through the lilies. They never felt tired. The water was warm and all the time it got shallower. At last they were on dry sand, and then on grass — a huge plain of very fine short grass, almost level with the Silver Sea and spreading in every direction without so much as a molehill.

And of course, as it always does in a perfectly flat place without trees, it looked as if the sky came down to meet the grass in front of them. But as they went on they got the strangest impression that here at last the sky did really come down and join the earth — a blue wall, very bright, but real and solid: more like glass than anything else. And soon they were quite sure of it. It was very near now.

But between them and the foot of the sky there was something so white on the green grass that even with their eagles' eyes they could hardly look at it. They came on and saw that it was a Lamb.

"Come and have breakfast," said the Lamb in its sweet milky voice.

Then they noticed for the first time that there was a fire lit on the grass and fish roasting on it. They sat down and ate the fish, hungry now for the first time for many days. And it was the most delicious food they had ever tasted.

"Please, Lamb," said Lucy, "is this the way to Aslan's country?"

"Not for you," said the Lamb. "For you the door into Aslan's country is from your own world."

"What!" said Edmund. "Is there a way into Aslan's country from our world too?"

"There is a way into my country from all the worlds," said the Lamb; but as he spoke his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane.

"Oh, Aslan," said Lucy. "Will you tell us how to get into your country from our world?"

"I shall be telling you all the time," said Aslan. "But I will not tell you how long or short the way will be; only that it lies across a river. But do not fear that, for I am the great Bridge Builder. And now come; I will open the door in the sky and send you to your own land."

"Please, Aslan," said Lucy. "Before we go, will you tell us when we can come back to Narnia again? Please. And oh, do, do, do make it soon."

"Dearest," said Aslan very gently, "you and your brother will never come back to Narnia."

"Oh, *Aslan*!!" said Edmund and Lucy both together in despairing voices.

"You are too old, children," said Aslan, "and you must begin to come close to your own world now."

“It isn’t Narnia, you know,” sobbed Lucy. “It’s OK. We shan’t meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?”

“But you shall meet me, dear one,” said Aslan.

“Are — are you there too, Sir?” said Edmund.

“I am,” said Aslan. “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.”

“And is Eustace never to come back here either?” said Lucy.

“Child,” said Aslan, “do you really need to know that? Come, I am opening the door in the sky.” Then all in one moment there was a rending of the blue wall (like a curtain being torn) and a terrible white light from beyond the sky, and the feel of Aslan’s mane and a Lion’s kiss on their foreheads and then — the back bedroom in Aunt Alberta’s home at Cambridge.

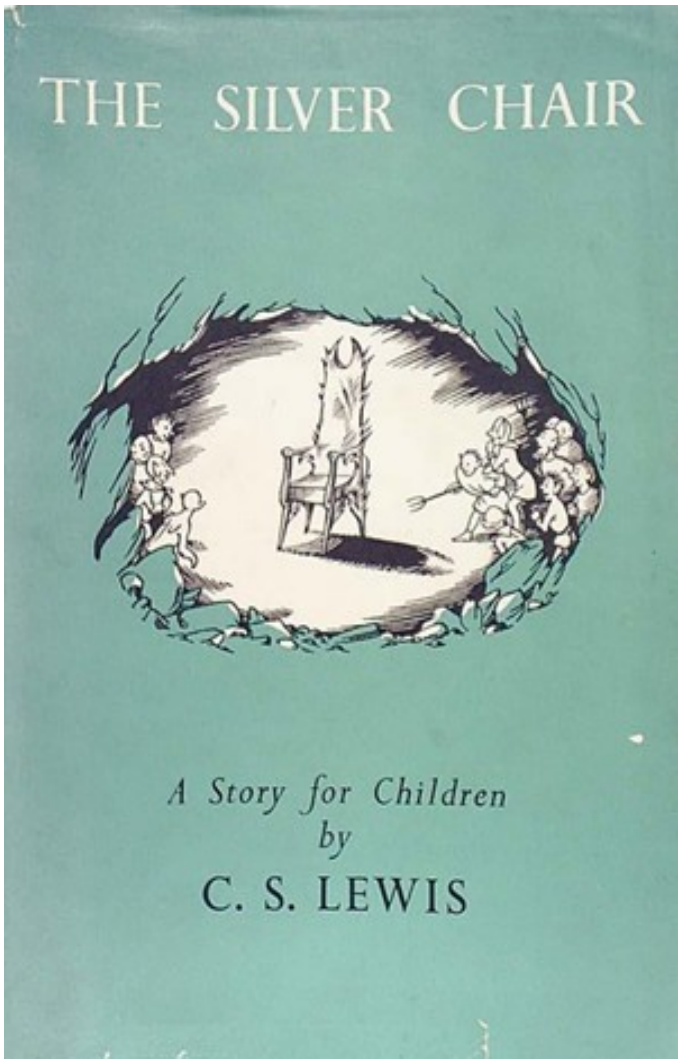
Only two more things need to be told. One is that Caspian and his men all came safely back to Ramandu’s Island. And the three lords woke from their sleep. Caspian married Ramandu’s daughter and they all reached Narnia in the end, and she became a great queen and the mother and grandmother of great kings. The other is that back in our own world everyone soon started saying how Eustace had improved, and how “You’d never know him for the same boy”: everyone except Aunt Alberta, who said he had become very commonplace and tiresome and it must have been the influence of those Pevensie children.

THE SILVER CHAIR (1953)



The fourth published novel of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Silver Chair* (1953) is set primarily in the world of Narnia, decades after *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, though less than a year later in England. The novel is dedicated to Nicholas Hardie, the son of Colin Hardie, a fellow member of the Inklings.

King Caspian X is now an old man, but his son and only heir, Prince Rilian, is missing. Aslan the lion sends two children from England to Narnia on a mission to resolve the mystery: Eustace Scrubb, from *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and his class-mate, Jill Pole. In the frame story, Eustace and Jill are students at a horrible boarding school, Experiment House. One day, they are escaping from a group of bullies, when Eustace confides to Jill that he has recently been to a land called Narnia, and that his experiences there have led to the changes in his behaviour that everyone seems to have noticed. Jill initially thinks that Eustace is lying, but when he asks her to attempt to go to Narnia with him, she agrees. When the bullies are about to converge on the two, Eustace suggests asking for Aslan's help, and the two blunder through a gate that leads them to a high cliff in Aslan's Country. Aslan appears and saves Eustace by blowing him to Narnia. He charges Jill with helping Eustace find Prince Rilian and he gives Jill four Signs to guide her and Eustace on their quest…



The first edition

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Chapter I

BEHIND THE GYM

It was a dull autumn day and Jill Pole was crying behind the gym.

She was crying because they had been bullying her. This is not going to be a school story, so I shall say as little as possible about Jill's school, which is not a pleasant subject. It was "Co-educational", a school for both boys and girls, what used to be called a "mixed" school; some said it was not nearly so mixed as the minds of the people who ran it. These people had the idea that boys and girls should be allowed to do what they liked. And unfortunately what ten or fifteen of the biggest boys and girls liked best was bullying the others. All sorts of things, horrid things, went on which at an ordinary school would have been found out and stopped in half a term; but at this school they weren't. Or even if they were, the people who did them were not expelled or punished. The Head said they were interesting psychological cases and sent for them and talked to them for hours. And if you knew the right sort of things to say to the Head, the main result was that you became rather a favourite than otherwise.

That was why Jill Pole was crying on that dull autumn day on the damp little path which runs between the back of the gym and the shrubbery. And she hadn't nearly finished her cry when a boy came round the corner to the gym whistling, with his hands in his pockets. He nearly ran into her.

"Can't you look where you're going?" said Jill Pole.

"All *right*," said the boy, "you needn't start — —" and then he noticed her face. "I say, Pole," he said, "what's up?"

Jill only made faces; the sort you make when you're trying to say something but find that if you speak you'll start crying again.

"It's *Them*, I suppose — as usual," said the boy grimly, digging his hands further into his pockets.

Jill nodded. There was no need for her to say anything, even if she could have said it. They both knew.

"Now, look here," said the boy, "there's no good us all — —"

He meant well, but he *did* talk rather like someone beginning a lecture. Jill suddenly flew into a temper (which is quite a likely thing to happen if you have been interrupted in a cry).

“Oh, go away and mind your own business,” she said. “Nobody asked you to come barging in, did they? And you’re a nice person to start telling us what we all ought to do, aren’t you? I suppose you mean we ought to spend all our time sucking up to Them, and currying favour, and dancing attendance on Them like you do.”

“Oh, Lor!” said the boy, sitting down on the grassy bank at the edge of the shrubbery and very quickly getting up again because the grass was soaking wet. His name unfortunately was Eustace Scrubb, but he wasn’t a bad sort.

“Pole!” he said, “Is that fair? Have I been doing anything of the sort this term? Didn’t I stand up to Carter about the rabbit? And didn’t I keep the secret about Spivvins — under torture too? And didn’t I — —”

“I d-don’t know and I don’t care,” sobbed Jill.

Scrubb saw that she wasn’t quite herself yet and very sensibly offered her a peppermint. He had one too. Presently Jill began to see things in a clearer light.

“I’m sorry, Scrubb,” she said presently. “I wasn’t fair. You have done all that — this term.”

“Then wash out last term if you can,” said Eustace. “I was a different chap then. I was — gosh! what a little tick I was.”

“Well, honestly, you were,” said Jill.

“You think there has been a change, then?” said Eustace.

“It’s not only me,” said Jill. “Everyone’s been saying so. *They*’ve noticed it. Eleanor Blakiston heard Adela Pennyfather talking about it in our changing room yesterday. She said, ‘Someone’s got hold of that Scrubb kid. He’s quite unmanageable this term. We shall have to attend to *him* next.’”

Eustace gave a shudder. Everyone at Experiment House knew what it was like being “attended to” by *Them*.

Both children were quiet for a moment. The drops dripped off the laurel leaves.

“Why were you so different last term?” said Jill Presently.

“A lot of queer things happened to me in the hols,” said Eustace mysteriously.

“What sort of things?” asked Jill.

Eustace didn’t say anything for quite a long time. Then he said:

“Look here, Pole, you and I hate this place about as much as anybody can hate anything, don’t we?”

“I know I do,” said Jill.

“Then I really think I can trust you.”

“Dam’ good of you,” said Jill.

“Yes, but this is a really terrific secret. Pole, I say, are you good at believing things? I mean things that everyone here would laugh at?”

“I’ve never had the chance,” said Jill, “but I think I would be.”

“Could you believe me if I said I’d been right out of the world — outside this world — last hols?”

“I wouldn’t know what you meant.”

“Well, don’t let’s bother about worlds then. Supposing I told you I’d been in a place where animals can talk and where there are — er — enchantments and dragons — and — well, all the sorts of things you have in fairy tales.” Scrubb felt terribly awkward as he said this and got red in the face.

“How did you get there?” said Jill. She also felt curiously shy.

“The only way you can — by Magic,” said Eustace almost in a whisper. “I was with two cousins of mine. We were just — whisked away. They’d been there before.”

Now that they were talking in whispers Jill somehow felt it easier to believe. Then suddenly a horrible suspicion came over her and she said (so fiercely that for the moment she looked like a tigress):

“If I find you’ve been pulling my leg I’ll never speak to you again; never, never, never.”

“I’m not,” said Eustace. “I swear I’m not. I swear by — by everything.”

(When I was at school one would have said, “I swear by the Bible.” But Bibles were not encouraged at Experiment House.)

“All right,” said Jill, “I’ll believe you.”

“And tell nobody?”

“What do you take me for?”

They were very excited as they said this. But when they had said it and Jill looked round and saw the dull autumn sky and heard the drip off the leaves and thought of all the hopelessness of Experiment House (it was a thirteen-week term and there were still eleven weeks to come) she said:

“But after all, what’s the good? We’re not there: we’re here. And we jolly well can’t get *there*. Or can we?”

“That’s what I’ve been wondering,” said Eustace. “When we came back from That Place, Someone said that the two Pevensie kids (that’s my two

cousins) could never go there again. It was their third time, you see. I suppose they've had their share. But he never said I couldn't. Surely he would have said so, unless he meant that I was to get back? And I can't help wondering, can we — could we? — —"

"Do you mean, do something to make it happen?"

Eustace nodded.

"You mean we might draw a circle on the ground — and write things in queer letters in it — and stand inside — and recite charms and spells?"

"Well," said Eustace after he had thought hard for a bit. "I believe that was the sort of thing I was thinking of, though I never did it. But now that it comes to the point, I've an idea that all those circles and things are rather rot. I don't think he'd like them. It would look as if we thought we could make him do things. But really, we can only ask him."

"Who is this person you keep on talking about?"

"They call him Aslan in that place," said Eustace.

"What a curious name!"

"Not half so curious as himself," said Eustace solemnly. "But let's get on. It can't do any harm, just asking. Let's stand side by side, like this. And we'll hold out our a arms in front of us with the palms down: like they did in Ramandu's island — —"

"Whose island?"

"I'll tell you about that another time. And he might like us to face the east. Let's see, where is the east?"

"I don't know," said Jill.

"It's an extraordinary thing about girls that they never know the points of the compass," said Eustace.

"You don't know either," said Jill indignantly.

"Yes I do, if only you didn't keep on interrupting. I've got it now. That's the east, facing up into the laurels. Now, will you say the words after me?"

"What words?" asked Jill.

"The words I'm going to say, of course," answered Eustace. "Now — —"

And he began, "Aslan, Aslan, Aslan!"

"Aslan, Aslan, Aslan," repeated Jill.

"Please let us two go into — —"

At that moment a voice from the other side of the gym was heard shouting out, "Pole? Yes. I know where she is. She's blubbing behind the

gym. Shall I fetch her out?”

Jill and Eustace gave one glance at each other, dived under the laurels, and began scrambling up the steep, earthy slope of the shrubbery at a speed which did them great credit. (Owing to the curious methods of teaching at Experiment House, one did not learn much French or Maths or Latin or things of that sort; but one did learn a lot about getting away quickly and quietly when They were looking for one.)

After about a minute’s scramble they stopped to listen, and knew by the noises they heard that they were being followed.

“If only the door was open again!” said Scrubb as they went on, and Jill nodded. For at the top of the shrubbery was a high stone wall and in that wall a door by which you could get out onto open moor. This door was nearly always locked. But there had been times when people had found it open; or perhaps there had been only one time. But you may imagine how the memory of even one time kept people hoping, and trying the door; for if it should happen to be unlocked it would be a splendid way of getting outside the school grounds without being seen.

Jill and Eustace, now both very hot and very grubby from going along bent almost double under the laurels, panted up to the wall. And there was the door, shut as usual.

“It’s sure to be no good,” said Eustace with his hand on the handle; and then, “O-o-oh. By Gum!!” For the handle turned and the door opened.

A moment before, both of them had meant to get through that doorway in double quick time, if by any chance the door was not locked. But when the door actually opened, they both stood stock still. For what they saw was quite different from what they had expected.

They had expected to see the grey, heathery slope of the moor going up and up to join the dull autumn sky. Instead, a blaze of sunshine met them. It poured through the doorway as the light of a June day pours into a garage when you open the door. It made the drops of water on the grass glitter like beads and showed up the dirtiness of Jill’s tear-stained face. And the sunlight was coming from what certainly did look like a different world — what they could see of it. They saw smooth turf, smoother and brighter than Jill had ever seen before, and blue sky, and, darting to and fro, things so bright that they might have been jewels or huge butterflies.

Although she had been longing for something like this, Jill felt frightened. She looked at Scrubb’s face and saw that he was frightened too.

“Come on, Pole,” he said in a breathless voice.

“Can we get back? Is it safe?” asked Jill.

At that moment a voice shouted from behind, a mean, spiteful little voice. “Now then, Pole,” it squeaked. “Everyone knows you’re there. Down you come.” It was the voice of Edith Jackie, not one of Them herself but one of their hangers-on and tale-bearers.

“Quick!” said Scrubb. “Here. Hold hands. We mustn’t get separated.” And before she quite knew what was happening, he had grabbed her hand and pulled her through the door, out of the school grounds, out of England, out of our whole world into That Place.

The sound of Edith Jackie’s voice stopped as suddenly as the voice on the radio when it is switched off. Instantly there was a quite different sound all about them. It came from those bright things overhead, which now turned out to be birds. They were making a riotous noise, but it was much more like music — rather advanced music which you don’t quite take in at the first hearing — than birds’ songs ever are in our world. Yet, in spite of the singing, there was a sort of background of immense silence. That silence, combined with the freshness of the air, made Jill think they must be on the top of a very high mountain.

Scrubb still had her by the hand and they were walking forward, staring about them on every side. Jill saw that huge trees, rather like cedars but bigger, grew in every direction. But as they did not grow close together, and as there was no undergrowth, this did not prevent one from seeing a long way into the forest to left and right. And as far as Jill’s eye could reach, it was all the same — level turf, darting birds with yellow, or dragonfly blue, or rainbow plumage, blue shadows, and emptiness. There was not a breath of wind in that cool, bright air. It was a very lonely forest.

Right ahead there were no trees: only blue sky. They went straight on without speaking till suddenly Jill heard Scrubb say, “Look out!” and felt herself jerked back. They were at the very edge of a cliff.

Jill was one of those lucky people who have a good head for heights. She didn’t mind in the least standing on the edge of a precipice. She was rather annoyed with Scrubb for pulling her back— “just as if I was a kid,” she said — and she wrenched her hand out of his. When she saw how very white he had turned, she despised him.

“What’s the matter?” she said. And to show that she was not afraid, she stood very near the edge indeed; in fact, a good deal nearer than even she

liked. Then she looked down.

She now realised that Scrubb had some excuse for looking white, for no cliff in our world is to be compared with this. Imagine yourself at the top of the very highest cliff you know. And imagine yourself looking down to the very bottom. And then imagine that the precipice goes on below that, as far again, ten times as far, twenty times as far. And when you've looked down all that distance imagine little white things that might, at first glance, be mistaken for sheep, but presently you realise that they are clouds — not little wreaths of mist but the enormous white, puffy clouds which are themselves as big as most mountains. And at last, in between those clouds, you get your first glimpse of the real bottom, so far away that you can't make out whether it's field or wood, or land or water: further below those clouds than you are above them.

Jill stared at it. Then she thought that perhaps, after all, she would step back a foot or so from the edge; but she didn't like to for fear of what Scrubb would think. Then she suddenly decided that she didn't care what he thought, and that she would jolly well get away from that horrible edge and never laugh at anyone for not liking heights again. But when she tried to move, she found she couldn't. Her legs seemed to have turned into putty. Everything was swimming before her eyes.

"What are you doing, Pole? Come back — blithering little idiot!" shouted Scrubb. But his voice seemed to be coming from a long way off. She felt him grabbing at her. But by now she had no control over her own arms and legs. There was a moment's struggling on the cliff edge. Jill was too frightened and dizzy to know quite what she was doing, but two things she remembered as long as she lived (they often came back to her in dreams). One was that she had wrenched herself free of Scrubb's clutches; the other was that, at the same moment, Scrubb himself, with a terrified scream, had lost his balance and gone hurtling to the depths.

Fortunately she was given no time to think over what she had done. Some huge, brightly coloured animal had rushed to the edge of the cliff. It was lying down, leaning over, and (this was the odd thing) blowing. Not roaring or snorting but just blowing from its wide-opened mouth; blowing out as steadily as a vacuum cleaner sucks in. Jill was lying so close to the creature that she could feel the breath vibrating steadily through its body. She was lying still because she couldn't get up. She was nearly fainting: indeed, she wished she could really faint, but faints don't come for the

asking. At last she saw, far away below her, a tiny black speck floating away from the cliff and slightly upwards. As it rose, it also got further away. By the time it was nearly on a level with the cliff top it was so far off that she lost sight of it. It was obviously moving away from them at a great speed. Jill couldn’t help thinking that the creature at her side was blowing it away.

So she turned and looked at the creature. It was a lion.

Chapter II

JILL IS GIVEN A TASK

Without a glance at Jill the lion rose to its feet and gave one last blow. Then, as if satisfied with its work, it turned and stalked slowly away, back into the forest.

“It must be a dream, it must, it must,” said Jill to herself. “I’ll wake up in a moment.” But it wasn’t, and she didn’t.

“I do wish we’d never come to this dreadful place,” said Jill. “I don’t believe Scrubb knew any more about it than I do. Or if he did, he had no business to bring me here without warning me what it was like. It’s not my fault he fell over that cliff. If he’d left me alone we should both be all right.” Then she remembered again the scream that Scrubb had given when he fell, and burst into tears.

Crying is all right in its way while it lasts. But you have to stop sooner or later and then you still have to decide what to do. When Jill stopped, she found she was dreadfully thirsty. She had been lying face downward, and now she sat up. The birds had ceased singing and there was perfect silence except for one small persistent sound which seemed to come a good distance away. She listened carefully and felt almost sure it was the sound of running water.

Jill got up and looked round her very carefully. There was no sign of the lion; but there were so many trees about that it might easily be quite close without her seeing it. For all she knew, there might be several lions. But her thirst was very bad now, and she plucked up her courage to go and look for that running water. She went on tip-toes, stealing cautiously from tree to tree, and stopping to peer round her at every step.

The wood was so still that it was not difficult to decide where the sound was coming from. It grew clearer every moment and, sooner than she expected, she came to an open glade and saw the stream, bright as glass, running across the turf a stone’s throw away from her. But although the sight of the water made her feel ten times thirstier than before, she didn’t rush forward and drink. She stood as still as if she had been turned into stone, with her mouth wide open. And she had a very good reason; just on this side of the stream lay the lion.

It lay with its head raised and its two fore-paws out in front of it, like the lions in Trafalgar Square. She knew at once that it had seen her, for its eyes looked straight into hers for a moment and then turned away — as if it knew her quite well and didn't think much of her.

"If I run away, it'll be after me in a moment," thought Jill. "And if I go on, I shall run straight into its mouth." Anyway, she couldn't have moved if she had tried, and she couldn't take her eyes off it. How long this lasted, she could not be sure; it seemed like hours. And the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the lion if only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first.

"If you're thirsty, you may drink."

They were the first words she had heard since Scrubb had spoken to her on the edge of the cliff. For a second she stared here and there, wondering who had spoken. Then the voice said again, "If you are thirsty, come and drink," and of course she remembered what Scrubb had said about animals talking in that other world, and realised that it was the lion speaking. Anyway, she had seen its lips move this time, and the voice was not like a man's. It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in rather a different way.

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.

"I'm *dying* of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

"May I — could I — would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realised that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

"Will you promise not to — do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

"*Do* you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

“Then you will die of thirst,” said the Lion.

“Oh dear!” said Jill, coming another step nearer. “I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.”

“There is no other stream,” said the Lion.

It never occurred to Jill to disbelieve the Lion — no one who had seen his stern face could do that — and her mind suddenly made itself up. It was the worst thing she had ever had to do, but she went forward to the stream, knelt down, and began scooping up water in her hand. It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted. You didn’t need to drink much of it, for it quenched your thirst at once. Before she tasted it she had been intending to make a dash away from the Lion the moment she had finished. Now, she realised that this would be on the whole the most dangerous thing of all. She got up and stood there with her lips still wet from drinking.

“Come here,” said the Lion. And she had to. She was almost between its front paws now, looking straight into its face. But she couldn’t stand that for long; she dropped her eyes.

“Human Child,” said the Lion, “Where is the Boy?”

“He fell over the cliff,” said Jill, and added, “Sir.” She didn’t know what else to call him, and it sounded cheek to call him nothing.

“How did he come to do that, Human Child?”

“He was trying to stop me from falling, Sir.”

“Why were you so near the edge, Human Child?”

“I was showing off, Sir.”

“That is a very good answer, Human Child. Do so no more. And now” (here for the first time the Lion’s face became a little less stern) “the Boy is safe. I have blown him to Narnia. But your task will be the harder because of what you have done.”

“Please, what task, Sir?” said Jill.

“The task for which I called you and him here out of your own world.”

This puzzled Jill very much. “It’s mistaking me for someone else,” she thought. She didn’t dare to tell the Lion this, though she felt things would get into a dreadful muddle unless she did.

“Speak your thought, Human Child,” said the Lion.

“I was wondering — I mean — could there be some mistake? Because nobody called me and Scrubb, you know. It was we who asked to come here. Scrubb said we were to call to — to Somebody — it was a name I

wouldn’t know — and perhaps the Somebody would let us in. And we did, and then we found the door open.”

“You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you,” said the Lion.

“Then you are Somebody, Sir?” said Jill.

“I am. And now hear your task. Far from here in the land of Narnia there lives an aged king who is sad because he has no prince of his blood to be king after him. He has no heir because his only son was stolen from him many years ago and no one in Narnia knows where that prince went or whether he is still alive. But he is. I lay on you this command, that you seek this lost prince until either you have found him and brought him to his father’s house, or else died in the attempt, or else gone back into your own world.”

“How, please?” said Jill.

“I will tell you, Child,” said the Lion. “These are the signs by which I will guide you in your quest. First; as soon as the Boy Eustace sets foot in Narnia, he will meet an old and dear friend. He must greet that friend at once; if he does, you will both have good help. Second; you must journey out of Narnia to the north till you come to the ruined city of the ancient giants. Third; you shall find a writing on a stone in that ruined city, and you must do what the writing tells you. Fourth; you will know the lost prince (if you find him) by this, that he will be the first person you have met in your travels who will ask you to do something in my name, in the name of Aslan.”

As the Lion seemed to have finished, Jill thought she should say something. So she said “Thank you very much. I see.”

“Child,” said Aslan, in a gentler voice than he had yet used, “perhaps you do not see quite as well as you think. But the first step is to remember. Repeat to me, in order, the four signs.”

Jill tried, and didn’t get them quite right. So the Lion corrected her and made her repeat them again and again till she could say them perfectly. He was very patient over this, so that, when it was done, Jill plucked up courage to ask:

“Please, how am I to get to Narnia?”

“On my breath,” said the Lion. “I will blow you into the west of the world as I blew Eustace.”

“Shall I catch him in time to tell him the first sign? But I suppose it won’t matter. If he sees an old friend, he’s sure to go and speak to him, isn’t he?”

“You will have no time to spare,” said the Lion. “That is why I must send you at once. Come. Walk before me to the edge of the cliff.”

Jill remembered very well that if there was no time to spare, that was her own fault. “If I hadn’t made such a fool of myself, Scrubb and I would have been going together. And he’d have heard all the instructions as well as me,” she thought. So she did as she was told. It was very alarming walking back to the edge of the cliff, especially as the Lion did not walk with her but behind her — making no noise on his soft paws.

But long before she had got anywhere near the edge, the voice behind her said, “Stand still. In a moment I will blow. But, first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters. And now, daughter of Eve, farewell — —”

The voice had been growing softer towards the end of this speech and now it faded away altogether. Jill looked behind her. To her astonishment she saw the cliff already more than a hundred yards behind her, and the Lion himself a speck of bright gold on the edge of it. She had been setting her teeth and clenching her fists for a terrible blast of lion’s breath; but the breath had really been so gentle that she had not even noticed the moment at which she left the earth. And now, there was nothing but air for thousands upon thousands of feet below her.

She felt frightened only for a second. For one thing, the world beneath her was so very far away that it seemed to have nothing to do with her. For another, floating on the breath of the Lion was so extremely comfortable. She found she could lie on her back or on her face and twist any way she

pleased, just as you can in water (if you've learned to float really well). And because she was moving at the same pace as the breath, there was no wind, and the air seemed beautifully warm. It was not in the least like being in an aeroplane, because there was no noise and no vibration. If Jill had ever been in a balloon she might have thought it more like that; only better.

When she looked back now she could take in for the first time the real size of the mountain she was leaving. She wondered why a mountain so huge as that was not covered with snow and ice— "but I suppose all that sort of thing is different in this world," thought Jill. Then she looked below her; but she was so high that she couldn't make out whether she was floating over land or sea, nor what speed she was going at.

"By Jove! The signs!" said Jill suddenly. "I'd better repeat them." She was in a panic for a second or two, but she found she could still say them all correctly. "So that's all right," she said, and lay back on the air as if it was a sofa, with a sigh of contentment.

"Well, I do declare," said Jill to herself some hours later, "I've been asleep. Fancy sleeping on air. I wonder if anyone's done it before. I don't suppose they have. Oh bother — Scrubb probably has! On this same journey, a little bit before me. Let's see what it looks like down below."

What it looked like was an enormous, very dark blue plain. There were no hills to be seen, but there were biggish white things moving slowly across it. "Those must be clouds," she thought. "But far bigger than the ones we saw from the cliff. I suppose they're bigger because they're nearer. I must be getting lower. Bother this sun."

The sun which had been high overhead when she began her journey was now getting in her eyes. This meant that it was getting lower, ahead of her. Scrubb was quite right in saying that Jill (I don't know about girls in general) didn't think much about points of the compass. Otherwise she would have known, when the sun began getting in her eyes, that she was travelling pretty nearly due west.

Staring at the blue plain below her, she presently noticed that there were little dots of brighter, paler colour in it here and there. "It's the sea!" thought Jill. "I do believe those are islands." And so they were. She might have felt rather jealous if she had known that some of them were islands which Scrubb had seen from a ship's deck and even landed on; but she didn't know this. Then, later on, she began to see that there were little wrinkles on the blue flatness: little wrinkles which must be quite big ocean

waves if you were down among them. And now, all along the horizon there was a thick dark line which grew thicker and darker so quickly that you could see it growing. That was the first sign she had had of the great speed at which she was travelling. And she knew that the thickening line must be land.

Suddenly from her left (for the wind was in the south) a great white cloud came rushing towards her, this time on the same level as herself. And before she knew where she was, she had shot right into the middle of its cold, wet fogginess. That took her breath away, but she was in it only for a moment. She came out blinking in the sunlight and found her clothes wet. (She had on a blazer and sweater and shorts and stockings and pretty thick shoes; it had been a muddy sort of day in England.) She came out lower than she had gone in; and as soon as she did so she noticed something which, I suppose, she ought to have been expecting, but which came as a surprise and a shock. It was Noises. Up till then she had travelled in total silence. Now, for the first time, she heard the noise of waves and the crying of seagulls. And now too she smelled the smell of the sea. There was no mistake about her speed now. She saw two waves meet with a smack and a spout of foam go up between them; but she had hardly seen it before it was a hundred yards behind her. The land was getting nearer at a great pace. She could see mountains far inland, and other nearer mountains on her left. She could see bays and headlands, woods and fields, stretches of sandy beach. The sound of waves breaking on the shore was growing louder every second and drowning the other sea noises.

Suddenly the land opened right ahead of her. She was coming to the mouth of a river. She was very low now, only a few feet above the water. A wave-top came against her toe and a great splash of foam spurted up, drenching her nearly to the waist. Now she was losing speed. Instead of being carried up the river she was gliding in to the river bank on her left. There were so many things to notice that she could hardly take them all in; a smooth, green lawn, a ship so brightly coloured that it looked like an enormous piece of jewellery, towers and battlements, banners fluttering in the air, a crowd, gay clothes, armour, gold, swords, a sound of music. But this was all jumbled. The first thing that she knew clearly was that she had alighted and was standing under a thicket of trees close by the river side, and there, only a few feet away from her, was Scrubb.

The first thing she thought was how very grubby and untidy and generally unimpressive he looked. And the second was “How wet I am!”

Chapter III

THE SAILING OF THE KING

What made Scrubb look so dingy (and Jill too, if she could only have seen herself) was the splendour of their surroundings. I had better describe them at once. Through a cleft in those mountains which Jill had seen far inland as she approached the land, the sunset light was pouring over a level lawn. On the far side of the lawn, its weather-vanes glittering in the light, rose a many-towered and many-turreted castle; the most beautiful castle Jill had ever seen. On the near side was a quay of white marble and, moored to this, the ship: a tall ship with high forecastle and high poop, gilded and crimson, with a great flag at the mast-head, and many banners waving from the decks, and a row of shields, bright as silver, along the bulwarks. The gangplank was laid to her, and at the foot of it, just ready to go on board, stood an old, old man. He wore a rich mantle of scarlet which opened in front to show his silver mail shirt. There was a thin circlet of gold on his head. His beard, white as wool, fell nearly to his waist. He stood straight enough, leaning one hand on the shoulder of a richly dressed lord who seemed younger than himself: but you could see he was very old and frail. He looked as if a puff of wind could blow him away, and his eyes were watery.

Immediately in front of the King — who had turned round to speak to his people before going on board the ship — there was a little chair on wheels, and, harnessed to it, a little donkey: not much bigger than a big retriever. In this chair sat a fat little dwarf. He was as richly dressed as the King, but because of his fatness and because he was sitting hunched up among cushions, the effect was quite different: it made him look like a shapeless little bundle of fur and silk and velvet. He was as old as the King, but more hale and hearty, with very keen eyes. His bare head, which was bald and extremely large, shone like a gigantic billiard ball in the sunset light.

Farther back, in a half-circle, stood what Jill at once knew to be the courtiers. They were well worth looking at for their clothes and armour alone. As far as that went, they looked more like a flower bed than a crowd. But what really made Jill open her eyes and mouth as wide as they would

go, was the people themselves. If “people” was the right word. For only about one in every five was human. The rest were things you never see in our world. Fauns, satyrs, centaurs: Jill could give a name to these, for she had seen pictures of them. Dwarfs too. And there were a lot of animals she knew as well; bears, badgers, moles, leopards, mice, and various birds. But then they were so very different from the animals which one called by the same names in England. Some of them were much bigger — the mice, for instance, stood on their hind legs and were over two feet high. But quite apart from that, they all looked different. You could see by the expression in their faces that they could talk and think just as well as you could.

“Golly!” thought Jill. “So it’s true after all.” But next moment she added, “I wonder are they friendly?” For she had just noticed, on the outskirts of the crowd, one or two giants and some people whom she couldn’t give a name to at all.

At that moment Aslan and the signs rushed back into her mind. She had forgotten all about them for the last half-hour.

“Scrubb!” she whispered, grabbing his arm. “Scrubb, quick! Do you see anyone you know?”

“So *you’ve* turned up again, have you?” said Scrubb disagreeably (for which he had some reason). “Well, keep quiet, can’t you? I want to listen.”

“Don’t be a fool,” said Jill. “There isn’t a moment to lose. Don’t you see some old friend here? Because you’ve got to go and speak to him at once.”

“What are you talking about?” said Scrubb.

“It’s Aslan — the Lion — says you’ve got to,” said Jill despairingly. “I’ve seen him.”

“Oh, you have, have you? What did he say?”

“He said the very first person you saw in Narnia would be an old friend, and you’d got to speak to him at once.”

“Well, there’s nobody here I’ve ever seen in my life before; and anyway, I don’t know whether this is Narnia.”

“Thought you said you’d been here before,” said Jill.

“Well, you thought wrong then.”

“Well, I like that! You told me — —”

“For heaven’s sake dry up and let’s hear what they’re saying.”

The King was speaking to the Dwarf, but Jill couldn’t hear what he said. And, as far as she could make out, the Dwarf made no answer, though he nodded and wagged his head a great deal. Then the King raised his voice

and addressed the whole court: but his voice was so old and cracked that she could understand very little of his speech — especially since it was all about people and places she had never heard of. When the speech was over, the King stooped down and kissed the Dwarf on both cheeks, straightened himself, raised his right hand as if in blessing, and went, slowly and with feeble steps, up the gangway and on board the ship. The courtiers appeared to be greatly moved by his departure. Handkerchiefs were got out, sounds of sobbing were heard in every direction. The gangway was cast off, trumpets sounded from the poop, and the ship moved away from the quay. (It was being towed by a rowing-boat, but Jill didn't see that.)

"Now — —" said Scrubb, but he didn't get any further because at that moment a large white object — Jill thought for a second that it was a kite — came gliding through the air and alighted at his feet. It was a white owl, but so big that it stood as high as a good-sized dwarf.

It blinked and peered as if it were short-sighted, and put its head a little on one side, and said in a soft, hooting kind of voice.

"Tu-whoo, tu-whoo! Who are you two?"

"My name's Scrubb, and this is Pole," said Eustace. "Would you mind telling us where we are?"

"In the land of Narnia, at the King's castle of Cair Paravel."

"Is that the King who's just taken ship?"

"Too true, too true," said the Owl sadly, shaking its big head. "But who are you? There's something magic about you two. I saw you arrive: you *flew*. Everyone else was so busy seeing the King off that nobody knew. Except me. I happened to notice you, you flew."

"We were sent here by Aslan," said Eustace in a low voice.

"Tu-whoo, tu-whoo!" said the Owl, ruffling out its feathers. "This is almost too much for me, so early in the evening. I'm not quite myself till the sun's down."

"And we've been sent to find the lost Prince," said Jill, who had been anxiously waiting to get into the conversation.

"It's the first I've heard about it," said Eustace. "What prince?"

"You had better come and speak to the Lord Regent at once," it said. "That's him, over there in the donkey carriage; Trumpkin the Dwarf." The bird turned and began leading the way, muttering to itself, "Whoo! Tu-whoo! What a to-do! I can't think clearly yet. It's too early."

"What is the King's name?" asked Eustace.

“Caspian the Tenth,” said the Owl. And Jill wondered why Scrubb had suddenly pulled up short in his walk and turned an extraordinary colour. She thought she had never seen him look so sick about anything. But before she had time to ask any questions they had reached the Dwarf, who was just gathering up the reins of his donkey and preparing to drive back to the castle. The crowd of courtiers had broken up and were going in the same direction, by ones and twos and little knots, like people coming away from watching a game or a race.

“Tu-whoo! Ahem! Lord Regent,” said the Owl, stooping down a little and holding its beak near the Dwarf’s ear.

“Heh? What’s that?” said the Dwarf.

“Two strangers, my lord,” said the Owl.

“Rangers! What d’ye mean?” said the Dwarf. “I see two uncommonly grubby man-cubs. What do they want?”

“My name’s Jill,” said Jill, pressing forward. She was very eager to explain the important business on which they had come.

“The girl’s called Jill,” said the Owl, as loud as it could.

“What’s that?” said the Dwarf. “The girls are all killed! I don’t believe a word of it. What girls? Who killed ’em?”

“Only one girl, my lord,” said the Owl. “Her name is Jill.”

“Speak up, speak up,” said the Dwarf. “Don’t stand there buzzing and twittering in my ear. Who’s been killed?”

“Nobody’s been killed,” hooted the Owl.

“Who?”

“NOBODY.”

“All right, all right. You needn’t shout. I’m not so deaf as all that. What do you mean by coming here to tell me that nobody’s been killed? Why should anyone have been killed?”

“Better tell him I’m Eustace,” said Scrubb.

“The boy’s Eustace, my lord,” hooted the Owl as loud as it could.

“Useless?” said the Dwarf irritably. “I dare say he is. Is that any reason for bringing him to court? Hey?”

“Not useless,” said the Owl. “EUSTACE.”

“Used to it, is he? I don’t know what you’re talking about, I’m sure. I tell you what it is, Master Glimfeather; when I was a young Dwarf there used to be *talking* beasts and birds in this country who really could talk. There wasn’t all this mumbling and muttering and whispering. It wouldn’t have

been tolerated for a moment. Not for a moment, Sir. Urnus, my trumpet please — —”

A little Faun who had been standing quietly beside the Dwarf’s elbow all this time now handed him a silver ear-trumpet. It was made like the musical instrument called a serpent, so that the tube curled right round the Dwarf’s neck. While he was getting it settled the Owl, Glimfeather, suddenly said to the children in a whisper:

“My brain’s a bit clearer now. Don’t say anything about the lost Prince. I’ll explain later. It wouldn’t do, wouldn’t do, Tu-Whoo! Oh *what* a to-do!”

“Now,” said the Dwarf, “if you *have* anything sensible to say, Master Glimfeather, try and say it. Take a deep breath and don’t attempt to speak too quickly.”

With help from the children, and in spite of a fit of coughing on the part of the Dwarf, Glimfeather explained that the strangers had been sent by Aslan to visit the court of Narnia. The Dwarf glanced quickly up at them with a new expression in his eyes.

“Sent by the Lion Himself, hey?” he said. “And from — m’m — from that other Place — beyond the world’s end, hey?”

“Yes, my lord,” bawled Eustace into the trumpet.

“Son of Adam and daughter of Eve, hey?” said the Dwarf. But people at Experiment House haven’t heard of Adam and Eve, so Jill and Eustace couldn’t answer this. But the Dwarf didn’t seem to notice.

“Well, my dears,” he said, taking first one and then the other by the hand and bowing his head a little. “You are very heartily welcome. If the good King, my poor Master, had not this very hour set sail for Seven Isles, he would have been glad of your coming. It would have brought back his youth to him for a moment — for a moment. And now, it is high time for supper. You shall tell me your business in full council to-morrow morning. Master Glimfeather, see that bedchambers and suitable clothes and all else are provided for these guests in the most honourable fashion. And — Glimfeather — in your ear — —”

Here the Dwarf put his mouth close to the Owl’s head and, no doubt, intended to whisper: but, like other deaf people, he wasn’t a very good judge of his own voice, and both children heard him say, “See that they’re properly washed.”

After that, the Dwarf touched up his donkey and it set off towards the castle at something between a trot and a waddle (it was a very fat little

beast) while the Faun, the Owl, and the children followed at a rather slower pace. The sun had set and the air was growing cool.

They went across the lawn and then through an orchard and so to the North Gate of Cair Paravel, which stood wide open. Inside, they found a grassy courtyard. Lights were already showing from the windows of the great hall on their right and from a more complicated mass of buildings straight ahead. Into these the Owl led them, and there a most delightful person was called to look after Jill. She was not much taller than Jill herself, and a good deal slenderer, but obviously full grown, graceful as a willow, and her hair was willowy too, and there seemed to be moss in it. She brought Jill to a round room in one of the turrets, where there was a little bath sunk in the floor and a fire of sweet-smelling woods burning on the flat hearth and a lamp hanging by a silver chain from the vaulted roof. The window looked west into the strange land of Narnia, and Jill saw the red remains of the sunset still glowing behind distant mountains. It made her long for more adventures and feel sure that this was only the beginning.

When she had had her bath, and brushed her hair, and put on the clothes that had been laid out for her — they were the kind that not only felt nice, but looked nice and smelled nice and made nice sounds when you moved as well — she would have gone back to gaze out of that exciting window, but she was interrupted by a bang on the door.

“Come in,” said Jill. And in came Scrubb, also bathed and splendidly dressed in Narnian clothes. But his face didn’t look as if he were enjoying it.

“Oh, here you are at last,” he said crossly, flinging himself into a chair. “I’ve been trying to find you for ever so long.”

“Well, now you have,” said Jill. “I say, Scrubb, isn’t it all simply too exciting and scrumptious for words.” She had forgotten all about the signs and the lost Prince for the moment.

“Oh! That’s what you think, is it?” said Scrubb: and then, after a pause, “I wish to goodness we’d never come.”

“Why on earth?”

“I can’t bear it,” said Scrubb. “Seeing the King — Caspian — a doddering old man like that. It’s — it’s frightful.”

“Why, what harm does it do you?”

“Oh, you don’t understand. Now that I come to think of it, you couldn’t. I didn’t tell you that this world has a different time from ours.”

“How do you mean?”

“The time you spend here doesn’t take up any of our time. Do you see? I mean, however long we spend here, we shall still get back to Experiment House at the moment we left it — —”

“That won’t be much fun — —”

“Oh, dry up! Don’t keep interrupting. And when you’re back in England — in our world — you can’t tell how time is going here. It might be any number of years in Narnia while we’re having one year at home. The Pevensies explained it all to me, but, like a fool, I forgot about it. And now apparently it’s been about seventy years — Narnian years — since I was here last. Do you see now? And I come back and find Caspian an old, old man.”

“Then the King *was* an old friend of yours!” said Jill. A horrid thought had struck her.

“I should jolly well think he was,” said Scrubb miserably. “About as good a friend as a chap could have. And last time he was only a few years older than me. And to see that old man with a white beard, and to remember Caspian as he was the morning we captured the Lone Islands, or in the fight with the Sea Serpent — oh, it’s frightful. It’s worse than coming back and finding him dead.”

“Oh, shut up,” said Jill impatiently. “It’s far worse than you think. We’ve muffed the first Sign.” Of course Scrubb did not understand this. Then Jill told him about her conversation with Aslan and the four signs and the task of finding the lost prince which had been laid upon them.

“So you see,” she wound up, “you did see an old friend, just as Aslan said, and you ought to have gone and spoken to him at once. And now you haven’t, and everything is going wrong from the very beginning.”

“But how was I to know?” said Scrubb.

“If you’d only listened to me when I tried to tell you, we’d be all right,” said Jill.

“Yes, and if you hadn’t played the fool on the edge of that cliff and jolly nearly murdered me — all right, I said *murder*, and I’ll say it again as often as I like, so keep your hair on — we’d have come together and both known what to do.”

“I suppose he *was* the very first person you saw?” said Jill. “You must have been here hours before me. Are you sure you didn’t see anyone else first?”

“I was only here about a minute before you,” said Scrubb. “He must have blown you quicker than me. Making up for lost time: the time *you* lost.”

“Don’t be a perfect beast, Scrubb,” said Jill. “Hallo! What’s that?”

It was the castle bell ringing for supper, and thus what looked like turning into a first-rate quarrel was happily cut short. Both had a good appetite by this time.

Supper in the great hall of the castle was the most splendid thing either of them had ever seen; for though Eustace had been in that world before, he had spent his whole visit at sea and knew nothing of the glory and courtesy of the Narnians at home in their own land. The banners hung from the roof, and each course came in with trumpeters and kettledrums. There were soups that would make your mouth water to think of, and the lovely fishes called pavenders, and venison and peacock and pies, and ices and jellies and fruit and nuts, and all manner of wines and fruit drinks. Even Eustace cheered up and admitted that it was “something like”. And when all the serious eating and drinking was over, a blind poet came forward and struck up the grand old tale of Prince Cor and Aravis and the horse Bree, which is called *The Horse and his Boy* and tells of an adventure that happened in Narnia and Calormen and the lands between, in the Golden Age when Peter was High King in Cair Paravel. (I haven’t time to tell it now, though it is well worth hearing.)

When they were dragging themselves upstairs to bed, yawning their heads off, Jill said, “I bet we sleep well, to-night”; for it had been a full day. Which just shows how little anyone knows what is going to happen to them next.

Chapter IV

A PARLIAMENT OF OWLS

It is a very funny thing that the sleepier you are, the longer you take about getting to bed; especially if you are lucky enough to have a fire in your room. Jill felt she couldn't even start undressing unless she sat down in front of the fire for a bit first. And once she had sat down, she didn't want to get up again. She had already said to herself about five times, "I must go to bed", when she was startled by a tap on the window.

She got up, pulled the curtain, and at first saw nothing but darkness. Then she jumped and started backwards, for something very large had dashed itself against the window, giving a sharp tap on the glass as it did so. A very unpleasant idea came into her head— "Suppose they have giant moths in this country! Ugh!" But then the thing came back, and this time she was almost sure she saw a beak, and that the beak had made the tapping noise. "It's some huge bird," thought Jill. "Could it be an eagle?" She didn't very much want a visit even from an eagle, but she opened the window and looked out. Instantly, with a great whirring noise, the creature alighted on the window-sill and stood there filling up the whole window, so that Jill had to step back to make room for it. It was the Owl.

"Hush, hush! Tu-whoo, tu-whoo," said the Owl. "Don't make a noise. Now, are you two really in earnest about what you've got to do?"

"About the lost Prince, you mean?" said Jill. "Yes, we've got to be." For now she remembered the Lion's voice and face, which she had nearly forgotten during the feasting and story-telling in the hall.

"Good!" said the Owl. "Then there's no time to waste. You must get away from here at once. I'll go and wake the other human. Then I'll come back for you. You'd better change those court clothes and put on something you can travel in. I'll be back in two twos. Tu-whoo!" And without waiting for an answer, he was gone.

If Jill had been more used to adventures, she might have doubted the Owl's word, but this never occurred to her: and in the exciting idea of a midnight escape she forgot her sleepiness. She changed back into sweater and shorts — there was a guide's knife on the belt of the shorts which might come in useful — and added a few of the things that had been left in the

room for her by the girl with the willowy hair. She chose a short cloak that came down to her knees and had a hood (“just the thing, if it rains,” she thought), a few handkerchiefs and a comb. Then she sat down and waited.

She was getting sleepy again when the Owl returned.

“Now we’re ready,” it said.

“You’d better lead the way,” said Jill. “I don’t know all these passages yet.”

“Tu-whoo!” said the Owl. “We’re not going through the castle. That would never do. You must ride on me. We shall fly.”

“Oh!” said Jill, and stood with her mouth open, not much liking the idea. “Shan’t I be far too heavy for you?”

“Tu-whoo, tu-whoo! Don’t you be a fool. I’ve already carried the other one. Now. But we’ll put out that lamp first.”

As soon as the lamp was out, the bit of the night which you saw through the window looked less dark — no longer black, but grey. The Owl stood on the window-sill with his back to the room and raised his wings. Jill had to climb onto his short fat body and get her knees under the wings and grip tight. The feathers felt beautifully warm and soft but there was nothing to hold on by. “I wonder how Scrubb liked his ride!” thought Jill. And just as she was thinking this, with a horrid plunge they had left the window-sill, and the wings were making a flurry round her ears, and the night air, rather cool and damp, was flying in her face.

It was much lighter than she expected, and though the sky was overcast, one patch of watery silver showed where the moon was hiding above the clouds. The fields beneath her looked grey, and the trees black. There was a certain amount of wind — a hushing, ruffling sort of wind which meant that rain was coming soon.

The Owl wheeled round so that the castle was now ahead of them. Very few of the windows showed lights. They flew right over it, northwards, crossing the river: the air grew colder, and Jill thought she could see the white reflection of the Owl in the water beneath her. But soon they were on the north bank of the river, flying above wooded country.

The Owl snapped at something which Jill couldn’t see.

“Oh, don’t, please!” said Jill. “Don’t jerk like that. You nearly threw me off.”

“I beg your pardon,” said the Owl. “I was just nabbing a bat. There’s nothing so sustaining, in a small way, as a nice plump little bat. Shall I catch

you one?”

“No, thanks,” said Jill with a shudder.

He was flying a little lower now and a large, black-looking object was looming up towards them. Jill had just time to see that it was a tower — a partly ruinous tower, with a lot of ivy on it, she thought — when she found herself ducking to avoid the archway of a window, as the Owl squeezed with her through the ivied and cobwebby opening, out of the fresh, grey night into a dark place inside the top of the tower. It was rather fusty inside and, the moment she slipped off the Owl’s back, she knew (as one usually does somehow) that it was quite crowded. And when voices began saying out of the darkness from every direction “Tu-whoo! Tu-whoo!” she knew it was crowded with owls. She was rather relieved when a very different voice said:

“Is that you, Pole?”

“Is that you, Scrubb?” said Jill.

“Now,” said Glimfeather, “I think we’re all here. Let us hold a parliament of owls.”

“Tu-whoo, tu-whoo. True for you. That’s the right thing to do,” said several voices.

“Half a moment,” said Scrubb’s voice. “There’s something I want to say first.”

“Do, do, do,” said the owls; and Jill said, “Fire ahead.”

“I suppose all you chaps — owls, I mean,” said Scrubb, “I suppose you all know that King Caspian the Tenth, in his young days, sailed to the eastern end of the world. Well, I was with him on that journey: with him and Reepicheep the Mouse, and the Lord Drinian and all of them. I know it sounds hard to believe, but people don’t grow older in our world at the same speed as they do in yours. And what I want to say is this, that I’m the King’s man; and if this parliament of owls is any sort of plot against the King, I’m having nothing to do with it.”

“Tu-whoo, tu-whoo, we’re all the King’s owls too,” said the owls.

“What’s it all about then?” said Scrubb.

“It’s only this,” said Glimfeather. “That if the Lord Regent, the Dwarf Trumpkin, hears you are going to look for the lost Prince, he won’t let you start. He’d keep you under lock and key sooner.”

“Great Scott!” said Scrubb. “You don’t mean that Trumpkin is a traitor? I used to hear a lot about him in the old days, at sea. Caspian — the King, I

mean — trusted him absolutely."

"Oh no," said a voice. "Trumpkin's no traitor. But more than thirty champions (knights, centaurs, good giants, and all sorts) have at one time or another set out to look for the lost Prince, and none of them have ever come back. And at last the King said he was not going to have all the bravest Narnians destroyed in the search for his son. And now nobody is allowed to go."

"But surely he'd let *us* go," said Scrubb. "When he knew who I was and who had sent me."

("Sent both of us," put in Jill.)

"Yes," said Glimfeather, "I think, very likely, he would. But the King's away. And Trumpkin will stick to the rules. He's as true as steel, but he's deaf as a post and very peppery. You could never make him see that this might be the time for making an exception to the rule."

"You might think he'd take some notice of us, because we're owls and everyone knows how wise owls are," said someone else. "But he's so old now he'd only say, 'You're a mere chick. I remember you when you were an egg. Don't come trying to teach *me*, Sir. Crabs and crumpets!'"

This owl imitated Trumpkin's voice rather well, and there were sounds of owlish laughter all round. The children began to see that the Narnians all felt about Trumpkin as people feel at school about some crusty teacher, whom everyone is a little afraid of and everyone makes fun of and nobody really dislikes.

"How long is the King going to be away?" asked Scrubb.

"If only we knew!" said Glimfeather. "You see, there has been a rumour lately that Aslan himself has been seen in the islands — in Terebinthia, I think it was. And the King said he would make one more attempt before he died to see Aslan face to face again, and ask his advice about who is to be King after him. But we're all afraid that, if he doesn't meet Aslan in Terebinthia, he'll go on east, to Seven Isles and Lone Islands — and on and on. He never talks about it, but we all know he has never forgotten that voyage to the world's end. I'm sure in his heart of hearts he wants to go there again."

"Then there's no good waiting for him to come back?" said Jill.

"No, no good," said the Owl. "Oh, what a to-do! If only you two had known and spoken to him at once! He'd have arranged everything — probably given you an army to go with you in search of the Prince."

Jill kept quiet at this and hoped Scrubb would be sporting enough not to tell all the owls why this hadn't happened. He was, or very nearly. That is, he only muttered under his breath, "Well, it wasn't my fault," before saying out loud:

"Very well. We'll have to manage without it. But there's just one thing more I want to know. If this owls' parliament, as you call it, is all fair and above board and means no mischief, why does it have to be so jolly secret — meeting in a ruin in dead of night, and all that?"

"Tu-whoo! Tu-whoo!" hooted several owls. "Where should we meet? When would anyone meet except at night?"

"You see," explained Glimfeather, "most of the creatures in Narnia have such unnatural habits. They do things by day, in broad blazing sunlight (ugh!) when everyone ought to be asleep. And, as a result, at night they're so blind and stupid that you can't get a word out of them. So we owls have got into the habit of meeting at sensible hours, on our own, when we want to talk about things."

"I see," said Scrubb. "Well now, let's get on. Tell us all about the lost Prince." Then an old owl, not Glimfeather, related the story.

About ten years ago, it appeared, when Rilian, the son of Caspian, was a very young knight, he rode with the Queen his mother on a May morning in the north parts of Narnia. They had many squires and ladies with them and all wore garlands of fresh leaves on their heads, and horns at their sides; but they had no hounds with them, for they were maying, not hunting. In the warm part of the day they came to a pleasant glade where a fountain flowed freshly out of the earth, and there they dismounted and ate and drank and were merry. After a time the Queen felt sleepy, and they spread cloaks for her on the grassy bank, and Prince Rilian with the rest of the party went a little way from her, that their tales and laughter might not wake her. And so, presently, a great serpent came out of the thick wood and stung the Queen in her hand. All heard her cry out and rushed towards her, and Rilian was first at her side. He saw the worm gliding away from her and made after it with his sword drawn. It was great, shining, and as green as poison, so that he could see it well: but it glided away into thick bushes and he could not come at it. So he returned to his mother, and found them all busy about her. But they were busy in vain, for at the first glance of her face Rilian knew that no physic in the world would do her good. As long as the life was in her she seemed to be trying hard to tell him something. But she could not

speak clearly and, whatever her message was, she died without delivering it. It was then hardly ten minutes since they had first heard her cry.

They carried the dead Queen back to Cair Paravel, and she was bitterly mourned by Rilian and by the King, and by all Narnia. She had been a great lady, wise and gracious and happy, King Caspian's bride whom he had brought home from the eastern end of the world. And men said that the blood of the stars flowed in her veins. The Prince took his mother's death very hardly, as well he might. After that, he was always riding on the northern marches of Narnia, hunting for that venomous worm, to kill it and be avenged. No one remarked much on this, though the Prince came home from these wanderings looking tired and distraught. But about a month after the Queen's death, some said they could see a change in him. There was a look in his eyes as of a man who has seen visions, and though he would be out all day, his horse did not bear the signs of hard riding. His chief friend among the older courtiers was the Lord Drinian, he who had been his father's captain on that great voyage to the east parts of earth.

One evening Drinian said to the Prince, "Your Highness must soon give over seeking the worm. There is no true vengeance on a witless brute as there might be on a man. You weary yourself in vain." The Prince answered him, "My lord, I have almost forgotten the worm this seven days." Drinian asked him why, if that were so, he rode so continually in the northern woods. "My lord," said the Prince, "I have seen there the most beautiful thing that was ever made." "Fair Prince," said Drinian, "of your courtesy let me ride with you to-morrow, that I also may see this fair thing." "With a good will," said Rilian.

Then in good time on the next day they saddled their horses and rode a great gallop into the northern woods and alighted at that same fountain where the Queen got her death. Drinian thought it strange that the Prince should choose that place of all places, to linger in. And there they rested till it came to high noon: and at noon Drinian looked up and saw the most beautiful lady he had ever seen; and she stood at the north side of the fountain and said no word but beckoned to the Prince with her hand as if she bade him come to her. And she was tall and great, shining, and wrapped in a thin garment as green as poison. And the Prince stared at her like a man out of his wits. But suddenly the lady was gone, Drinian knew not where; and they two returned to Cair Paravel. It stuck in Drinian's mind that this shining green woman was evil.

Drinian doubted very much whether he ought not to tell this adventure to the King, but he had little wish to be a blab and a tale-bearer and so he held his tongue. But afterwards he wished he had spoken. For next day Prince Rilian rode out alone. That night he came not back, and from that hour no trace of him was ever found in Narnia nor any neighbouring land, and neither his horse nor his hat nor his cloak nor anything else was ever found. Then Drinian in the bitterness of his heart went to Caspian and said, “Lord King, slay me speedily as a great traitor: for by my silence I have destroyed your son.” And he told him the story. Then Caspian caught up a battle-axe and rushed upon the Lord Drinian to kill him, and Drinian stood still as a stock for the death blow. But when the axe was raised, Caspian suddenly threw it away and cried out, “I have lost my queen and my son: shall I lose my friend also?” And he fell upon the Lord Drinian’s neck and embraced him and both wept, and their friendship was not broken.

Such was the story of Rilian. And when it was over, Jill said, “I bet that serpent and that woman were the same person.”

“True, true, we think the same as you,” hooted the owls.

“But we don’t think she killed the Prince,” said Glimfeather, “because no bones — —”

“We know she didn’t,” said Scrubb. “Aslan told Pole he was still alive somewhere.”

“That almost makes it worse,” said the oldest owl. “It means she has some use for him, and some deep scheme against Narnia. Long, long ago, at the very beginning, a White Witch came out of the North and bound our land in snow and ice for a hundred years. And we think this may be one of the same crew.”

“Very well, then,” said Scrubb. “Pole and I have got to find this Prince. Can you help us?”

“Have you any clue, you two?” asked Glimfeather.

“Yes,” said Scrubb. “We know we’ve got to go north. And we know we’ve got to reach the ruins of a giant city.”

At this there was a greater tu-whooing than ever, and noises of birds shifting their feet and ruffling their feathers, and then all the owls started speaking at once. They all explained how very sorry they were that they themselves could not go with the children on their search for the lost Prince. “You’d want to travel by day, and we’d want to travel by night,” they said. “It wouldn’t do, wouldn’t do.” One or two owls added that even here in the

ruined tower it wasn’t nearly so dark as it had been when they began, and that the parliament had been going on quite long enough. In fact, the mere mention of a journey to the ruined city of giants seemed to have damped the spirits of those birds. But Glimfeather said:

“If they want to go that way — into Ettinsmoor — we must take them to one of the Marsh-wiggles. They’re the only people who can help them much.”

“True, true. Do,” said the owls.

“Come on, then,” said Glimfeather. “I’ll take one. Who’ll take the other? It must be done to-night.”

“I will: as far as the Marsh-wiggles,” said another owl.

“Are you ready?” said Glimfeather to Jill.

“I think Pole’s asleep,” said Scrubb.

Chapter V

PUDDLEGLUM

Jill was asleep. Ever since the owls' parliament began she had been yawning terribly and now she had dropped off. She was not at all pleased at being waked again, and at finding herself lying on bare boards in a dusty belfry sort of place, completely dark, and almost completely full of owls. She was even less pleased when she heard that they had to set off for somewhere else — and not, apparently, for bed — on the Owl's back.

"Oh, come on, Pole, buck up," said Scrubb's voice. "After all, it is an adventure."

"I'm sick of adventures," said Jill crossly.

She did, however, consent to climb onto Glimfeather's back, and was thoroughly waked up (for a while) by the unexpected coldness of the air when he flew out with her into the night. The moon had disappeared and there were no stars. Far behind her she could see a single lighted window well above the ground; doubtless, in one of the towers of Cair Paravel. It made her long to be back in that delightful bedroom, snug in bed, watching the firelight on the walls. She put her hands under her cloak and wrapped it tightly round her. It was uncanny to hear two voices in the dark air a little distance away; Scrubb and his owl were talking to one another. "He doesn't sound tired," thought Jill. She did not realise that he had been on great adventures in that world before and that the Narnian air was bringing back to him a strength he had won when he sailed the Eastern Seas with King Caspian.

Jill had to pinch herself to keep awake, for she knew that if she dozed on Glimfeather's back she would probably fall off. When at last the two owls ended their flight, she climbed stiffly off Glimfeather and found herself on flat ground. A chilly wind was blowing and they appeared to be in a place without trees. "Tu-whoo, tu-whoo!" Glimfeather was calling. "Wake up, Puddleglum. Wake up. It is on the Lion's business."

For a long time there was no reply. Then, a long way off, a dim light appeared and began to come nearer. With it came a voice.

"Owls ahoy!" it said. "What is it? Is the King dead? Has an enemy landed in Narnia? Is it a flood? Or dragons?"

When the light reached them, it turned out to be that of a large lantern. She could see very little of the person who held it. He seemed to be all legs and arms. The owls were talking to him, explaining everything, but she was too tired to listen. She tried to wake herself up a bit when she realised that they were saying good-bye to her. But she could never afterwards remember much except that, sooner or later, she and Scrubb were stooping to enter a low doorway and then (oh, thank heavens) were lying down on something soft and warm, and a voice was saying,

"There you are. Best we can do. You'll lie cold and hard. Damp too, I shouldn't wonder. Won't sleep a wink, most likely; even if there isn't a thunderstorm or a flood or the wigwam doesn't fall down on top of us all, as I've known them do. Must make the best of it — —" But she was fast asleep before the voice had ended.

When the children woke late next morning they found that they were lying, very dry and warm, on beds of straw in a dark place. A triangular opening let in the daylight.

"Where on earth are we?" asked Jill.

"In the wigwam of a Marsh-wiggle," said Eustace.

"A what?"

"A Marsh-wiggle. Don't ask me what it is. I couldn't see it last night. I'm getting up. Let's go and look for it."

"How beastly one feels after sleeping in one's clothes," said Jill, sitting up.

"I was just thinking how nice it was not to have to dress," said Eustace.

"Or wash either, I suppose," said Jill scornfully. But Scrubb had already got up, yawned, shaken himself, and crawled out of the wigwam. Jill did the same.

What they found outside was quite unlike the bit of Narnia they had seen on the day before. They were on a great flat plain which was cut into countless little islands by countless channels of water. The islands were covered with coarse grass and bordered with reeds and rushes. Sometimes there were beds of rushes about an acre in extent. Clouds of birds were constantly alighting in them and rising from them again — duck, snipe, bitterns, herons. Many wigwams like that in which they had passed the night could be seen dotted about, but all at a good distance from one another; for Marsh-wiggles are people who like privacy. Except for the fringe of the forest several miles to the south and west of them, there was

not a tree in sight. Eastward the flat marsh stretched to low sand-hills on the horizon, and you could tell by the salt tang in the wind which blew from that direction that the sea lay over there. To the North there were low pale-coloured hills, in places bastioned with rock. The rest was all flat marsh. It would have been a depressing place on a wet evening. Seen under a morning sun, with a fresh wind blowing, and the air filled with the crying of birds, there was something fine and fresh and clean about its loneliness. The children felt their spirits rise.

"Where has the thingummy got to, I wonder?" said Jill.

"The Marsh-wiggle," said Scrubb, as if he were rather proud of knowing the word. "I expect — hullo, that must be him." And then they both saw him, sitting with his back to them, fishing, about fifty yards away. He had been hard to see at first because he was nearly the same colour as the marsh and because he sat so still.

"I suppose we'd better go and speak to him," said Jill. Scrubb nodded. They both felt a little nervous.

As they drew nearer, the figure turned its head and showed them a long thin face with rather sunken cheeks, a tightly shut mouth, a sharp nose, and no beard. He was wearing a high, pointed hat like a steeple, with an enormously wide flat brim. The hair, if it could be called hair which hung over his large ears was greeny-grey, and each lock was flat rather than round, so that they were like tiny reeds. His expression was solemn, his complexion muddy, and you could see at once that he took a serious view of life.

"Good morning, Guests," he said. "Though when I say *good* I don't mean it won't probably turn to rain or it might be snow, or fog, or thunder. You didn't get any sleep, I dare say."

"Yes we did, though," said Jill. "We had a lovely night."

"Ah," said the Marsh-wiggle, shaking his head. "I see you're making the best of a bad job. That's right. You've been well brought up, you have. You've learned to put a good face on things."

"Please, we don't know your name," said Scrubb.

"Puddleglum's my name. But it doesn't matter if you forget it. I can always tell you again."

The children sat down on each side of him. They now saw that he had very long legs and arms, so that although his body was not much bigger than a dwarf's, he would be taller than most men when he stood up. The

fingers of his hands were webbed like a frog's, and so were his bare feet which dangled in the muddy water. He was dressed in earth-coloured clothes that hung loose about him.

"I'm trying to catch a few eels to make an eel stew for our dinner," said Puddleglum. "Though I shouldn't wonder if I didn't get any. And you won't like them much if I do."

"Why not?" asked Scrubb.

"Why, it's not in reason that you should like our sort of victuals, though I've no doubt you'll put a bold face on it. All the same, while I am a catching of them, if you two could try to light the fire — no harm trying —— ! The wood's behind the wigwam. It may be wet. You could light it inside the wigwam, and then we'd get all the smoke in our eyes. Or you could light it outside, and then the rain would come and put it out. Here's my tinder-box. You won't know how to use it, I expect."

But Scrubb had learned that sort of thing on his last adventure. The children ran back together to the wigwam, found the wood (which was perfectly dry) and succeeded in lighting a fire with rather less than the usual difficulty. Then Scrubb sat and took care of it while Jill went and had some sort of wash — not a very nice one — in the nearest channel. After that she saw to the fire and he had a wash. Both felt a good deal fresher, but very hungry.

Presently the Marsh-wiggle joined them. In spite of his expectation of catching no eels, he had a dozen or so, which he had already skinned and cleaned. He put a big pot on, mended the fire, and lit his pipe. Marsh-wiggles smoke a very strange, heavy sort of tobacco (some people say they mix it with mud) and the children noticed the smoke from Puddleglum's pipe hardly rose in the air at all. It trickled out of the bowl and downwards and drifted along the ground like a mist. It was very black and set Scrubb coughing.

"Now," said Puddleglum. "Those eels will take a mortal long time to cook, and either of you might faint with hunger before they're done. I knew a little girl — but I'd better not tell you that story. It might lower your spirits, and that's a thing I never do. So, to keep your minds off your hunger, we may as well talk about our plans."

"Yes, do let's," said Jill. "Can you help us to find Prince Rilian?"

The Marsh-wiggle sucked in his cheeks till they were hollower than you would have thought possible. "Well, I don't know that you'd call it *help*,"

he said. “I don’t know that anyone can exactly *help*. It stands to reason we’re not likely to get very far on a journey to the North, not at this time of the year, with the winter coming on soon and all. And an early winter too, by the look of things. But you mustn’t let that make you down-hearted. Very likely, what with enemies, and mountains, and rivers to cross, and losing our way, and next to nothing to eat, and sore feet, we’ll hardly notice the weather. And if we don’t get far enough to do any good, we may get far enough not to get back in a hurry.”

Both children noticed that he said “we”, not “you”, and both exclaimed at the same moment. “Are you coming with us?”

“Oh yes, I’m coming of course. Might as well, you see. I don’t suppose we shall ever see the King back in Narnia, now that he’s once set off for foreign parts; and he had a nasty cough when he left. Then there’s Trumpkin. He’s failing fast. And you’ll find there’ll have been a bad harvest after this terrible dry summer. And I shouldn’t wonder if some enemy attacked us. Mark my words.”

“And how shall we start?’ said Scrubb.

“Well,” said the Marsh-wiggle very slowly, “all the others who ever went looking for Prince Rilian started from that same fountain where the Lord Drinian saw the lady. They went north, mostly. And as none of them ever came back, we can’t exactly say how they got on.”

“We’ve got to start by finding a ruined city of giants,” said Jill. “Aslan said so.”

“Got to start by *finding* it, have we?” answered Puddleglum. “Not allowed to start by *looking* for it, I suppose?”

“That’s what I meant, of course,” said Jill. “And then, when we’ve found it — —”

“Yes, when!” said Puddleglum very drily.

“Doesn’t anyone know where it is?” asked Scrubb.

“I don’t know about Anyone,” said Puddleglum. “And I won’t say I haven’t heard of that Ruined City. You wouldn’t start from the fountain, though. You’d have to go across Ettinsmoor. That’s where the Ruined City is, if it’s anywhere. But I’ve been as far in that direction as most people and I never got to any ruins, so I won’t deceive you.”

“Where’s Ettinsmoor?” said Scrubb.

“Look over there northward,” said Puddleglum, pointing with his pipe. “See those hills and bits of cliff? That’s the beginning of Ettinsmoor. But

there’s a river between it and us; the river Shribble. No bridges, of course.

“I suppose we can ford it, though,” said Scrubb.

“Well, it has been forded,” admitted the Marsh-wiggle.

“Perhaps we shall meet people on Ettinsmoor who can tell us the way,” said Jill.

“You’re right about meeting people,” said Puddleglum.

“What sort of people live there?” she asked.

“It’s not for me to say they aren’t all right in their own way,” answered Puddleglum. “If you like their way.”

“Yes, but what *are* they?” pressed Jill. “There are so many queer creatures in this country. I mean, are they animals, or birds, or dwarfs, or what?”

The Marsh-wiggle gave a long whistle. “Phew!” he said. “Don’t you know? I thought the owls had told you. They’re giants.”

Jill winced. She had never liked giants even in books, and she had once met one in a nightmare. Then she saw Scrubb’s face, which had turned rather green, and thought to herself, “I bet he’s in a worse funk than I am.” That made her feel braver.

“The King told me long ago,” said Scrubb— “that time when I was with him at sea — that he’d jolly well beaten those giants in war and made them pay him tribute.”

“That’s true enough,” said Puddleglum. “They’re at peace with us all right. As long as we stay on our own side of the Shribble, they won’t do us any harm. Over on their side, on the Moor —— Still, there’s always a chance. If we don’t get near any of them, and if none of them forget themselves, and if we’re not seen, it’s just possible we might get a long way.”

“Look here!” said Scrubb, suddenly losing his temper, as people so easily do when they have been frightened. “I don’t believe the whole thing can be half as bad as you’re making out; any more than the beds in the wigwam were hard or the wood was wet. I don’t think Aslan would ever have sent us if there was so little chance as all that.”

He quite expected the Marsh-wiggle to give him an angry reply, but he only said, “That’s the spirit, Scrubb. That’s the way to talk. Put a good face on it. But we all need to be very careful about our tempers, seeing all the hard times we shall have to go through together. Won’t do to quarrel, you know. At any rate, don’t begin it too soon. I know these expeditions usually

end that way: knifing one another, I shouldn't wonder, before all's done. But the longer we can keep off it — —"

"Well, if you feel it's so hopeless," interrupted Scrubb, "I think you'd better stay behind. Pole and I can go on alone, can't we, Pole?"

"Shut up and don't be an ass, Scrubb," said Jill hastily, terrified lest the Marsh-wiggle should take him at his word.

"Don't you lose heart, Pole," said Puddleglum. "I'm coming, sure and certain. I'm not going to lose an opportunity like this. It will do me good. They all say — I mean, the other wiggles all say — that I'm too flighty; don't take life seriously enough. If they've said it once, they've said it a thousand times. 'Puddleglum,' they've said, 'you're altogether too full of bobance and bounce and high spirits. You've got to learn that life isn't all fricasseed frogs and eel pie. You want something to sober you down a bit. We're only saying it for your own good, Puddleglum.' That's what they say. Now a job like this — a journey up north just as winter's beginning, looking for a Prince that probably isn't there, by way of a ruined city that no one has ever seen — will be just the thing. If that doesn't steady a chap, I don't know what will." And he rubbed his big frog-like hands together as if he were talking of going to a party or a pantomime. "And now," he added, "let's see how those eels are getting on."

When the meal came it was delicious and the children had two large helpings each. At first the Marsh-wiggle wouldn't believe that they really liked it, and when they had eaten so much that he had to believe them, he fell back on saying that it would probably disagree with them horribly. "What's food for wiggles may be poison for humans, I shouldn't wonder," he said. After the meal they had tea, in tins (as you've seen men having it who are working on the road), and Puddleglum had a good many sips out of a square black bottle. He offered the children some of it, but they thought it very nasty.

The rest of the day was spent in preparations for an early start to-morrow morning. Puddleglum, being far the biggest, said he would carry three blankets, with a large bit of bacon rolled up inside them. Jill was to carry the remains of the eels, some biscuit, and the tinder-box. Scrubb was to carry both his own cloak and Jill's when they didn't want to wear them. Scrubb (who had learned some shooting when he sailed to the East under Caspian) had Puddleglum's second-best bow, and Puddleglum had his best one; though he said that what with winds, and damp bowstrings, and bad

light, and cold fingers, it was a hundred to one against either of them hitting anything. He and Scrubb both had swords — Scrubb had brought the one which had been left out for him in his room at Cair Paravel, but Jill had to be content with her knife. There would have been a quarrel about this, but as soon as they started sparring the wiggle rubbed his hands and said, “Ah, there you are. I thought as much. That’s what usually happens on adventures.” This made them both shut up.

All three went to bed early in the wigwam. This time the children really had a rather bad night. That was because Puddleglum, after saying, “You’d better try for some sleep, you two; not that I suppose any of us will close an eye to-night,” instantly went off into such a loud, continuous snore that, when Jill at last got to sleep, she dreamed all night about road-drills and waterfalls and being in express trains in tunnels.

Chapter VI

THE WILD WASTE LANDS OF THE NORTH

At about nine o'clock next morning three lonely figures might have been seen picking their way across the Shribble by the shoals and stepping-stones. It was a shallow, noisy stream, and even Jill was not wet above her knees when they reached the northern bank. About fifty yards ahead, the land rose up to the beginning of the moor, everywhere steeply, and often in cliffs.

"I suppose *that's* our way!" said Scrubb, pointing left and west to where a stream flowed down from the moor through a shallow gorge. But the Marsh-wiggle shook his head.

"The giants mainly live along the side of that gorge," he said. "You might say the gorge was like a street to them. We'll do better straight ahead, even though it's a bit steep."

They found a place where they could scramble up, and in about ten minutes stood panting at the top. They cast a longing look back at the valley-land of Narnia and then turned their faces to the North. The vast, lonely moor stretched on and up as far as they could see. On their left was rockier ground. Jill thought that must be the edge of the giants' gorge and did not much care about looking in that direction. They set out.

It was good, springy ground for walking, and a day of pale winter sunlight. As they got deeper into the moor, the loneliness increased: one could hear peewits and see an occasional hawk. When they halted in the middle of the morning for a rest and a drink in a little hollow by a stream, Jill was beginning to feel that she might enjoy adventures after all, and said so.

"We haven't had any yet," said the Marsh-wiggle.

Walks after the first halt — like school mornings after break or railway journeys after changing trains — never go on as they were before. When they set out again, Jill noticed that the rocky edge of the gorge had drawn nearer. And the rocks were less flat, more upright, than they had been. In fact they were like little towers of rock. And what funny shapes they were!

"I do believe," thought Jill, "that all the stories about giants might have come from those funny rocks. If you were coming along here when it was

half dark, you could easily think those piles of rock were giants. Look at that one, now! You could almost imagine that the lump on top was a head. It would be rather too big for the body, but it would do well enough for an ugly giant. And all that bushy stuff — I suppose it's heather and birds' nests, really — would do quite well for hair and beard. And the things sticking out on each side are quite like ears. They'd be horribly big, but then I daresay giants would have big ears, like elephants. And — o-o-o-h! — —"

Her blood froze. The thing moved. It was a real giant. There was no mistaking it; she had seen it turn its head. She had caught a glimpse of the great, stupid, puff-cheeked face. All the things were giants, not rocks. There were forty or fifty of them, all in a row; obviously standing with their feet on the bottom of the gorge and their elbows resting on the edge of the gorge, just as men might stand leaning on a wall — lazy men, on a fine morning after breakfast.

"Keep straight on," whispered Puddleglum, who had noticed them too. "Don't look at them. And whatever you do, don't *run*. They'd all be after us in a moment."

So they kept on, pretending not to have seen the giants. It was like walking past the gate of a house where there is a fierce dog, only far worse. There were dozens and dozens of these giants. They didn't look angry — or kind — or interested at all. There was no sign that they had seen the travellers.

Then — whizz-whizz-whizz — some heavy object came hurtling through the air, and with a crash a big boulder fell about twenty paces ahead of them. And then — thud! — another fell twenty feet behind.

"Are they aiming at us?" asked Scrubb.

"No," said Puddleglum. "We'd be a good deal safer if they were. They're trying to hit *that* — that cairn over there to the right. They won't hit *it*, you know. *It's* safe enough; they're such very bad shots. They play cock-shies most fine mornings. About the only game they're clever enough to understand."

It was a horrible time. There seemed no end to the line of giants, and they never ceased hurling stones, some of which fell extremely close. Quite apart from the real danger, the very sight and sound of their faces and voices were enough to scare anyone. Jill tried not to look at them.

After about twenty-five minutes the giants apparently had a quarrel. This put an end to the cock-shies, but it is not pleasant to be within a mile of quarrelling giants. They stormed and jeered at one another in long, meaningless words of about twenty syllables each. They foamed and jibbered and jumped in their rage, and each jump shook the earth like a bomb. They lammed each other on the head with great, clumsy stone hammers; but their skulls were so hard that the hammers bounced off again, and then the monster who had given the blow would drop his hammer and howl with pain because it had stung his fingers. But he was so stupid that he would do exactly the same thing a minute later. This was a good thing in the long run, for by the end of an hour all the giants were so hurt that they sat down and began to cry. When they sat down, their heads were below the edge of the gorge, so that you saw them no more; but Jill could hear them howling and blubbering and boo-hooing like great babies even after the place was a mile behind.

That night they bivouacked on the bare moor, and Puddleglum showed the children how to make the best of their blankets by sleeping back to back. (The backs keep each other warm and you can then have both blankets on top.) But it was chilly even so, and the ground was hard and lumpy. The Marsh-wiggle told them they would feel more comfortable if only they thought how very much colder it would be later on and further north; but this didn’t cheer them up at all.

They travelled across Ettinsmoor for many days, saving the bacon and living chiefly on the moor-fowl (they were not, of course, *talking* birds) which Eustace and the wiggle shot. Jill rather envied Eustace for being able to shoot; he had learned it on his voyage with King Caspian. As there were countless streams on the moor, they were never short of water. Jill thought that when, in books, people live on what they shoot, it never tells you what a long, smelly, messy job it is plucking and cleaning dead birds, and how cold it makes your fingers. But the great thing was that they met hardly any giants. One giant saw them, but he only roared with laughter and stumped away about his own business.

About the tenth day, they reached a place where the country changed. They came to the northern edge of the moor and looked down a long, steep slope into a different, and grimmer, land. At the bottom of the slope were cliffs: beyond these, a country of high mountains, dark precipices, stony valleys, ravines so deep and narrow that one could not see far into them,

and rivers that poured out of echoing gorges to plunge sullenly into black depths. Needless to say, it was Puddleglum who pointed out a sprinkling of snow on the more distant slopes.

“But there’ll be more on the north side of them, I shouldn’t wonder,” he added.

It took them some time to reach the foot of the slope and, when they did, they looked down from the top of the cliffs at a river running below them from west to east. It was walled in by precipices on the far side as well as on their own, and it was green and sunless, full of rapids and waterfalls. The roar of it shook the earth even where they stood.

“The bright side of it is,” said Puddleglum, “that if we break our necks getting down the cliff, then we’re safe from being drowned in the river.”

“What about *that*?” said Scrubb suddenly, pointing upstream to their left. Then they all looked and saw the last thing they were expecting — a bridge. And what a bridge, too! It was a huge, single arch that spanned the gorge from cliff-top to cliff-top; and the crown of that arch was as high above the cliff-tops as the dome of St. Paul’s is above the street.

“Why, it must be a giants’ bridge!” said Jill.

“Or a sorcerer’s, more likely,” said Puddleglum. “We’ve got to look out for enchantments in a place like this. I think it’s a trap. I think it’ll turn into mist and melt away just when we’re out on the middle of it.”

“Oh, for goodness’ sake, don’t be such a wet blanket,” said Scrubb. “Why on earth shouldn’t it be a proper bridge?”

“Do you think any of the giants we’ve seen would have sense to build a thing like that?” said Puddleglum.

“But mightn’t it have been built by other giants?” said Jill. “I mean, by giants who lived hundreds of years ago, and were far cleverer than the modern kind. It might have been built by the same ones who built the giant city we’re looking for. And that would mean we were on the right track — the old bridge leading to the old city!”

“That’s a real brain-wave, Pole,” said Scrubb. “It must be that. Come on.”

So they turned and went to the bridge. And when they reached it, it certainly seemed solid enough. The single stones were as big as those at Stonehenge and must have been squared by good masons once, though now they were cracked and crumbled. The balustrade had apparently been covered with rich carvings, of which some traces remained; mouldering

faces and forms of giants, minotaurs, squids, centipedes, and dreadful gods. Puddleglum still didn't trust it, but he consented to cross it with the children.

The climb up to the crown of the arch was long and heavy. In many places the great stones had dropped out, leaving horrible gaps through which you looked down on the river foaming thousands of feet below. They saw an eagle fly through under their feet. And the higher they went, the colder it grew, and the wind blew so that they could hardly keep their footing. It seemed to shake the bridge.

When they reached the top and could look down the further slope of the bridge, they saw what looked like the remains of an ancient giant road stretching away before them into the heart of the mountains. Many stones of its pavement were missing and there were wide patches of grass between those that remained. And riding towards them on that ancient road were two people of normal grown-up human size.

"Keep on. Move towards them," said Puddleglum. "Anyone you meet in a place like this is as likely as not to be an enemy, but we mustn't let them think we're afraid."

By the time they had stepped off the end of the bridge on to the grass, the two strangers were quite close. One was a knight in complete armour with his visor down. His armour and his horse were black; there was no device on his shield and no banneret on his spear. The other was a lady on a white horse, a horse so lovely that you wanted to kiss its nose and give it a lump of sugar at once. But the lady, who rode side-saddle and wore a long, fluttering dress of dazzling green, was lovelier still.

"Good day, t-r-r-avellers," she cried out in a voice as sweet as the sweetest bird's song, trilling her R's delightfully. "Some of you are young pilgrims to walk this rough waste."

"That's as may be, Ma'am," said Puddleglum very stiffly and on his guard.

"We're looking for the ruined city of the giants," said Jill.

"The r-r-ruined city?" said the Lady. "That is a strange place to be seeking. What will you do if you find it?"

"We've got to — —" began Jill, but Puddleglum interrupted.

"Begging your pardon, Ma'am. But we don't know you or your friend — a silent chap, isn't he? — and you don't know us. And we'd as soon not talk

to strangers about our business, if you don't mind. Shall we have a little rain soon, do you think?"

The Lady laughed: the richest, most musical laugh you can imagine. "Well, children," she said, "you have a wise, solemn old guide with you. I think none the worse of him for keeping his own counsel, but I'll be free with mine. I have often heard the name of the giantish City Ruinous, but never met any who would tell me the way thither. This road leads to the burgh and castle of Harfang, where dwell the gentle giants. They are as mild, civil, prudent, and courteous as those of Ettinsmoor are foolish, fierce, savage and given to all beastliness. And in Harfang you may or may not hear tidings of the City Ruinous, but certainly you shall find good lodgings and merry hosts. You would be wise to winter there, or, at the least, to tarry certain days for your ease and refreshment. There you shall have steaming baths, soft beds, and bright hearths; and the roast and the baked and the sweet and the strong will be on the table four times in a day."

"I say!" exclaimed Scrubb. "That's something like! Think of sleeping in a bed again."

"Yes, and having a hot bath," said Jill. "Do you think they'll ask us to stay? We don't know them, you see."

"Only tell them," answered the Lady, "that She of the Green Kirtle salutes them by you, and has sent them two fair Southern children for the Autumn Feast."

"Oh, thank you, thank you ever so much," said Jill and Scrubb.

"But have a care," said the Lady. "On whatever day you reach Harfang, that you come not to the door too late. For they shut their gates a few hours after noon, and it is the custom of the castle that they open to none when once they have drawn bolt, how hard so ever he knock."

The children thanked her again, with shining eyes, and the Lady waved to them. The Marsh-wiggle took off his steeple-hat and bowed very stiffly. Then the silent Knight and the Lady started walking their horses up the slope of the bridge with a great clatter of hoofs.

"Well!" said Puddleglum. "I'd give a good deal to know where *she's* coming from and where she's going. Not the sort you expect to meet in the wilds of Giantland, is she? Up to no good, I'll be bound."

"Oh rot!" said Scrubb. "I thought she was simply super. And think of hot meals and warm rooms. I do hope Harfang isn't a long way off."

“Same here,” said Jill. “And hadn’t she a scrumptious dress. And the horse!”

“All the same,” said Puddleglum, “I wish we knew a bit more about her.”

“I was going to ask her all about herself,” said Jill. “But how could I when you wouldn’t tell her anything about us?”

“Yes,” said Scrubb. “And why were you so stiff and unpleasant. Didn’t you like them?”

“Them?” said the wiggle. “Who’s them? I only saw one.”

“Didn’t you see the Knight?” asked Jill.

“I saw a suit of armour,” said Puddleglum. “Why didn’t he speak?”

“I expect he was shy,” said Jill. “Or perhaps he just wants to look at her and listen to her lovely voice. I’m sure I would if I was him.”

“I was wondering,” remarked Puddleglum, “what you’d really see if you lifted up the visor of that helmet and looked inside.”

“Hang it all,” said Scrubb. “Think of the shape of the armour! What *could* be inside it except a man?”

“How about a skeleton?” asked the Marsh-wiggle with ghastly cheerfulness. “Or perhaps,” he added as an afterthought, “nothing at all. I mean, nothing you could see. Someone invisible.”

“Really, Puddleglum,” said Jill with a shudder, “you do have the most horrible ideas? How do you think of them all?”

“Oh, bother his ideas!” said Scrubb. “He’s always expecting the worst, and he’s always wrong. Let’s think about those Gentle Giants and get on to Harfang as quickly as we can. I wish I knew how far it is.”

And now they nearly had the first of those quarrels which Puddleglum had foretold: not that Jill and Scrubb hadn’t been sparring and snapping at each other a good deal before, but this was the first really serious disagreement. Puddleglum didn’t want them to go to Harfang at all. He said that he didn’t know what a giant’s idea of being “gentle” might be, and that, anyway, Aslan’s signs had said nothing about staying with giants, gentle or otherwise. The children, on the other hand, who were sick of wind and rain, and skinny fowl roasted over campfires, and hard, cold earth to sleep on, were absolutely dead set to visit the Gentle Giants. In the end, Puddleglum agreed to do so, but only on one condition. The others must give an absolute promise that, unless he gave them leave, they would not tell the Gentle Giants that they came from Narnia or that they were looking for Prince Rilian. And they gave him this promise, and went on.

After that talk with the Lady things got worse in two different ways. In the first place the country was much harder. The road led through endless, narrow valleys down which a cruel north wind was always blowing in their faces. There was nothing that could be used for firewood, and there were no nice little hollows to camp in, as there had been on the moor. And the ground was all stony, and made your feet sore by day and every bit of you sore by night.

In the second place, whatever the Lady had intended by telling them about Harfang, the actual effect on the children was a bad one. They could think about nothing but beds and baths and hot meals and how lovely it would be to get indoors. They never talked about Aslan, or even about the lost prince, now. And Jill gave up her habit of repeating the signs over to herself every night and morning. She said to herself, at first, that she was too tired, but she soon forgot all about it. And though you might have expected that the idea of having a good time at Harfang would have made them more cheerful, it really made them more sorry for themselves and more grumpy and snappy with each other and with Puddleglum.

At last they came one afternoon to a place where the gorge in which they were travelling widened out and dark fir woods rose on either side. They looked ahead and saw that they had come through the mountains. Before them lay a desolate, rocky plain: beyond it, further mountains capped with snow. But between them and those further mountains rose a low hill with an irregular, flattish top.

“Look! Look!” cried Jill, and pointed across the plain; and there, through the gathering dusk, from beyond the flat hill, everyone saw lights. Lights! Not moonlight, nor fires, but a homely cheering row of lighted windows. If you have never been in the wild wilderness, day and night, for weeks, you will hardly understand how they felt.

“Harfang!” cried Scrubb and Jill in glad, excited voices; and “Harfang,” repeated Puddleglum in a dull, gloomy voice. But he added, “Hullo! Wild geese!” and had the bow off his shoulder in a second. He brought down a good fat goose. It was far too late to think of reaching Harfang that day. But they had a hot meal and a fire, and started the night warmer than they had been for over a week. After the fire had gone out, the night grew bitterly cold, and when they woke next morning, their blankets were stiff with frost.

“Never mind!” said Jill, stamping her feet. “Hot baths to-night!”

Chapter VII

THE HILL OF THE STRANGE TRENCHES

There is no denying it was a beast of a day. Overhead was a sunless sky, muffled in clouds that were heavy with snow; underfoot, a black frost; blowing over it, a wind that felt as if it would take your skin off. When they got down into the plain they found that this part of the ancient road was much more ruinous than any they had yet seen. They had to pick their way over great broken stones and between boulders and across rubble: hard going for sore feet. And, however tired they got, it was far too cold for a halt.

At about ten o'clock the first tiny snow flakes came loitering down and settled on Jill's arm. Ten minutes later they were falling quite thickly. In twenty minutes the ground was noticeably white. And by the end of half an hour a good steady snowstorm, which looked as if it meant to last all day, was driving in their faces so that they could hardly see.

In order to understand what followed, you must keep on remembering how little they could see. As they drew near the low hill which separated them from the place where the lighted windows had appeared, they had no general view of it at all. It was a question of seeing the next few paces ahead, and, even for that, you had to screw up your eyes. Needless to say, they were not talking.

When they reached the foot of the hill they caught a glimpse of what might be rocks on each side — squarish rocks, if you looked at them carefully, but no one did. All were more concerned with the ledge right in front of them which barred their way. It was about four feet high. The Marsh-wiggle, with his long legs, had no difficulty in jumping onto the top of it, and he then helped the others up. It was a nasty wet business for them, though not for him, because the snow now lay quite deep on the ledge. They then had a stiff climb — Jill fell once — up very rough ground for about a hundred yards, and came to a second ledge. There were four of these ledges altogether, at quite irregular intervals.

As they struggled onto the fourth ledge, there was no mistaking the fact that they were now at the top of the flat hill. Up till now the slope had given them some shelter; here, they got the full fury of the wind. For the hill,

oddly enough, was quite as flat on top as it had looked from a distance: a great level tableland which the storm tore across without resistance. In most places the snow was still hardly lying at all, for the wind kept catching it up off the ground in sheets and clouds, and hurling it in their faces. And round their feet little eddies of snow ran about as you sometimes see them doing over ice. And, indeed, in many places, the surface was almost as smooth as ice. But to make matters worse it was crossed and criss-crossed with curious banks or dykes, which sometimes divided it up into squares and oblongs. All these of course had to be climbed; they varied from two to five feet in height and were about a couple of yards thick. On the north side of each bank the snow already lay in deep drifts; and after each climb you came down into drift and got wet.

Fighting her way forward with hood up and head down and numb hands inside her cloak, Jill had glimpses of other odd things on that horrible tableland — things on her right that looked vaguely like factory chimneys, and, on her left, a huge cliff, straighter than any cliff ought to be. But she wasn't at all interested and didn't give them a thought. The only things she thought about were her cold hands (and nose and chin and ears) and hot baths and beds at Harfang.

Suddenly she skidded, slid about five feet, and found herself to her horror sliding down into a dark, narrow chasm which seemed that moment to have appeared in front of her. Half a second later she had reached the bottom. She appeared to be in a kind of trench or groove, only about three feet wide. And though she was shaken by the fall, almost the first thing she noticed was the relief of being out of the wind; for the walls of the trench rose high above her. The next thing she noticed was, naturally, the anxious faces of Scrubb and Puddleglum looking down at her from the edge.

"Are you hurt, Pole?" shouted Scrubb.

"*Both* legs broken, I shouldn't wonder," shouted Puddleglum.

Jill stood up and explained that she was all right, but they'd have to help her out.

"What is it you've fallen into?" asked Scrubb.

"It's a kind of trench, or it might be a kind of sunken lane or something," said Jill. "It runs quite straight."

"Yes, by Jove," said Scrubb. "And it runs due north! I wonder is it a sort of road? If it was, we'd be out of this infernal wind down there. Is there a lot of snow at the bottom?"

“Hardly any. It all blows over the top, I suppose.”

“What happens further on?”

“Half a sec. I’ll go and see,” said Jill. She got up and walked along the trench; but before she had gone far, it turned sharply to the right. She shouted this information back to the others.

“What’s round the corner?” asked Scrubb.

Now it happened that Jill had the same feeling about twisty passages and dark places underground, or even nearly underground, that Scrubb had about the edges of cliffs. She had no intention of going round that corner alone; especially when she heard Puddleglum bawling out from behind her,

“Be careful, Pole. It’s just the sort of place that might lead to a dragon’s cave. And in a giant country, there might be giant earth-worms or giant beetles.”

“I don’t think it goes anywhere much,” said Jill, coming hastily back.

“I’m jolly well going to have a look,” said Scrubb. “What do you mean by *anywhere much*, I should like to know?” So he sat down on the edge of the trench (everyone was too wet by now to bother about being a bit wetter) and then dropped in. He pushed past Jill and, though he didn’t say anything, she felt sure that he knew she had funked it. So she followed him close, but took care not to get in front of him.

It proved, however, a disappointing exploration. They went round the right-hand turn and straight on for a few paces. Here there was a choice of ways: straight on again, or sharp to the right. “That’s no good,” said Scrubb, glancing down the right-hand turn, “that would be taking us back — south.” He went straight on, but once more, in a few steps, they found a second turn to the right. But this time there was no choice of ways, for the trench they had been following here came to a dead end.

“No good,” grunted Scrubb. Jill lost no time in turning and leading the way back. When they returned to the place where Jill had first fallen in, the Marsh-wiggle with his long arms had no difficulty in pulling them out.

But it was dreadful to be out on top again. Down in those narrow slits of trenches, their ears had almost begun to thaw. They had been able to see clearly and breathe easily and hear each other speak without shouting. It was absolute misery to come back into the withering coldness. And it did seem hard when Puddleglum chose that moment for saying:

“Are you still sure of those signs, Pole? What’s the one we ought to be after, now?”

“Oh, come *on*! Bother the signs,” said Pole. “Something about someone mentioning Aslan’s name, I think. But I’m jolly well not going to give a recitation here.”

As you see, she had got the order wrong. That was because she had given up saying the signs over every night. She still really knew them, if she troubled to think: but she was no longer so “pat” in her lesson as to be sure of reeling them off in the right order at a moment’s notice and without thinking. Puddleglum’s question annoyed her because, deep down inside her, she was already annoyed with herself for not knowing the Lion’s lesson quite so well as she felt she ought to have known it. This annoyance, added to the misery of being very cold and tired, made her say, “Bother the signs.” She didn’t perhaps quite mean it.

“Oh, that was next, was it?” said Puddleglum. “Now I wonder, are you right? Got ’em mixed, I shouldn’t wonder. It seems to me, this hill, this flat place we’re on, is worth stopping to have a look at. Have you noticed —”

“Oh Lor!” said Scrubb, “is this a time for stopping to admire the view? For goodness’ sake let’s get on.”

“Oh, look, look, look,” cried Jill and pointed. Everyone turned, and everyone saw. Some way off to the north, and a good deal higher up than the tableland on which they stood, a line of lights had appeared. This time, even more obviously than when the travellers had seen them the night before, they were windows: smaller windows that made one think deliciously of bedrooms, and larger windows that made one think of great halls with fires roaring on the hearth and hot soup or juicy sirloins smoking on the table.

“Harfang!” exclaimed Scrubb.

“That’s all very well,” said Puddleglum. “But what I was saying was —”

“Oh, shut up,” said Jill crossly. “We haven’t a moment to lose. Don’t you remember what the Lady said about their locking up so early? We must get there in time, we must, we must. We’ll *die* if we’re shut out on a night like this.”

“Well, it isn’t exactly a night, not yet,” began Puddleglum; but the two children both said, “Come on,” and began stumbling forward on the slippery tableland as quickly as their legs would carry them. The Marsh-wiggle followed them: still talking, but now that they were forcing their

way into the wind again, they could not have heard him even if they had wanted to. And they didn't want. They were thinking of baths and beds and hot drinks; and the idea of coming to Harfang too late and being shut out was almost unbearable.

In spite of their haste, it took them a long time to cross the flat top of that hill. And even when they had crossed it, there were still several ledges to climb down on the far side. But at last they reached the bottom and could see what Harfang was like.

It stood on a high crag, and in spite of its many towers was more a huge house than a castle. Obviously, the Gentle Giants feared no attack. There were windows in the outside wall quite close to the ground — a thing no one would have in a serious fortress. There were even odd little doors here and there, so that it would be quite easy to get in and out of the castle without going through the courtyard. This raised the spirits of Jill and Scrubb. It made the whole place look more friendly and less forbidding.

At first the height and steepness of the crag frightened them, but presently they noticed that there was an easier way up on the left and that the road wound up towards it. It was a terrible climb, after the journey they had already had, and Jill nearly gave up. Scrubb and Puddleglum had to help her for the last hundred yards. But in the end they stood before the castle gate. The portcullis was up and the gate open.

However tired you are, it takes some nerve to walk up to a giant's front door. In spite of all his previous warnings against Harfang, it was Puddleglum who showed most courage.

"Steady pace, now," he said. "Don't look frightened, whatever you do. We've done the silliest thing in the world by coming at all: but now that we *are* here, we'd best put a bold face on it."

With these words he strode forward into the gateway, stood still under the arch where the echo would help his voice, and called out as loud as he could.

"Ho! Porter! Guests who seek lodging."

And while he was waiting for something to happen, he took off his hat and knocked off the heavy mass of snow which had gathered on its wide brim.

"I say," whispered Scrubb to Jill. "He may be a wet blanket, but he has plenty of pluck — and cheek."

A door opened, letting out a delicious glow of firelight, and the Porter appeared. Jill bit her lips for fear she should scream. He was not a perfectly enormous giant; that is to say, he was rather taller than an apple tree but nothing like so tall as a telegraph pole. He had bristly red hair, a leather jerkin with metal plates fastened all over it so as to make a kind of mail shirt, bare knees (very hairy indeed) and things like puttees on his legs. He stooped down and goggled at Puddleglum.

"And what sort of a creature do you call yourself," he said.

Jill took her courage in both hands. "Please," she said, shouting up at the giant. "The Lady of the Green Kirtle salutes the King of the Gentle Giants, and has sent us two Southern children and this Marsh-wiggle (his name's Puddleglum) to your Autumn Feast. — If it's quite convenient, of course," she added.

"O-ho!" said the Porter. "That's quite a different story. Come in, little people, come in. You'd best come into the lodge while I'm sending word to his Majesty." He looked at the children with curiosity. "Blue faces," he said. "I didn't know they were that colour. Don't care about it myself. But I daresay you look quite nice to one another. Beetles fancy other beetles, they do say."

"Our faces are only blue with cold," said Jill. "We're not this colour *really*."

"Then come in and get warm. Come in, little shrimps," said the Porter. They followed him into the lodge. And though it was rather terrible to hear such a big door clang shut behind them, they forgot about it as soon as they saw the thing they had been longing for ever since supper time last night — a fire. And such a fire! It looked as if four or five whole trees were blazing on it, and it was so hot they couldn't go within yards of it. But they all flopped down on the brick floor, as near as they could bear the heat, and heaved great sighs of relief.

"Now, youngster," said the Porter to another giant who had been sitting in the back of the room, staring at the visitors till it looked as if his eyes would start out of his head, "run across with this message to the House." And he repeated what Jill had said to him. The younger giant, after a final stare, and a great guffaw, left the room.

"Now, Froggy," said the Porter to Puddleglum, "you look as if you wanted some cheering up." He produced a black bottle very like Puddleglum's own, but about twenty times larger. "Let me see, let me see,"

said the Porter. “I can’t give you a cup or you’ll drown yourself. Let me see. This salt-cellar will be just the thing. You needn’t mention it over at the House. The silver *will* keep on getting over here, and it’s not my fault.”

The salt-cellar was not very like one of ours, being narrower and more upright, and made quite a good cup for Puddleglum, when the giant set it down on the floor beside him. The children expected Puddleglum to refuse it, distrusting the Gentle Giants as he did. But he muttered, “It’s rather late to be thinking of precautions now that we’re inside and the door shut behind us.” Then he sniffed at the liquor. “Smells all right,” he said. “But that’s nothing to go by. Better make sure,” and took a sip. “Tastes all right too,” he said. “But it might do that at the *first* sip. How does it go on?” He took a larger sip. “Ah!” he said. “But is it the same all the way down?” and took another. “There’ll be something nasty at the bottom, I shouldn’t wonder,” he said, and finished the drink. He licked his lips and remarked to the children, “This’ll be a test, you see. If I curl up, or burst, or turn into a lizard, or something, then you’ll know not to take anything they offer you.” But the giant, who was too far up to hear the things Puddleglum had been saying under his breath, roared with laughter and said, “Why, Froggy, you’re a man. See him put it away!”

“Not a man ... Marsh-wiggle,” replied Puddleglum in a somewhat indistinct voice. “Not frog either: Marsh-wiggle.”

At that moment the door opened behind them and the younger giant came in saying, “They’re to go to the throne-room at once.”

The children stood up but Puddleglum remained sitting and said, “Marsh-wiggle. Marsh-wiggle. Very respectable Marsh-wiggle. Respectowiggle.”

“Show them the way, young ‘un,” said the giant Porter. “You’d better carry Froggy. He’s had a drop more than’s good for him.”

“Nothing wrong with me,” said Puddleglum. “Not a frog. Nothing frog with me. I’m a respectabiggle.”

But the young giant caught him up by the waist and signed to the children to follow. In this undignified way they crossed the courtyard. Puddleglum, held in the giant’s fist, and vaguely kicking the air, did certainly look very like a frog. But they had little time to notice this, for they soon entered the great doorway of the main castle — both their hearts were beating faster than usual — and, after pattering along several corridors at a trot to keep up with the giant’s paces, found themselves blinking in the

light of an enormous room, where lamps glowed and fire roared on the hearth and both were reflected from the gilding of roof and cornice. More giants than they could count stood on their left and right, all in magnificent robes; and on two thrones at the far end, sat two huge shapes that appeared to be the King and Queen.

About twenty feet from the thrones, they stopped. Scrubb and Jill made an awkward attempt at a bow (girls are not taught how to curtsey at Experiment House) and the young giant carefully put Puddleglum down on the floor, where he collapsed into a sort of sitting position. With his long limbs he looked, to tell the truth, uncommonly like a large spider.

Chapter VIII

THE HOUSE OF HARFANG

“Go on, Pole, do your stuff,” whispered Scrubb.

Jill found that her mouth was so dry that she couldn’t speak a word. She nodded savagely at Scrubb.

Thinking to himself that he would never forgive her (or Puddleglum either), Scrubb licked his lips and shouted up to the King giant.

“If you please, Sire, the Lady of the Green Kirtle salutes you by us and said you’d like to have us for your Autumn Feast.”

The giant King and Queen looked at each other, nodded to each other, and smiled in a way that Jill didn’t exactly like. She liked the King better than the Queen. He had a fine, curled beard and a straight eagle-like nose, and was really rather good-looking as giants go. The Queen was dreadfully fat and had a double chin and a fat, powdered face — which isn’t a very nice thing at the best of times, and of course looks much worse when it is ten times too big. Then the King put out his tongue and licked his lips. Anyone might do that: but his tongue was so very large and red, and came out so unexpectedly, that it gave Jill quite a shock.

“Oh, what *good* children!” said the Queen. (“Perhaps she’s the nice one after all,” thought Jill.)

“Yes indeed,” said the King. “Quite excellent children. We welcome you to our court. Give me your hands.”

He stretched down his great right hand — very clean and with any number of rings on the fingers, but also with terrible pointed nails. He was much too big to shake the hands which the children, in turn, held up to him; but he shook the arms.

“And what’s *that*?” asked the King, pointing to Puddleglum.

“Reshpeckobiggle,” said Puddleglum.

“Oh!” screamed the Queen, gathering her skirts close about her ankles. “The horrid thing! It’s alive.”

“He’s quite all right, your Majesty, really, he is,” said Scrubb hastily. “You’ll like him much better when you get to know him. I’m sure you will.”

I hope you won’t lose all interest in Jill for the rest of the book if I tell you that at this moment she began to cry. There was a good deal of excuse for her. Her feet and hands and ears and nose were still only just beginning to thaw; melted snow was trickling off her clothes; she had had hardly anything to eat or drink that day; and her legs were aching so that she felt she could not go on standing much longer. Anyway, it did more good at the moment than anything else would have done, for the Queen said:

“Ah, the poor child! My lord, we do wrong to keep our guests standing. Quick, some of you! Take them away. Give them food and wine and baths. Comfort the little girl. Give her lollipops, give her dolls, give her physics, give her all you can think of — possets and comfits and caraways and lullabies and toys. Don’t cry, little girl, or you won’t be good for anything when the feast comes.”

Jill was just as indignant as you and I would have been at the mention of toys and dolls; and, though lollipops and comfits might be all very well in their way, she very much hoped that something more solid would be provided. The Queen’s foolish speech, however, produced excellent results, for Puddleglum and Scrubb were at once picked up by gigantic gentlemen-in-waiting, and Jill by a gigantic maid of honour, and carried off to their rooms.

Jill’s room was about the size of a church, and would have been rather grim if it had not had a roaring fire on the hearth and a very thick crimson carpet on the floor. And here delightful things began to happen to her. She was handed over to the Queen’s old Nurse, who was, from the giants’ point of view, a little old woman almost bent double with age, and, from the human point of view, a giantess small enough to go about an ordinary room without knocking her head on the ceiling. She was very capable, though Jill did wish she wouldn’t keep on clicking her tongue and saying things like “Oh la, la! Ups-a-daisy” and “There’s a duck” and “Now we’ll be all right, my poppet”. She filled a giant foot-bath with hot water and helped Jill into it. If you can swim (as Jill could) a giant bath is a lovely thing. And giant towels, though a bit rough and coarse, are lovely too, because there are acres of them. In fact you don’t need to dry at all, you just roll about on them in front of the fire and enjoy yourself. And when that was over, clean, fresh, warmed clothes were put on Jill: very splendid clothes and a little too big for her, but clearly made for humans not giantesses. “I suppose if that

woman in the green kirtle comes here, they must be used to guests of our size," thought Jill.

She soon saw that she was right about this, for a table and chair of the right height for an ordinary grown-up human were placed for her, and the knives and forks and spoons were the proper size too. It was delightful to sit down, feeling warm and clean at last. Her feet were still bare and it was lovely to tread on the giant carpet. She sank in it well over her ankles and it was just the thing for sore feet. The meal — which I suppose we must call dinner, though it was nearer tea time — was cock-a-leekie soup, and hot roast turkey, and a steamed pudding, and roast chestnuts, and as much fruit as you could eat!

The only annoying thing was that the Nurse kept coming in and out, and every time she came in, she brought a gigantic toy with her — a huge doll, bigger than Jill herself, a wooden horse on wheels, about the size of an elephant, a drum that looked like a young gasometer, and a woolly lamb. They were crude, badly made things, painted in very bright colours, and Jill hated the sight of them. She kept on telling the Nurse she didn't want them, but the Nurse said:

"Tut-tut-tut-tut. You'll want 'em all right when you've had a bit of a rest, I know! Te-he-he! Beddy bye, now. A precious poppet!"

The bed was not a giant bed but only a big four-poster, like what you might see in an old-fashioned hotel; and very small it looked in that enormous room. She was very glad to tumble into it.

"Is it still snowing, Nurse?" she asked sleepily.

"No. Raining now, ducky!" said the giantess. "Rain'll wash away all the nasty snow. Precious poppet will be able to go out and play to-morrow!" And she tucked Jill up and said good-night.

I know nothing so disagreeable as being kissed by a giantess. Jill thought the same, but was asleep in five minutes.

The rain fell steadily all that evening and all the night, dashing against the windows of the castle, and Jill never heard it but slept deeply, past supper time and past midnight. And then came the deadest hour of the night and nothing stirred but mice in the house of the giants. At that hour there came to Jill a dream. It seemed to her that she awoke in the same room and saw the fire, sunk low and red, and in the firelight the great wooden horse. And the horse came of its own will, rolling on its wheels across the carpet, and stood at her head. And now it was no longer a horse, but a lion as big as

the horse. And then it was not a toy lion, but a real lion, The Real Lion, just as she had seen him on the mountain beyond the world's end. And a smell of all sweet-smelling things there are filled the room. But there was some trouble in Jill's mind, though she could not think what it was, and the tears streamed down her face and wet the pillow. The Lion told her to repeat the signs, and she found that she had forgotten them all. At that, a great horror came over her. And Aslan took her up in his jaws (she could feel his lips and his breath but not his teeth) and carried her to the window and made her look out. The moon shone bright; and written in great letters across the world or the sky (she did not know which) were the words UNDER ME. After that, the dream faded away, and when she woke, very late next morning, she did not remember that she had dreamed at all.

She was up and dressed and had finished breakfast in front of the fire when the Nurse opened the door and said:

"Here's pretty poppet's little friends come to play with her."

In came Scrubb and the Marsh-wiggle.

"Hullo! Good-morning," said Jill. "Isn't this fun? I've slept about fifteen hours, I believe. I do feel better, don't you?"

"*I* do," said Scrubb, "but Puddleglum says he has a headache. Hullo! — your window has a window seat. If we got up on that, we could see out." And at once they all did so: and at the first glance Jill said, "Oh, how perfectly dreadful!"

The sun was shining and, except for a few drifts, the snow had been almost completely washed away by the rain. Down below them, spread out like a map, lay the flat hill-top which they had struggled over yesterday afternoon; seen from the castle, it could not be mistaken for anything but the ruins of a gigantic city. It had been flat, as Jill now saw, because it was still, on the whole, paved, though in places the pavement was broken. The criss-cross banks were what was left of the walls of huge buildings which might once have been giants' palaces and temples. One bit of wall, about five hundred feet high, was still standing; it was that which she had thought was a cliff. The things that had looked like factory chimneys were enormous pillars, broken off at unequal heights; their fragments lay at their bases like felled trees of monstrous stone. The ledges which they had climbed down on the north side of the hill — and also, no doubt the other ledges which they had climbed up on the south side — were the remaining

steps of giant stairs. To crown all, in large, dark lettering across the centre of the pavement, ran the words UNDER ME.

The three travellers looked at each other in dismay, and, after a short whistle, Scrubb said what they were all thinking, “The second and third signs muffed.” And at that moment Jill’s dream rushed back into her mind.

“It’s my fault,” she said in despairing tones. “I — I’d given up repeating the signs every night. If I’d been thinking about them I could have seen it was the city, even in all that snow.”

“I’m worse,” said Puddleglum. “I *did* see, or nearly. I thought it looked uncommonly like a ruined city.”

“You’re the only one who isn’t to blame,” said Scrubb. “You *did* try to make us stop.”

“Didn’t try hard enough, though,” said the Marsh-wiggle. “And I’d no call to be trying. I ought to have done it. As if I couldn’t have stopped you two with one hand each!”

“The truth is,” said Scrubb, “we were so jolly keen on getting to this place that we weren’t bothering about anything else. At least I know I was. Ever since we met that woman with the knight who didn’t talk, we’ve been thinking of nothing else. We’d nearly forgotten about Prince Rilian.”

“I shouldn’t wonder,” said Puddleglum, “if that wasn’t exactly what she intended.”

“What I don’t quite understand,” said Jill, “is how we didn’t see the lettering? Or could it have come there since last night. Could he — Aslan — have put it there in the night? I had such a queer dream.” And she told them all about it.

“Why, you chump!” said Scrubb. “We did see it. We got into the lettering. Don’t you see? We got into the letter E in ME. That was your sunk lane. We walked along the bottom stroke of the E, due north — turned to our right along the upright — came to another turn to the right — that’s the middle stroke — and then went on to the top left-hand corner, or (if you like) the north-eastern corner of the letter, and came back. Like the bally idiots we are.” He kicked the window seat savagely, and went on, “So it’s no good, Pole. I know what you were thinking because I was thinking the same. You were thinking how nice it would have been if Aslan hadn’t put the instructions on the stones of the ruined city till after we’d passed it. And then it would have been his fault, not ours. So likely, isn’t it? No. We must

just own up. We've only four signs to go by, and we've muffed the first three."

"You mean I have," said Jill. "It's quite true. I've spoiled everything ever since you brought me here. All the same — I'm frightfully sorry and all that — all the same, what are the instructions? UNDER ME doesn't seem to make much sense."

"Yes it does, though," said Puddleglum. "It means we've got to look for the Prince under that city."

"But how can we?" asked Jill.

"That's the question," said Puddleglum, rubbing his big, frog-like hands together. "How can we *now*? No doubt, if we'd had our minds on our job when we were at the Ruinous City, we'd have been shown how — found a little door, or a cave, or a tunnel, met someone to help us. Might have been (you never know) Aslan himself. We'd have got down under those paving-stones somehow or other. Aslan's instructions always work: there are no exceptions. But how to do it *now* — that's another matter."

"Well, we shall just have to go back, I suppose," said Jill.

"Easy, isn't it?" said Puddleglum. "We might try opening that door to begin with." And they all looked at the door and saw that none of them could reach the handle, and that almost certainly no one could turn it if they did.

"Do you think they won't let us out if we ask?" said Jill. And nobody said, but everyone thought, "Supposing they don't."

It was not a pleasant idea. Puddleglum was dead against any idea of telling the giants their real business and simply asking to be let out; and of course the children couldn't tell without his permission, because they had promised. And all three felt pretty sure that there would be no chance of escaping from the castle by night. Once they were in their rooms with the doors shut, they would be prisoners till morning. They might, of course, ask to have their doors left open, but that would rouse suspicions.

"Our only chance," said Scrubb, "is to try to sneak away by daylight. Mightn't there be an hour in the afternoon when most of the giants are asleep? — and if we could steal down into the kitchen, mightn't there be a back door open?"

"It's hardly what I call a Chance," said the Marsh-wiggle. "But it's all the chance we're likely to get." As a matter of fact, Scrubb's plan was not quite so hopeless as you might think. If you want to get out of a house

without being seen, the middle of the afternoon is in some ways a better time to try it than the middle of the night. Doors and windows are more likely to be open; and if you *are* caught, you can always pretend you weren't meaning to go far and had no particular plans. (It is very hard to make either giants or grown-ups believe this if you're found climbing out of a bedroom window at one o'clock in the morning.)

"We must put them off their guard, though," said Scrubb. "We must pretend we love being here and are longing for this Autumn Feast."

"That's to-morrow night," said Puddleglum. "I heard one of them say so."

"I see," said Jill. "We must pretend to be awfully excited about it, and keep on asking questions. They think we're absolute infants anyway, which will make it easier."

"Gay," said Puddleglum with a deep sigh. "That's what we've got to be, Gay. As if we hadn't a care in the world. Frolicsome. You two youngsters haven't always got very high spirits, I've noticed. You must watch me, and do as I do. I'll be gay. Like this" — and he assumed a ghastly grin. "And frolicsome" — here he cut a most mournful caper. "You'll soon get into it, if you keep your eyes on me. They think I'm a funny fellow already, you see. I daresay, you two thought I was a trifle tipsy last night, but I do assure you it was — well, most of it was — put on. I had an idea it would come in useful, somehow."

The children, when they talked over their adventures afterwards, could never feel sure whether this last statement was quite strictly true; but they were sure that Puddleglum thought it was true when he made it.

"All right. Gay's the word," said Scrubb. "Now, if we could only get someone to open this door. While we're fooling about and being gay, we've got to find out all we can about this castle."

Luckily, at that very moment the door opened, and the giant Nurse bustled in saying, "Now, my poppets. Like to come and see the King and all the court setting out on the hunting? Such a pretty sight!"

They lost no time in rushing out past her and climbing down the first staircase they came to. The noise of hounds and horns and giant voices guided them, so that in a few minutes they reached the courtyard. The giants were all on foot, for there are no giant horses in that part of the world, and the giants' hunting is done on foot; like beagling in England. The hounds also were of normal size. When Jill saw that there were no

horses she was at first dreadfully disappointed, for she felt sure that the great fat Queen would never go after hounds on foot; and it would never do to have her about the house all day. But then she saw the Queen in a kind of litter supported on the shoulders of six young giants. The silly old creature was all got up in green and had a horn at her side. Twenty or thirty giants, including the King, were assembled, ready for the sport, all talking and laughing fit to deafen you: and down below, nearer Jill's level, there were wagging tails, and barking, and loose, slobbery mouths and noses of dogs thrust into your hand. Puddleglum was just beginning to strike what he thought a gay and gamesome attitude (which might have spoiled everything if it had been noticed) when Jill put on her most attractively childish smile, rushed across to the Queen's litter and shouted up to the Queen.

"Oh, please! You're not going *away*, are you? You will come back?"

"Yes, my dear," said the Queen. "I'll be back to-night."

"Oh, *good*. How lovely!" said Jill. "And we *may* come to the feast to-morrow night, mayn't we? We're so longing for to-morrow night! And we do love being here. And while you're out, we may run over the whole castle and see everything, mayn't we? Do say yes."

The Queen did say yes, but the laughter of all the courtiers nearly drowned her voice.

Chapter IX

HOW THEY DISCOVERED SOMETHING WORTH KNOWING

The others admitted afterwards that Jill had been wonderful that day. As soon as the King and the rest of the hunting party had set off, she began making a tour of the whole castle and asking questions, but all in such an innocent, babyish way that no one could suspect her of any secret design. Though her tongue was never still, you could hardly say she talked: she prattled and giggled. She made love to everyone — the grooms, the porters, the housemaids, the ladies-in-waiting, and the elderly giant lords whose hunting days were past. She submitted to being kissed and pawed about by any number of giantesses, many of whom seemed sorry for her and called her “a poor little thing” though none of them explained why. She made especial friends with the cook and discovered the all-important fact there was a scullery door which let you out through the outer wall, so that you did not have to cross the courtyard or pass the great gatehouse. In the kitchen she pretended to be greedy, and ate all sorts of scraps which the cook and scullions delighted to give her. But upstairs among the ladies she asked questions about how she would be dressed for the great feast, and how long she would be allowed to sit up, and whether she would dance with some very, very small giant. And then (it made her hot all over when she remembered it afterwards) she would put her head on one side in an idiotic fashion which grown-ups, giant and otherwise, thought very fetching, and shake her curls, and fidget, and say, “Oh, I do wish it was to-morrow night, don’t you? Do you think the time will go quickly till then?” And all the giantesses said she was a perfect little darling; and some of them dabbed their eyes with enormous handkerchiefs as if they were going to cry.

“They’re dear little things at that age,” said one giantess to another. “It seems almost a pity...”

Scrubb and Puddleglum both did their best, but girls do that kind of thing better than boys. Even boys do it better than marsh-wiggles.

At lunchtime something happened which made all three of them more anxious than ever to leave the castle of the Gentle Giants. They had lunch in the great hall at a little table of their own, near the fireplace. At a bigger table, about twenty yards away, half a dozen old giants were lunching. Their

conversation was so noisy, and so high up in the air, that the children soon took no more notice of it than you would of hooters outside the window or traffic noises in the street. They were eating cold venison, a kind of food which Jill had never tasted before, and she was liking it.

Suddenly Puddleglum turned to them, and his face had gone so pale that you could see the paleness under the natural muddiness of his complexion. He said:

"Don't eat another bite."

"What's wrong?" asked the other two in a whisper.

"Didn't you hear what those giants were saying? 'That's a nice tender haunch of venison,' said one of them. 'Then that stag was a liar,' said another. 'Why?' said the first one. 'Oh,' said the other. 'They say that when he was caught he said, Don't kill me, I'm tough. You won't like me.'"

For a moment Jill did not realise the full meaning of this. But she did when Scrubb's eyes opened wide with horror and he said:

"So we've been eating a *Talking* stag."

This discovery didn't have exactly the same effect on all of them. Jill, who was new to that world, was sorry for the poor stag and thought it rotten of the giants to have killed him. Scrubb, who had been in that world before and had at least one Talking beast as his dear friend, felt horrified; as you might feel about a murder. But Puddleglum, who was Narnian born, was sick and faint, and felt as you would feel if you found you had eaten a baby.

"We've brought the anger of Aslan on us," he said. "That's what comes of not attending to the signs. We're under a curse, I expect. If it was allowed, it would be the best thing we could do, to take these knives and drive them into our own hearts."

And gradually even Jill came to see it from his point of view. At any rate, none of them wanted any more lunch. And as soon as they thought it safe they crept quietly out of the hall.

It was now drawing near to that time of the day on which their hopes of escape depended, and all became nervous. They hung about in passages and waited for things to become quiet. The giants in the hall sat on a dreadfully long time after the meal was over. The bald one was telling a story. When that was over, the three travellers dawdled down to the kitchen. But there were still plenty of giants there, or at least in the scullery, washing up and putting things away. It was agonising, waiting till these finished their jobs and, one by one, wiped their hands and went away. At last only one old

giantess was left in the room. She pottered about, and pottered about, and at last the three travellers realised with horror that she did not intend to go away at all.

“Well, dearies,” she said to them. “That job’s about through. Let’s put the kettle there. That’ll make a nice cup of tea presently. Now I can have a little bit of a rest. Just look into the scullery, like good poppets, and tell me if the back door is open.”

“Yes, it is,” said Scrubb.

“That’s right. I always leave it open so as Puss can get in and out, the poor thing.”

Then she sat down on one chair and put her feet up on another.

“I don’t know as I mightn’t have forty winks,” said the giantess. “If only that blarney hunting party doesn’t come back too soon.”

All their spirits leaped up when she mentioned forty winks, and flopped down again when she mentioned the return of the hunting party.

“When do they usually come back?” asked Jill.

“You never can tell,” said the giantess. “But there; go and be quiet for a bit, my dearies.”

They retreated to the far end of the kitchen, and would have slipped out into the scullery there and then if the giantess had not sat up, opened her eyes, and brushed away a fly. “Don’t try it till we’re sure she’s really asleep,” whispered Scrubb. “Or it’ll spoil everything.” So they all huddled at the kitchen end, waiting and watching. The thought that the hunters might come back at any moment was terrible. And the giantess was fidgety. Whenever they thought she had really gone to sleep, she moved.

“I can’t bear this,” thought Jill. To distract her mind, she began looking about her. Just in front of her was a clean wide table with two clean pie-dishes on it, and an open book. They were giant pie-dishes of course. Jill thought that she could lie down just comfortably in one of them. Then she climbed up on the bench beside the table to look at the book. She read:

MALLARD. This delicious bird can be cooked in a variety of ways.

“It’s a cookery book,” thought Jill without much interest, and glanced over her shoulder. The giantess’s eyes were shut but she didn’t look as if she were properly asleep. Jill glanced back at the book. It was arranged alphabetically: and at the very next entry her heart seemed to stop beating. It ran —

MAN. This elegant little biped has long been valued as a delicacy. It forms a traditional part of the Autumn Feast, and is served between the fish and the joint. Each Man —

but she could not bear to read any more. She turned round. The giantess had waked up and was having a fit of coughing. Jill nudged the other two and pointed to the book. They also mounted the bench and bent over the huge pages. Scrubb was still reading about how to cook Men when Puddleglum pointed to the next entry below it. It was like this:

MARSH-WIGGLE. Some authorities reject this animal altogether as unfit for giants' consumption because of its stringy consistency and muddy flavour. The flavour can, however, be greatly reduced if ——

Jill touched his feet, and Scrubb's, gently. All three looked back at the giantess. Her mouth was slightly open and from her nose there came a sound which at that moment was more welcome to them than any music; she snored. And now it was a question of tip-toe work, not daring to go too fast, hardly daring to breathe, out through the scullery (giant sculleries smell horrid), out at last into the pale sunlight of a winter afternoon.

They were at the top of a rough little path which ran steeply down. And, thank heavens, on the right side of the castle; the City Ruinous was in sight. In a few minutes they were back on the broad, steep road which led down from the main gate of the castle. They were also in full view from every single window on that side. If it had been one, or two, or five windows there'd be a reasonable chance that no-one might be looking out. But there were nearer fifty than five. They now realised, too, that the road on which they were, and indeed all the ground between them and the City Ruinous, didn't offer as much cover as would hide a fox; it was all coarse grass and pebbles and flat stones. To make matters worse, they were now in the clothes that the giants had provided for them last night: except Puddleglum, whom nothing would fit. Jill wore a vivid green robe, rather too long for her, and over that a scarlet mantle fringed with white fur. Scrubb had scarlet stockings, blue tunic and cloak, a gold-hiked sword, and a feathered bonnet.

"Nice bits of colour, you two are," muttered Puddleglum. "Show up very prettily on a winter day. The worst archer in the world couldn't miss either of you if you were in range. And talking of archers, we'll be sorry not to

have our own bows before long, I shouldn't wonder. Bit thin, too, those clothes of yours, are they?"

"Yes, I'm freezing already," said Jill.

A few minutes ago when they had been in the kitchen, she had thought that if only they could once get out of the castle, their escape would be almost complete. She now realised that the most dangerous part of it was still to come.

"Steady, steady," said Puddleglum. "Don't look back. Don't walk too quickly. Whatever you do, don't run. Look as if we were just taking a stroll, and then, if anyone sees us, he might, just possibly, not bother. The moment we look like people running away, we're done."

The distance to the City Ruinous seemed longer than Jill would have believed possible. But bit by bit they were covering it. Then came a noise. The other two gasped. Jill, who didn't know what it was, said, "What's that?"

"Hunting horn," whispered Scrubb.

"But don't run even now," said Puddleglum. "Not till I give the word."

This time Jill couldn't help glancing over her shoulder. There, about half a mile away, was the hunt returning from behind them on the left.

They walked on. Suddenly a great clamour of giant voices arose: then shouts and hollas.

"They've seen us. Run," said Puddleglum.

Jill gathered up her long skirts — horrible things for running in — and ran. There was no mistaking the danger now. She could hear the music of the hounds. She could hear the King's voice roaring out, "After them, after them, or we'll have no man-pies to-morrow."

She was last of the three now, cumbered with her dress, slipping on loose stones, her hair getting in her mouth, running-pains across her chest. The hounds were much nearer. Now she had to run uphill, up the stony slope which led to the lowest step of the giant stairway. She had no idea what they would do when they got there, or how they would be any better off even if they reached the top. But she didn't think about that. She was like a hunted animal now; as long as the pack was after her, she must run till she dropped.

The Marsh-wiggle was ahead. As he came to the lowest step he stopped, looked a little to his right, and all of a sudden darted into a little hole or crevice at the bottom of it. His long legs, disappearing into it, looked very like those of a spider. Scrubb hesitated and then vanished after him. Jill,

breathless and reeling, came to the place about a minute later. It was an unattractive hole — a crack between the earth and the stone about three feet long and hardly more than a foot high. You had to fling yourself flat on your face and crawl in. You couldn't do it so very quickly either. She felt sure that a dog's teeth would close on her heel before she had got inside.

"Quick, quick. Stones. Fill up the opening," came Puddleglum's voice in the darkness beside her. It was pitch black in there, except for the grey light in the opening by which they had crawled in. The other two were working hard. She could see Scrubb's small hands and the Marsh-wiggle's big, frog-like hands black against the light, working desperately to pile up stones. Then she realised how important this was and began groping for large stones herself, and handing them to the others. Before the dogs were baying and yelping at the cave mouth, they had it pretty well filled; and now, of course, there was no light at all.

"Further in, quick," said Puddleglum's voice.

"Let's all hold hands," said Jill.

"Good idea," said Scrubb. But it took them quite a long time to find one another's hands in the darkness. The dogs were sniffing at the other side of the barrier now.

"Try if we can stand up," suggested Scrubb. They did and found that they could. Then, Puddleglum holding out a hand behind him to Scrubb, and Scrubb holding a hand out behind him to Jill (who wished very much that she was the middle one of the party and not the last), they began groping with their feet and stumbling forwards into the blackness. It was all loose stones underfoot. Then Puddleglum came up to a wall of rock. They turned a little to their right and went on. There were a good many more twists and turns. Jill had now no sense of direction at all, and no idea where the mouth of the cave lay.

"The question is," came Puddleglum's voice out of the darkness ahead, "whether, taking one thing with another, it wouldn't be better to go back (if we *can*) and give the giants a treat at that feast of theirs, instead of losing our way in the guts of a hill where, ten to one, there's dragons and deep holes and gases and water and —— Ow! Let go! Save yourselves. I'm ——"

After that all happened quickly. There was a wild cry, a swishing, dusty, gravelly noise, a rattle of stones, and Jill found herself sliding, sliding, hopelessly sliding, and sliding quicker every moment down a slope that

grew steeper every moment. It was not a smooth, firm slope, but a slope of small stones and rubbish. Even if you could have stood up, it would have been no use. Any bit of that slope you had put your foot on would have slid away from under you and carried you down with it. But Jill was more lying than standing. And the further they all slid, the more they disturbed all the stones and earth, so that the general downward rush of everything (including themselves) got faster and louder and dustier and dirtier. From the sharp cries and swearing of the other two, Jill got the idea that many of the stones which she was dislodging were hitting Scrubb and Puddleglum pretty hard. And now she was going at a furious rate and felt sure she would be broken to bits at the bottom.

Yet somehow they weren't. They were a mass of bruises, and the wet sticky stuff on her face appeared to be blood. And such a mass of loose earth, shingle, and larger stones was piled up round her (and partly over her) that she couldn't get up. The darkness was so complete that it made no difference at all whether you had your eyes open or shut. There was no noise. And that was the very worst moment Jill had ever known in her life. Supposing she was alone: supposing the others ... Then she heard movements around her. And presently all three, in shaken voices, were explaining that none of them seemed to have any broken bones.

"We can never get up that again," said Scrubb's voice.

"And have you noticed how warm it is?" said the voice of Puddleglum. "That means we're a long way down. Might be nearly a mile."

No-one said anything. Some time later Puddleglum added:

"My tinder-box has gone."

After another long pause Jill said, "I'm terribly thirsty."

No one suggested doing anything. There was so obviously nothing to be done. For the moment, they did not feel it quite so badly as one might have expected; that was because they were so tired.

Long, long afterwards, without the slightest warning, an utterly strange voice spoke. They knew at once that it was not the one voice in the whole world for which each had secretly been hoping; the voice of Aslan. It was a dark, flat voice — almost, if you know what that means, a pitch-black voice. It said:

"What make you here, creatures of the Overworld?"

Chapter X

TRAVELS WITHOUT THE SUN

“Who’s there?” shouted the three travellers.

“I am the Warden of the Marches of Underland, and with me stand a hundred Earthmen in arms,” came the reply. “Tell me quickly who you are and what is your errand in the Deep Realm?”

“We fell down by accident,” said Puddleglum, truthfully enough.

“Many fall down, and few return to the sunlit lands,” said the voice. “Make ready now to come with me to the Queen of the Deep Realm.”

“What does she want with us?” asked Scrubb cautiously.

“I do not know,” said the voice. “Her will is not to be questioned but obeyed.”

While he said these words there was a noise like a soft explosion and immediately a cold light, grey with a little blue in it, flooded the cavern. All hope that the speaker had been idly boasting when he spoke of his hundred armed followers died at once. Jill found herself blinking and staring at a dense crowd. They were of all sizes, from little gnomes barely a foot high to stately figures taller than men. All carried three-pronged spears in their hands, and all were dreadfully pale, and all stood as still as statues. Apart from that, they were very different; some had tails and others not, some wore great beards and others had very round, smooth faces, big as pumpkins. There were long, pointed noses, and long, soft noses like small trunks, and great blobby noses. Several had single horns in the middle of their foreheads. But in one respect they were all alike: every face in the whole hundred was as sad as a face could be. They were so sad that, after the first glance, Jill almost forgot to be afraid of them. She felt she would like to cheer them up.

“Well!” said Puddleglum, rubbing his hands. “This is just what I needed. If these chaps don’t teach me to take a serious view of life, I don’t know what will. Look at that fellow with the walrus moustache — or that one with the — —”

“Get up,” said the leader of the Earthmen.

There was nothing else to be done. The three travellers scrambled to their feet and joined hands. One wanted the touch of a friend’s hand at a

moment like that. And the Earthmen came all round them, padding on large, soft feet, on which some had ten toes, some twelve, and others none.

"March," said the Warden: and march they did.

The cold light came from a large ball on the top of a long pole, and the tallest of the gnomes carried this at the head of the procession. By its cheerless rays they could see that they were in a natural cavern; the walls and roof were knobbed, twisted, and gashed into a thousand fantastic shapes, and the stony floor sloped downward as they proceeded. It was worse for Jill than for the others, because she hated dark, underground places. And when, as they went on, the cave got lower and narrower, and when, at last, the light-bearer stood aside, and the gnomes, one by one, stooped down (all except the very smallest ones) and stepped into a little dark crack and disappeared, she felt she could bear it no longer.

"I can't go in there, I can't! I can't! I won't," she panted. The Earthmen said nothing but they all lowered their spears and pointed them at her.

"Steady, Pole," said Puddleglum. "Those big fellows wouldn't be crawling in there if it didn't get wider later on. And there's one thing about this underground work, we shan't get any rain."

"Oh, you don't understand. I can't," wailed Jill.

"Think how *I* felt on that cliff, Pole," said Scrubb. "You go first, Puddleglum, and I'll come after her."

"That's right," said the Marsh-wiggle, getting down on his hands and knees. "You keep a grip of my heels, Pole, and Scrubb will hold on to yours. Then we'll all be comfortable."

"Comfortable!" said Jill. But she got down and they crawled in on their elbows. It was a nasty place. You had to go flat on your face for what seemed like half an hour, though it may really have been only five minutes. It was hot. Jill felt she was being smothered. But at last a dim light showed ahead, the tunnel grew wider and higher, and they came out, hot, dirty, and shaken, into a cave so large that it scarcely seemed like a cave at all.

It was full of a dim, drowsy radiance, so that here they had no need of the Earthmen's strange lantern. The floor was soft with some kind of moss and out of this grew many strange shapes, branched and tall like trees, but flabby like mushrooms. They stood too far apart to make a forest; it was more like a park. The light (a greenish grey) seemed to come both from them and from the moss, and it was not strong enough to reach the roof of the cave, which must have been a long way overhead. Across the mild, soft,

sleepy place they were now made to march. It was very sad, but with a quiet sort of sadness like soft music.

Here they passed dozens of strange animals lying on the turf, either dead or asleep, Jill could not tell which. These were mostly of a dragonish or bat-like sort; Puddleglum did not know what any of them were.

“Do they grow here?” Scrubb asked the Warden. He seemed very surprised at being spoken to, but replied, “No. They are all beasts that have found their way down by chasms and caves, out of Overland into the Deep Realm. Many come down, and few return to the sunlit lands. It is said that they will all wake at the end of the world.”

His mouth shut like a box when he had said this, and in the great silence of that cave the children felt that they would not dare to speak again. The bare feet of the gnomes, padding on the deep moss, made no sound. There was no wind, there were no birds, there was no sound of water. There was no sound of breathing from the strange beasts.

When they had walked for several miles, they came to a wall of rock, and in it a low archway leading into another cavern. It was not, however, so bad as the last entrance and Jill could go through it without bending her head. It brought them into a smaller cave, long and narrow, about the shape and size of a cathedral. And here, filling almost the whole length of it, lay an enormous man fast asleep. He was far bigger than any of the giants, and his face was not like a giant’s, but noble and beautiful. His breast rose and fell gently under the snowy beard which covered him to the waist. A pure, silver light (no-one saw where it came from) rested upon him.

“Who’s that?” asked Puddleglum. And it was so long since anyone had spoken, that Jill wondered how he had the nerve.

“That is old Father Time, who once was a King in Overland,” said the Warden. “And now he has sunk down into the Deep Realm and lies dreaming of all the things that are done in the upper world. Many sink down, and few return to the sunlit lands. They say he will wake at the end of the world.”

And out of that cave they passed into another, and then into another and another, and so on till Jill lost count, but always they were going downhill and each cave was lower than the last, till the very thought of the weight and depth of earth above you was suffocating. At last they came to a place where the Warden commanded his cheerless lantern to be lit again. Then they passed into a cave so wide and dark that they could see nothing of it

except that right in front of them a strip of pale sand ran down into still water. And there, beside a little jetty, lay a ship without mast or sail but with many oars. They were made to go on board her and led forward to the bows where there was a clear space in front of the rowers' benches and a seat running round inside the bulwarks.

"One thing I'd like to know," said Puddleglum, "is whether anyone from our world — from up-a-top, I mean — has ever done this trip before?"

"Many have taken ship at the pale beaches," replied the Warden, "and — —"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Puddleglum. "*And few return to the sunlit lands*. You needn't say it again. You are a chap of one idea, aren't you?"

The children huddled close together on each side of Puddleglum. They had thought him a wet blanket while they were still above ground, but down here he seemed the only comforting thing they had. Then the pale lantern was hung up amidships, the Earthmen sat to the oars, and the ship began to move. The lantern cast its light only a very short way. Looking ahead, they could see nothing but smooth, dark water, fading into absolute blackness.

"Oh, whatever will become of us?" said Jill despairingly.

"Now don't you let your spirits down, Pole," said the Marsh-wiggle. "There's one thing you've got to remember. We're back on the right lines. We were to go under the Ruined City, and we *are* under it. We're following the instructions again."

Presently they were given food — flat, flabby cakes of some sort which had hardly any taste. And after that, they gradually fell asleep. But when they woke, everything was just the same; the gnomes still rowing, the ship still gliding on, still dead blackness ahead. How often they woke and slept and ate and slept again, none of them could ever remember. And the worst thing about it was that you began to feel as if you had always lived on that ship, in that darkness, and to wonder whether sun and blue skies and wind and birds had not been only a dream.

They had almost given up hoping or being afraid about anything when at last they saw lights ahead: dreary lights, like that of their own lantern. Then, quite suddenly, one of these lights came close and they saw that they were passing another ship. After that they met several ships. Then, staring till their eyes hurt, they saw that some of the lights ahead were shining on what looked like wharfs, walls, towers, and moving crowds. But still there was hardly any noise.

“By Jove,” said Scrubb. “A city!” and soon they all saw that he was right.

But it was a queer city. The lights were so few and far apart that they would hardly have done for scattered cottages in our world. But the little bits of the place which you could see by the lights were like glimpses of a great sea-port. You could make out in one place a whole crowd of ships loading or unloading; in another, bales of stuff and warehouses; in a third, walls and pillars that suggested great palaces or temples; and always, wherever the light fell, endless crowds — hundreds of Earthmen, jostling one another as they padded softly about their business in narrow streets, broad squares, or up great flights of steps. Their continued movement made a sort of soft, murmuring noise as the ship drew nearer and nearer; but there was not a song or a shout or a bell or the rattle of a wheel anywhere. The City was as quiet, and nearly as dark, as the inside of an ant-hill.

At last their ship was brought alongside a quay and made fast. The three travellers were taken ashore and marched up into the City. Crowds of Earthmen, no two alike, rubbed shoulders with them in the crowded streets, and the sad light fell on many sad and grotesque faces. But no one showed any interest in the strangers. Every gnome seemed to be as busy as it was sad, though Jill never found what they were so busy about. But the endless moving, shoving, hurrying, and the soft pad-pad-pad went on.

At last they came to what appeared to be a great castle, though few of the windows in it were lighted. Here they were taken in and made to cross a courtyard, and to climb many staircases. This brought them in the end to a great murkily lit room. But in one corner of it — oh joy! — there was an archway filled with a quite different sort of light; the honest, yellowish, warm light of such a lamp as humans use. What showed by this light inside the archway was the foot of a staircase which wound upward between walls of stone. The light seemed to come from the top. Two Earthmen stood one on each side of the arch like sentries, or footmen.

The Warden went up to these two, and said, as if it were a password:

“Many sink down to the Underworld.”

“And few return to the sunlit lands,” they answered, as if it were the countersign. Then all three put their heads together and talked. At last one of the two gnomes-in-waiting said, “I tell you the Queen’s grace is gone from hence on her great affair. We had best keep these top dwellers in strait prison till her homecoming. Few return to the sunlit lands.”

At that moment the conversation was interrupted by what seemed to Jill the most delightful noise in the world. It came from above, from the top of the staircase; and it was a clear, ringing, perfectly human voice, the voice of a young man.

“What coil are you keeping down there, Mullugutherum?” it shouted. “Overworlders, ha! Bring them up to me, and that presently.”

“Please it your Highness to remember,” began Mullugutherum, but the voice cut him short.

“It pleases my Highness principally to be obeyed, old mutterer. Bring them up,” it called.

Mullugutherum shook his head, motioned to the travellers to follow and began going up the staircase. At every step the light increased. There were rich tapestries hanging on the walls. The lamplight shone golden through thin curtains at the staircase-head. The Earthmen parted the curtains and stood aside. The three passed in. They were in a beautiful room, richly tapestried, with a bright fire on a clean hearth, and red wine and cut glass sparkling on the table. A young man with fair hair rose to greet them. He was handsome and looked both bold and kind, though there was something about his face that didn’t seem quite right. He was dressed in black and altogether looked a little bit like Hamlet.

“Welcome, Overworlders,” he cried. “But stay a moment! I cry you mercy! I have seen you two fair children, and this, your strange governor, before. Was it not you three that met me by the bridge on the borders of Ettinsmoor when I rode there by my Lady’s side?”

“Oh ... you were the black knight who never spoke?” exclaimed Jill.

“And was that lady the Queen of Underland?” asked Puddleglum, in no very friendly voice. And Scrubb, who was thinking the same, burst out, “Because if it was, I think she was jolly mean to send us off to a castle of giants who intended to eat us. What harm had we ever done her, I should like to know?”

“How?” said the Black Knight with a frown. “If you were not so young a warrior, Boy, you and I must have fought to the death on this quarrel. I can hear no words against my Lady’s honour. But of this you may be assured, that whatever she said to you, she said of a good intent. You do not know her. She is a nosegay of all virtues, as truth, mercy, constancy, gentleness, courage and the rest. I say what I know. Her kindness to me alone, who can in no way reward her, would make an admirable history. But you shall

know and love her hereafter. Meanwhile, what is your errand in the Deep Lands?"

And before Puddleglum could stop her, Jill blurted out, "Please we are trying to find Prince Rilian of Narnia."

And then she realised what a frightful risk she had taken; these people might be enemies. But the Knight showed no interest.

"Rilian? Narnia?" he said carelessly. "Narnia? What land is that? I have never heard the name. It must be a thousand leagues from those parts of the Overworld that I know. But it was a strange fantasy that brought you seeking this — how do you call him? — Billian? Trillian? in my Lady's realm. Indeed, to my certain knowledge, there is no such man here." He laughed very loudly at this, and Jill thought to herself, "I wonder is that what's wrong with his face? Is he a bit silly?"

"We had been told to look for a message on the stones of the City Ruinous," said Scrubb. "And we saw the words UNDER ME."

The Knight laughed even more heartily than before. "You were the more deceived," he said. "Those words meant nothing to your purpose. Had you but asked my Lady, she could have given you better counsel. For those words are all that is left of a longer script, which in ancient times, as she well remembers, expressed this verse:

Though under Earth and throneless now I be,
Yet, while I lived, all Earth was under me.

From which it is plain that some great king of the ancient giants, who lies buried there, caused this boast to be cut in the stone over his sepulchre; though the breaking up of some stones, and the carrying away of others for new buildings, and the filling up of the cuts with rubble, has left only two words that can still be read. Is it not the merriest jest in the world that you should have thought they were written to you?"

This was like cold water down the back to Scrubb and Jill; for it seemed to them very likely that the words had nothing to do with their quest at all, and that they had been taken in by a mere accident.

"Don't you mind him," said Puddleglum. "There *are* no accidents. Our guide is Aslan; and he was there when the giant King caused the letters to be cut, and he knew already all things that would come of them; including *this*."

“This guide of yours must be a long liver, friend,” said the Knight with another of his laughs.

Jill began to find them a little irritating.

“And it seems to me, Sir,” answered Puddleglum. “That this Lady of yours must be a long liver too, if she remembers the verse as it was when they first cut it.”

“Very shrewd, Frog-face,” said the Knight, clapping Puddleglum on the shoulder and laughing again. “And you have hit the truth. She is of divine race, and knows neither age nor death. I am the more thankful to her for all her infinite bounty to such a poor mortal wretch as I. For you must know, Sirs, I am a man under most strange afflictions, and none but the Queen’s grace would have had patience with me. Patience, said I? But it goes far beyond that. She has promised me a great kingdom in Overland, and, when I am king, her own most gracious hand in marriage. But the tale is too long for you to hear fasting and standing. Hi there, some of you! Bring wine and Updwellers’ food for my guests. Please you, be seated, gentlemen. Little maiden, sit in this chair. You shall hear it all.”

Chapter XI

IN THE DARK CASTLE

When the meal (which was pigeon pie, cold ham, salad, and cakes) had been brought, and all had drawn their chairs up to the table and begun, the Knight continued:

"You must understand, friends, that I know nothing of who I was and whence I came into this Dark World. I remember no time when I was not dwelling, as now, at the court of this all but heavenly Queen; but my thought is that she saved me from some evil enchantment and brought me hither of her exceeding bounty. (Honest Frog-foot, your cup is empty. Suffer me to refill it.) And this seems to me the likelier because even now I am bound by a spell, from which my Lady alone can free me. Every night there comes an hour when my mind is most horribly changed, and, after my mind, my body. For first I become furious and wild and would rush upon my dearest friends to kill them, if I were not bound. And soon after that, I turn into the likeness of a great serpent, hungry, fierce, and deadly. (Sir, be pleased to take another breast of pigeon, I entreat you.) So they tell me, and they certainly speak truth, for my Lady says the same. I myself know nothing of it, for when my hour is past I awake forgetful of all that vile fit and in my proper shape and sound mind — saving that I am somewhat wearied. (Little lady, eat one of these honey cakes, which are brought for me from some barbarous land in the far south of the world.) Now the Queen's majesty knows by her art that I shall be freed from this enchantment when once she has made me king of a land in the Overworld and set its crown upon my head. The land is already chosen and the very place of our breaking out. Her Earthmen have worked day and night digging a way beneath it, and have now gone so far and so high that they tunnel not a score of feet beneath the very grass on which the Updwellers of that country walk. It will be very soon now that those Uplanders' fate will come upon them. She herself is at the diggings to-night, and I expect a message to go to her. Then the thin roof of earth which still keeps me from my kingdom will be broken through, and with her to guide me and a thousand Earthmen at my back, I shall ride forth in arms, fall suddenly on

our enemies, slay their chief men, cast down their strong places, and doubtless be their crowned king within four and twenty hours."

"It's a bit rough luck on them, isn't it?" said Scrubb.

"Thou art a lad of a wondrous, quick-working wit!" exclaimed the Knight. "For, on my honour, I had never thought of it so before. I see your meaning." He looked slightly, very slightly troubled for a moment or two; but his face soon cleared and he broke out, with another of his loud laughs, "But fie on gravity! Is it not the most comical and ridiculous thing in the world to think of them all going about their business and never dreaming that under their peaceful fields and floors, only a fathom down, there is a great army ready to break out upon them like a fountain! And they never to have suspected! Why, they themselves, when once the first smart of their defeat is over, can hardly choose but laugh at the thought!"

"I don't think it's funny at all," said Jill. "I think you'll be a wicked tyrant."

"What?" said the Knight, still laughing and patting her head in a quite infuriating fashion. "Is our little maid a deep politician? But never fear, sweetheart. In ruling that land, I shall do all by the counsel of my Lady, who will then be my Queen too. Her word shall be my law, even as my word will be law to the people we have conquered."

"Where I come from," said Jill, who was disliking him more every minute, "they don't think much of men who are bossed about by their wives."

"Shalt think otherwise when thou hast a man of thine own, I warrant you," said the Knight, apparently thinking this very funny. "But with my Lady, it is another matter. I am well content to live by her word, who has already saved me from a thousand dangers. No mother has taken pains more tenderly for her child, than the Queen's grace has for me. Why, look you, amid all her cares and business, she rideth out with me in the Overworld many a time and oft to accustom my eyes to the sunlight. And then I must go fully armed and with visor down, so that no man may see my face, and I must speak to no-one. For she has found out by art magical that this would hinder my deliverance from the grievous enchantment I lie under. Is not that a lady worthy of a man's whole worship?"

"Sounds a very nice lady indeed," said Puddelglum in a voice which meant exactly the opposite.

They were thoroughly tired of the Knight's talk before they had finished supper. Puddleglum was thinking, "I wonder what game that witch is really playing with this young fool." Scrubb was thinking, "He's a great baby, really: tied to that woman's apron strings; he's a sap." And Jill was thinking, "He's the silliest, most conceited, selfish pig I've met for a long time." But when the meal was over, the Knight's mood had changed. There was no more laughter about him.

"Friends," he said, "my hour is now very near. I am ashamed that you should see me yet I dread being left alone. They will come in presently and bind me hand and foot to yonder chair. Alas, so it must be: for in my fury, they tell me, I would destroy all that I could reach."

"I say," said Scrubb, "I'm awfully sorry about your enchantment of course, but what will those fellows do to us when they come to bind you? They talked of putting us in prison. And we don't like all those dark places very much. We'd much rather stay here till you're ... better ... if we may."

"It is well thought of," said the Knight. "By custom none but the Queen herself remains with me in my evil hour. Such is her tender care for my honour that she would not willingly suffer any ears but her own to hear the words I utter in that frenzy. But I could not easily persuade my attendant gnomes that you should be left with me. And I think I hear their soft feet even now upon the stairs. Go through yonder door: it leads into my other apartments. And there, either await my coming when they have unbound me; or, if you will, return and sit with me in my ravings."

They followed his directions and passed out of the room by a door which they had not yet seen opened. It brought them, they were pleased to see, not into darkness but into a lighted corridor. They tried various doors and found (what they very badly needed) water for washing and even a looking glass. "He never offered us a wash before supper," said Jill, drying her face. "Selfish, self-centred pig."

"Are we going back to watch the enchantment, or shall we stay here?" said Scrubb.

"Stay here, I vote," said Jill. "I'd much rather not see it." But she felt a little inquisitive all the same.

"No, go back," said Puddleglum. "We may pick up some information, and we need all we can get. I am sure that Queen is a witch and an enemy. And those Earthmen would knock us on the head as soon as look at us. There's a stronger smell of danger and lies and magic and treason about this

land than I've ever smelled before. We need to keep our eyes and ears open."

They went back down the corridor and gently pushed the door open, "It's all right," said Scrubb, meaning that there were no Earthmen about. Then they all came back into the room where they had supped.

The main door was now shut, concealing the curtain between which they had first entered. The knight was seated in a curious silver chair, to which he was bound by his ankles, his knees, his elbows, his wrists and his waist. There was sweat on his forehead and his face was filled with anguish.

"Come in, friends," he said, glancing quickly up. "The fit is not yet upon me. Make no noise, for I told that prying chamberlain that you were in bed. Now... I can feel it coming. Quick! Listen while I am master of myself. When the fit is upon me, it well may be that I shall beg and implore you, with entreaties and threatenings, to loosen my bonds. They say I do. I shall call upon you by all that is most dear and most dreadful. But do not listen to me. Harden your hearts and stop your ears. For while I am bound you are safe. But if once I were up and out of this chair, then first would come my fury, and after that" — he shuddered— "the change into a loathsome serpent."

"There's no fear of our loosing you," said Puddleglum. "We've no wish to meet wild men; or serpents either."

"I should think not," said Scrubb and Jill together.

"All the same," added Puddleglum in a whisper. "Don't let's be too sure. Let's be on our guard. We've muffed everything else, you know. He'll be cunning, I shouldn't wonder, once he gets started. Can we trust one another? Do we all promise that whatever he says we don't touch those cords? *Whatever* he says, mind you?"

"Rather!" said Scrubb.

"There's nothing in the world he can say or do that'll make me change my mind," said Jill.

"Hush! Something's happening," said Puddleglum.

The Knight was moaning. His face was as pale as putty, and he writhed in his bonds. And whether because she was sorry for him, or for some other reason, Jill thought that he looked a nicer sort of man than he had looked before.

"Ah," he groaned. "Enchantments, enchantments ... the heavy, tangled, cold, clammy web of evil magic. Buried alive. Dragged down under the

earth, down into the sooty blackness ... how many years is it? ... Have I lived ten years, or a thousand years, in the pit? Maggotmen all around me. Oh, have mercy. Let me out, let me go back. Let me feel the wind and see the sky ... There used to be a little pool. When you looked down into it you could see all the trees growing upside-down in the water, all green, and below them, deep, very deep, the blue sky."

He had been speaking in a low voice; now he looked up, fixed his eyes upon them, and said loud and clear:

"Quick! I am sane now. Every night I am sane. If only I could get out of this enchanted chair, it would last. I should be a man again. But every night they bind me, and so every night my chance is gone. But you are not enemies. I am not *your* prisoner. Quick! Cut these cords."

"Stand fast! Steady," said Puddleglum to the two children.

"I beseech you to hear me," said the Knight, forcing himself to speak calmly. "Have they told you that if I am released from this chair I shall kill you and become a serpent? I see by your faces that they have. It is a lie. It is at this hour that I am in my right mind: it is all the rest of the day that I am enchanted. You are not Earthmen nor witches. Why should you be on their side? Of your courtesy, cut my bonds."

"Steady! Steady! Steady!" said the three travellers to one another.

"Oh, you have hearts of stone," said the Knight. "Believe me, you look upon a wretch who has suffered almost more than any mortal heart can bear. What wrong have I ever done you, that you should side with my enemies to keep me in such miseries? And the minutes are slipping past. *Now* you can save me; when this hour has passed, I shall be witless again — the toy and lap-dog, nay, more likely the pawn and tool, of the most devilish sorceress that ever planned the woe of men. And this night, of all nights, when she is away! You take from me a chance that may never come again."

"This is dreadful. I do wish we'd stayed away till it was over," said Jill.

"Steady!" said Puddleglum.

The prisoner's voice was now rising into a shriek. "Let me go, I say. Give me my sword. My sword! Once I am free I shall take such revenge on Earthmen that Underland will talk of it for a thousand years!"

"Now the frenzy is beginning," said Scrubb. "I hope those knots are all right."

"Yes," said Puddleglum. "He'd have twice his natural strength if he got free now. And I'm not clever with my sword. He'd get us both, I shouldn't

wonder; and then Pole on her own would be left to tackle the snake."

The prisoner was now so straining at his bonds that they cut into his wrists and ankles. "Beware," he said. "Beware. One night I *did* break them. But the witch was there that time. You will not have her to help you to-night. Free me now, and I am your friend. I'm your mortal enemy else."

"Cunning, isn't he?" said Puddleglum.

"Once and for all," said the prisoner, "I adjure you to set me free. By all fears and all loves, by the bright skies of Overland, by the great Lion, by Aslan himself, I charge you — —"

"Oh!" cried the three travellers as though they had been hurt. "It's the sign," said Puddleglum. "It was the *words* of the sign," said Scrubb more cautiously. "Oh, what *are* we to do?" said Jill.

It was a dreadful question. What had been the use of promising one another that they would not on any account set the Knight free, if they were now to do so the first time he happened to call upon a name they really cared about? On the other hand, what had been the use of learning the signs if they weren't going to obey them? Yet could Aslan have really meant them to unbind anyone — even a lunatic — who asked it in his name? Could it be a mere accident? Or how if the Queen of the Underworld knew all about the signs and had made the Knight learn this name simply in order to entrap them? But then, supposing this was the real sign? ... They had muffed three already; they daren't muff the fourth.

"Oh, if only we knew!" said Jill.

"I think we do know," said Puddleglum.

"Do you mean you think everything will come right if we do untie him?" said Scrubb.

"I don't know about that," said Puddleglum. "You see, Aslan didn't tell Pole what would happen. He only told her what to do. That fellow will be the death of us once he's up, I shouldn't wonder. But that doesn't let us off following the sign."

They all stood looking at one another with bright eyes. It was a sickening moment. "All right!" said Jill suddenly. "Let's get it over. Good-bye, everyone...!" They all shook hands. The Knight was screaming by now; there was foam on his cheeks.

"Come on, Scrubb," said Puddleglum. He and Scrubb drew their swords and went over to the captive.

“In the name of Aslan,” they said and began methodically cutting the cords. The instant the prisoner was free, he crossed the room in a single bound, seized his own sword (which had been taken from him and laid on the table), and drew it.

“You first!” he cried and fell upon the silver chair. That must have been a good sword. The silver gave way before its edge like string, and in a moment a few twisted fragments, shining on the floor, were all that was left. But as the chair broke, there came from it a bright flash, a sound like small thunder, and (for one moment) a loathsome smell.

“Lie there, vile engine of sorcery,” he said, “lest your mistress should ever use you for another victim.” Then he turned and surveyed his rescuers; and the something wrong, whatever it was, had vanished from his face.

“What?” he cried, turning to Puddleglum. “Do I see before me a Marsh-wiggle — a real, live, honest, Narnian Marsh-wiggle?”

“Oh, so you *have* heard of Narnia after all?” said Jill.

“Had I forgotten it when I was under the spell?” asked the Knight. “Well, that and all other bedevilments are now over. You may well believe that I know Narnia, for I am Rilian, Prince of Narnia, and Caspian the great King is my father.”

“Your Royal Highness,” said Puddleglum, sinking on one knee (and the children did the same), “we have come hither for no other end than to seek you.”

“And who are you, my other deliverers?” said the Prince to Scrubb and Jill.

“We were sent by Aslan himself from beyond the world’s end to seek your Highness,” said Scrubb. “I am Eustace who sailed with him to the island of Ramandu.”

“I owe all three of you a greater debt than I can ever pay,” said Prince Rilian. “But my father? Is he yet alive?”

“He sailed east again before we left Narnia, my lord,” said Puddleglum. “But your Highness must consider that the King is very old. It is ten to one his Majesty must die on the voyage.”

“He is old, you say. How long then have I been in the power of the witch?”

“It is more than ten years since your Highness was lost in the woods at the north side of Narnia.”

“Ten years!” said the Prince, drawing his hand across his face as if to rub away the past. “Yes, I believe you. For now that I am myself I can remember that enchanted life, though while I was enchanted I could not remember my true self. And now, fair friends — but wait! I hear their feet (does it not sicken a man, that padding woolly tread! faugh!) on the stairs. Lock the door, boy. Or stay. I have a better thought than that. I will fool these Earthmen, if Aslan gives me the wit. Take your cue from me.”

He walked resolutely to the door and flung it wide open.

Chapter XII

THE QUEEN OF UNDERLAND

Two Earthmen entered, but instead of advancing into the room, they placed themselves one on each side of the door, and bowed deeply. They were followed immediately by the last person whom anyone had expected or wished to see: the Lady of the Green Kirtle, the Queen of Underland. She stood dead still in the doorway, and they could see her eyes moving as she took in the whole situation — the three strangers, the silver chair destroyed, and the Prince free, with his sword in his hand.

She turned very white; but Jill thought it was the sort of whiteness that comes over some people's faces not when they are frightened but when they are angry. For a moment the Witch fixed her eyes on the Prince, and there was murder in them. Then she seemed to change her mind.

"Leave us," she said to the two Earthmen. "And let none disturb us till I call, on pain of death." The gnomes padded away obediently, and the Witch-queen shut and locked the door.

"How now, my lord Prince," she said. "Has your nightly fit not yet come upon you, or is it over so soon? Why stand you here unbound? Who are these aliens? And is it they who have destroyed the chair which was your only safety?"

Prince Rilian shivered as she spoke to him. And no wonder: it is not easy to throw off in half an hour an enchantment which has made one a slave for ten years. Then, speaking with a great effort, he said:

"Madam, there will be no more need of that chair. And you, who have told me a hundred times how deeply you pitied me for the sorceries by which I was bound, will doubtless hear with joy that they are now ended for ever. There was, it seems, some small error in your Ladyship's way of treating them. These, my true friends, have delivered me. I am now in my right mind, and there are two things I will say to you. First — as for your Ladyship's design of putting me at the head of an army of Earthmen so that I may break out into the Overworld and there, by main force, make myself king over some nation that never did me wrong — murdering their natural lords and holding their throne as a bloody and foreign tyrant — now that I know myself, I do utterly abhor and renounce it as plain villainy. And

second: I am the King’s son of Narnia, Rilian, the only child of Caspian, Tenth of that name, whom some call Caspian the Seafarer. Therefore, Madam, it is my purpose, as it is also my duty, to depart suddenly from your Highness’s court into my own country. Please it you to grant me and my friends safe conduct and a guide through your dark realm.”

Now the Witch said nothing at all, but moved gently across the room, always keeping her face and eyes very steadily towards the Prince. When she had come to a little ark set in the wall not far from the fireplace, she opened it, and took out first a handful of a green powder. This she threw on the fire. It did not blaze much, but a very sweet and drowsy smell came from it. And all through the conversation which followed, that smell grew stronger, and filled the room, and made it harder to think. Secondly, she took out a musical instrument rather like a mandolin. She began to play it with her fingers — a steady, monotonous thrumming that you didn’t notice after a few minutes. But the less you noticed it, the more it got into your brain and your blood. This also made it hard to think. After she had thrummed for a time (and the sweet smell was now strong) she began speaking in a sweet, quiet voice.

“Narnia?” she said. “Narnia? I have often heard your Lordship utter that name in your ravings. Dear Prince, you are very sick. There is no land called Narnia.”

“Yes there is, though, Ma’am,” said Puddleglum. “You see, I happen to have lived there all my life.”

“Indeed,” said the Witch. “Tell me, I pray you, where that country is?”

“Up there,” said Puddleglum, stoutly, pointing overhead. “I — I don’t know exactly where.”

“How?” said the Queen, with a kind, soft, musical laugh. “Is there a country up among the stones and mortar of the roof?”

“No,” said Puddleglum, struggling a little to get his breath. “It’s in Overworld.”

“And what, or where, pray is this ... how do you call it ... *Overworld*?”

“Oh, don’t be so silly,” said Scrubb, who was fighting hard against the enchantment of the sweet smell and the thrumming. “As if you didn’t know! It’s up above, up where you can see the sky and the sun and the stars. Why, you’ve been there yourself. We met you there.”

“I cry you mercy, little brother,” laughed the Witch (you couldn’t have heard a lovelier laugh). “I have no memory of that meeting. But we often

meet our friends in strange places when we dream. And unless all dreamed alike, you must not ask them to remember it."

"Madam," said the Prince sternly, "I have already told your Grace that I am the King's son of Narnia."

"And shalt be, dear friend," said the Witch in a soothing voice, as if she was humouring a child, "shalt be king of many imagined lands in thy fancies."

"We've been there, too," snapped Jill. She was very angry because she could feel enchantment getting hold of her every moment. But of course the very fact that she could still feel it, showed that it had not yet fully worked.

"And thou art Queen of Narnia too, I doubt not, pretty one," said the Witch in the same coaxing, half-mocking tone.

"I'm nothing of the sort," said Jill, stamping her foot. "*We* come from another world."

"Why, this is a prettier game than the other," said the Witch. "Tell us, little maid, where is this other world? What ships and chariots go between it and ours?"

Of course a lot of things darted into Jill's head at once: Experiment House, Adela Pennyfather, her own home, radio-sets, cinemas, cars, aeroplanes, ration-books, queues. But they seemed dim and far away. (*Thrum — thrum — thrum* — went the strings of the Witch's instrument.) Jill couldn't remember the names of the things in our world. And this time it didn't come into her head that she was being enchanted, for now the magic was in its full strength; and of course, the more enchanted you get, the more certain you feel that you are not enchanted at all. She found herself saying (and at the moment it was a relief to say):

"No. I suppose that other world must be all a dream."

"Yes. It is all a dream," said the Witch, always thrumming.

"Yes, all a dream," said Jill.

"There never was such a world," said the Witch.

"No," said Jill and Scrubb, "never was such a world."

"There never was any world but mine," said the Witch.

"There never was any world but yours," said they.

Puddleglum was still fighting hard. "I don't know rightly what you all mean by a world," he said, talking like a man who hasn't enough air. "But you can play that fiddle till your fingers drop off, and still you won't make me forget Narnia; and the whole Overworld too. We'll never see it *again*, I

shouldn’t wonder. You may have blotted it out and turned it dark like this, for all I know. Nothing more likely. But I know I was there once. I’ve seen the sky full of stars. I’ve seen the sun coming up out of the sea of a morning and sinking behind the mountains at night. And I’ve seen him up in the midday sky when I couldn’t look at him for brightness.”

Puddleglum’s words had a very rousing effect. The other three all breathed again and looked at one another like people newly awaked.

“Why, there it is!” cried the Prince. “Of course! The blessing of Aslan upon this honest marsh-wiggle. We have all been dreaming, these last few minutes. How could we have forgotten it? Of course we’ve all seen the sun.”

“By Jove, so we have!” said Scrubb. “Good for you, Puddleglum! You’re the only one of us with any sense, I do believe.”

Then came the Witch’s voice, cooing softly like the voice of a wood-pigeon from the high elms in an old garden at three o’clock in the middle of a sleepy, summer afternoon; and it said:

“What is this *sun* that you all speak of? Do you mean anything by the word?”

“Yes, we jolly well do,” said Scrubb.

“Can you tell me what it’s like?” asked the Witch (*thrum*, *thrum*, *thrum*, went the strings).

“Please it your Grace,” said the Prince, very coldly and politely. “You see that lamp. It is round and yellow and gives light to the whole room; and hangeth moreover from the roof. Now that thing which we call the sun is like the lamp, only far greater and brighter. It giveth light to the whole Overworld and hangeth in the sky.”

“Hangeth from what, my lord?” asked the Witch; and then, while they were all still thinking how to answer her, she added, with another of her soft, silver laughs: “You see? When you try to think out clearly what this *sun* must be, you cannot tell me. You can only tell me it is like the lamp. Your *sun* is a dream; and there is nothing in that dream that was not copied from the lamp. The lamp is the real thing; the *sun* is but a tale, a children’s story.”

“Yes, I see now,” said Jill in a heavy, hopeless tone. “It must be so.” And while she said this, it seemed to her to be very good sense.

Slowly and gravely the Witch repeated, “There is no sun.” And they all said nothing. She repeated, in a softer and deeper voice. “There is no *sun*.”

After a pause, and after a struggle in their minds, all four of them said together. “You are right. There is no sun.” It was such a relief to give in and say it.

“There never was a *sun*,” said the Witch.

“No. There never was a sun,” said the Prince, and the Marsh-wiggle, and the children.

For the last few minutes Jill had been feeling that there was something she must remember at all costs. And now she did. But it was dreadfully hard to say it. She felt as if huge weights were laid on her lips. At last, with an effort that seemed to take all the good out of her, she said:

“There’s Aslan.”

“Aslan?” said the Witch, quickening ever so slightly the pace of her thrumming. “What a pretty name! What does it mean?”

“He is the great Lion who called us out of our own world,” said Scrubb, “and sent us into this to find Prince Rilian.”

“What is a *lion*?” asked the Witch.

“Oh, hang it all!” said Scrubb. “Don’t you know? How can we describe it to her? Have you ever seen a cat?”

“Surely,” said the Queen. “I love cats.”

“Well, a lion is a little bit — only a little bit, mind you — like a huge cat — with a mane. At least, it’s not like a horse’s mane, you know, it’s more like a judge’s wig. And it’s yellow. And terrifically strong.”

The Witch shook her head. “I see,” she said, “that we should do no better with your *lion*, as you call it, than we did with your sun. You have seen lamps, and so you imagined a bigger and better lamp and called it the sun. You’ve seen cats, and now you want a bigger and better cat, and it’s to be called a *lion*. Well, ’tis a pretty make-believe, though, to say truth, it would suit you all better if you were younger. And look how you can put nothing into your make-believe without copying it from the real world, this world of mine, which is the only world. But even you children are too old for such play. As for you, my lord Prince, that art a man full grown, fie upon you! Are you not ashamed of such toys? Come, all of you. Put away these childish tricks. I have work for you all in the real world. There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sky, no sun, no Aslan. And now, to bed all. And let us begin a wiser life to-morrow. But first, to bed; to sleep; deep sleep, soft pillows, sleep without foolish dreams.”

The Prince and the two children were standing with their heads hung down, their cheeks flushed, their eyes half closed; the strength all gone from them; the enchantment almost complete. But Puddleglum, desperately gathering all his strength, walked over to the fire. Then he did a very brave thing. He knew it wouldn't hurt him quite as much as it would hurt a human; for his feet (which were bare) were webbed and hard and cold-blooded like a duck's. But he knew it would hurt him badly enough; and so it did. With his bare foot he stamped on the fire, grinding a large part of it into ashes on the flat hearth. And three things happened at once.

First, the sweet heavy smell grew very much less. For though the whole fire had not been put out, a good bit of it had, and what remained smelled very largely of burnt marsh-wiggle, which is not at all an enchanting smell. This instantly made everyone's brain far clearer. The Prince and the children held up their heads again and opened their eyes.

Secondly, the Witch, in a loud, terrible voice, utterly different from all the sweet tones she had been using up till now, called out, "What are you doing? Dare to touch my fire again, mud-filth, and I'll turn the blood to fire inside your veins."

Thirdly, the pain itself made Puddleglum's head for a moment perfectly clear and he knew exactly what he really thought. There is nothing like a good shock of pain for dissolving certain kinds of magic.

"One word, Ma'am," he said, coming back from the fire; limping, because of the pain. "One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one thing more to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things — trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play-world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're

leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say."

"Oh, hurrah! Good old Puddleglum!" cried Scrubb and Jill. But the Prince shouted suddenly, "Ware! Look to the Witch."

When they did look their hair nearly stood on end.

The instrument dropped from her hands. Her arms appeared to be fastened to her sides. Her legs were intertwined with each other, and her feet had disappeared. The long green train of her skirt thickened and grew solid, and seemed to be all one piece with the writhing green pillar of her interlocked legs. And that writhing green pillar was curving and swaying as if it had no joints, or else were all joints. Her head was thrown far back and while her nose grew longer and longer, every other part of her face seemed to disappear, except her eyes. Huge flaming eyes they were now, without brows or lashes. All this takes time to write down; it happened so quickly that there was only just time to see it. Long before there was time to do anything, the change was complete, and the great serpent which the Witch had become, green as poison, thick as Jill's waist, had flung two or three coils of its loathsome body round the Prince's legs. Quick as lightning another great loop darted round, intending to pinion his sword-arm to his side. But the Prince was just in time. He raised his arms and got them clear: the living knot closed only round his chest — ready to crack his ribs like firewood when it drew tight.

The Prince caught the creature's neck in his left hand, trying to squeeze it till it choked. This held its face (if you could call it a face) about five inches from his own. The forked tongue flickered horribly in and out, but could not reach him. With his right hand he drew back his sword for the strongest blow he could give. Meanwhile Scrubb and Puddleglum had drawn their weapons and rushed to his aid. All three blows fell at once: Scrubb's (which did not even pierce the scales and did no good) on the body of the snake below the Prince's hand, but the Prince's own blow and Puddleglum's both on its neck. Even that did not quite kill it, though it began to loosen its hold on Rilian's legs and chest. With repeated blows they hacked off its head. The horrible thing went on coiling and moving like a bit of wire long after it had died; and the floor, as you may imagine, was a nasty mess.

The Prince, when he had breath, said, “Gentlemen, I thank you.” Then the three conquerors stood staring at one another and panting, without another word, for a long time. Jill had very wisely sat down and was keeping quiet; she was saying to herself, “I do hope I don’t faint — or blub — or do anything idiotic.”

“My royal mother is avenged,” said Rilian presently. “This is undoubtedly the same worm that I pursued in vain by the fountain in the forest of Narnia, so many years ago. All these years I have been the slave of my mother’s slayer. Yet I am glad, gentlemen, that the foul Witch took to her serpent form at the last. It would not have suited well either with my heart or with my honour to have slain a woman. But look to the lady.” He meant Jill.

“I’m all right, thanks,” said she.

“Damsel,” said the Prince, bowing to her. “You are of a high courage, and therefore, I doubt not, you come of a noble blood in your own world. But come, friends. Here is some wine left. Let us refresh ourselves and each pledge his fellows. After that, to our plans.”

“A jolly good idea, Sir,” said Scrubb.

Chapter XIII

UNDERLAND WITHOUT THE QUEEN

All felt that they had earned what Scrubb called a “breather”. The Witch had locked the door and told the Earthmen not to disturb her, so there was no danger of interruption for the present. Their first business was, of course, Puddleglum’s burnt foot. A couple of clean shirts from the Prince’s bedroom, torn into strips, and well greased on the inside with butter and salad oil off the supper table, made a fairly good dressing. When this had been applied, they all sat down and had a little refreshment, and discussed plans for escaping from the Underworld.

Rilian explained that there were quite a lot of outlets by which one could get to the surface; he had been taken out through most of them at one time or another. But he had never gone out alone, only with the Witch; and he had always reached these outlets by going in a ship across the Sunless Sea. What the Earthmen would say if he went down to the harbour without the Witch, and with four strangers, and simply ordered a ship, no-one could guess. But most likely they would ask awkward questions. On the other hand the new outlet, the one for the invasion of Overworld, was on this side of the sea, and only a few miles away. The Prince knew that it was nearly finished; only a few feet of earth divided the diggings from the outer air. It was even possible that it had now been quite finished. Perhaps the Witch had come back to tell him this and to start the attack. Even if it was not, they could probably dig themselves out by that route in a few hours — if they could only get there without being stopped, and if only they found the diggings unguarded. But those were the difficulties.

“If you ask me — —” began Puddleglum, when Scrubb interrupted.

“I say,” he asked, “what’s that noise?”

“I’ve been wondering that for some time!” said Jill.

They had all, in fact, been hearing the noise but it had begun and increased so gradually that they did not know when they had first noticed it. For a time it had been only a vague disquiet like gentle winds, or traffic very far away. Then it swelled to a murmur like the sea. Then came rumblings and rushings. Now there seemed to be voices as well and also a steady roaring that was not voices.

“By the Lion,” said Prince Rilian, “it seems this silent land has found a tongue at last.” He rose, walked to the window, and drew aside the curtains. The others crowded round him to look out.

The very first thing they noticed was a great red glow. Its reflection made a red patch on the roof of the Underworld thousands of feet above them, so that they could see a rocky ceiling which had perhaps been hidden in darkness ever since the world was made. The glow itself came from the far side of the city so that many buildings, grim and great, stood up blackly against it. But it also cast its light down many streets that ran from it towards the castle. And in those streets something very strange was going on. The closely-packed, silent crowds of Earthmen had vanished. Instead, there were figures darting about by ones, or twos, or threes. They behaved like people who do not want to be seen: lurking in shadow behind buttresses or in doorways, and then moving quickly across the open into fresh places of hiding. But the strangest thing of all, to anyone who knew the gnomes, was the noise. Shouts and cries came from all directions. But from the harbour there came a low, rumbling roar which grew steadily louder and was already shaking the whole city.

“What’s happened to the Earthmen?” said Scrubb. “Is it *them* shouting?”

“’Tis hardly possible,” said the Prince. “I never heard one of the rascals so much as speak with a loud voice in all the weary years of my bondage. Some new devilry, I don’t doubt.”

“And what is that red light over there?” asked Jill. “Is something on fire?”

“If you ask me,” said Puddleglum, “I should say that was the central fires of the Earth breaking out to make a new volcano. We’ll be in the middle of it, I shouldn’t wonder.”

“Look at that ship!” said Scrubb. “Why’s it coming on so quickly? No-one’s rowing it.”

“Look, look!” said the Prince. “The ship is already far this side of the harbour — it is in the street. Look! All the ships are driving into the city! By my head, the sea’s rising. The flood is upon us. Aslan be praised, this castle stands on high ground. But the water comes on grimly fast.”

“Oh, what can be happening?” cried Jill. “Fire and water and all those people dodging about the streets.”

“I’ll tell you what it is,” said Puddleglum. “That Witch has laid a train of magic spells so that whenever she was killed, at that same moment her

whole kingdom would fall to pieces. She's the sort that wouldn't so much mind dying herself if she knew that the chap who killed her was going to be burned, or buried, or drowned five minutes later."

"Hast hit it, friend wiggle," said the Prince. "When our swords hacked off the Witch's head, that stroke ended all her magic works, and now the Deep Lands are falling to pieces. We are looking on the end of Underworld."

"That's it, Sir," said Puddleglum. "Unless it should happen to be the end of the whole world."

"But are we just going to stay here and — wait?" gasped Jill.

"Not by my counsel," said the Prince. "I would save my horse, Coalblack, and the Witch's Snowflake (a noble beast and worthy of a better mistress) which are both stabled in the courtyard. After that, let us make shift to get out to high ground and pray that we shall find an outlet. The horses can carry two each at need, and if we put them to it they may outstrip the flood."

"Will your Highness not put on armour?" asked Puddleglum. "I don't like the look of *those*" — and he pointed down to the street. Everyone looked down. Dozens of creatures (and now that they were close, they obviously were Earthmen) were coming up from the direction of the harbour. But they were not moving like an aimless crowd. They behaved like modern soldiers in an attack, making rushes and taking cover, anxious not to be seen from the castle windows.

"I dare not see the inside of that armour again," said the Prince. "I rode in it as in a movable dungeon, and it stinks of magic and slavery. But I will take the shield."

He left the room and returned with a strange light in his eyes a moment later.

"Look, friends," he said, holding out the shield towards them. "An hour ago it was black and without device; and now, this." The shield had turned bright as silver, and on it, redder than blood or cherries, was the figure of the Lion.

"Doubtless," said the Prince, "this signifies that Aslan will be our good lord, whether he means us to live or die. And all's one, for that. Now, by my counsel, we shall all kneel and kiss his likeness, and then all shake hands one with another, as true friends that may shortly be parted. And then, let us descend into the city and take the adventure that is sent us."

And they all did as the Prince had said. But when Scrubb shook hands with Jill, he said, “So long, Jill. Sorry I’ve been a funk and so ratty. I hope you get safe home,” and Jill said, “So long, Eustace. And I’m sorry I’ve been such a pig.” And this was the first time they had ever used Christian names, because one didn’t do it at school.

The Prince unlocked the door and they all went down the stairs: three of them with drawn swords, and Jill with drawn knife. The attendants had vanished and the great room at the foot of the Prince’s stairs was empty. The grey, doleful lamps were still burning and by their light they had no difficulty in passing gallery after gallery and descending stairway after stairway. The noises from outside the castle were not so easily heard here as they had been in the room above. Inside the house all was still as death, and deserted. It was as they turned a corner into the great hall on the ground floor that they met their first Earthman — a fat, whitish creature with a very pig-like face who was gobbling up all the remains of food on the tables. It squealed (the squeal also was very like a pig’s) and darted under a bench, whisking its long tail out of Puddleglum’s reach in the nick of time. Then it rushed away through the far door too quickly to be followed.

From the hall they came out into the courtyard. Jill, who went to a riding school in the holidays, had just noticed the smell of a stable (a very nice, honest, homely smell it is to meet in a place like Underland) when Eustace said, “Great Scott! Look at that!” A magnificent rocket had risen from somewhere beyond the castle walls and broken into green stars.

“Fireworks!” said Jill in a puzzled voice.

“Yes,” said Eustace, “but you can’t imagine those Earth people letting them off for fun! It must be a signal.”

“And means no good to us, I’ll be bound,” said Puddleglum.

“Friends,” said the Prince, “when once a man is launched on such an adventure as this, he must bid farewell to hopes and fears, otherwise death or deliverance will both come too late to save his honour and his reason. Ho, my beauties” (he was now opening the stable door). “Hey, cousins! Steady, Coalblack! Softly now, Snowflake! You are not forgotten.”

The horses were both frightened by the strange lights and the noises. Jill, who had been so cowardly about going through a black hole between one cave and another, went in without fear between the stamping and snorting beasts, and she and the Prince had them saddled and bridled in a few minutes. Very fine they looked as they came out into the courtyard, tossing

their heads. Jill mounted Snowflake, and Puddleglum got up behind her. Eustace got up behind the Prince on Coalblack. Then with a great echo of hoofs, they rode out of the main gateway into the street.

"Not much danger of being burnt. That's the bright side of it," observed Puddleglum, pointing to their right. There, hardly a hundred yards away, lapping against the walls of the houses, was water.

"Courage!" said the Prince. "The road there goes down steeply. That water has climbed only half up the greatest hill in the city. It might come so near in the first half-hour and come no nearer in the next two. My fear is more of that — —" and he pointed with his sword to a great tall Earthman with boar's tusks, followed by six others of assorted shapes and sizes who had just dashed out of a side street and stepped into the shadow of the houses where no one could see them.

The Prince led them, aiming always in the direction of the glowing red light but a little to the left of it. His plan was to get round the fire (if it was a fire) onto high ground, in hope that they might find their way to the new diggings. Unlike the other three, he seemed to be almost enjoying himself. He whistled as he rode, and sang snatches of an old song about Corin Thunder-fist of Archenland. The truth is, he was so glad at being free from his long enchantment that all dangers seemed a game in comparison. But the rest found it an eerie journey.

Behind them was the sound of clashing and entangled ships, and the rumble of collapsing buildings. Overhead was the great patch of lurid light on the roof of the Underworld. Ahead was the mysterious glow, which did not seem to grow any bigger. From the same direction came a continual hubbub of shouts, screams, cat-calls, laughter, squeals, and bellowings; and fireworks of all sorts rose in the dark air. No one could guess what they meant. Nearer to them, the city was partly lit up by the red glow, and partly by the very different light of the dreary Gnome lamps. But there were many places where neither of these lights fell, and those places were jet-black. And in and out of those places the shapes of Earthmen were darting and slipping all the time, always with their eyes fixed on the travellers, always trying to keep out of sight themselves. There were big faces and little faces, huge eyes like fishes' eyes and little eyes like bears'. There were feathers and bristles, horns and tusks, noses like whipcord and chins so long that they looked like beards. Every now and then a group of them would get too big or come too near. Then the Prince would brandish his sword and make a

show of charging them. And the creatures, with all manner of hootings, squeakings, and cluckings, would dive away into the darkness.

But when they had climbed many steep streets and were far away from the flood, and almost out of the town on the inland side, it began to be more serious. They were now close to the red glow and nearly on a level with it, though they still could not see what it really was. But by its light they could see their enemies more clearly. Hundreds — perhaps a few thousands — of gnomes were all moving towards it. But they were doing so in short rushes, and whenever they stopped, they turned and faced the travellers.

"If your Highness asked me," said Puddleglum, "I'd say those fellows were meaning to cut us off in front."

"That was my thought too, Puddleglum," said the Prince. "And we can never fight our way through so many. Hark you! Let us ride forth close by the edge of yonder house. And even as we reach it, do you slip off into its shadow. The Lady and I will go forward a few paces. Some of these devils will follow us, I doubt not; they are thick behind us. Do you, who have long arms, take one alive if you may, as it passes your ambush. We may get a true tale of it or learn what is their quarrel against us."

"But won't the others all come rushing at us to rescue the one we catch," said Jill in a voice not so steady as she tried to make it.

"Then, Madam," said the Prince, "you shall see us die fighting around you, and you must commend yourself to the Lion. Now, good Puddleglum."

The Marsh-wiggle slipped off into the shadow as quickly as a cat. The others, for a sickening minute or so, went forward at a walk. Then suddenly from behind them there broke out a series of blood-curdling screams, mixed with the familiar voice of Puddleglum, saying, "Now then! Don't cry out before you're hurt, or you will be hurt, see? Anyone would think it was a pig being killed."

"That was good hunting," exclaimed the Prince, immediately turning Coalblack and coming back to the corner of the house. "Eustace," he said, "of your courtesy, take Coalblack's head." Then he dismounted, and all three gazed in silence while Puddleglum pulled his catch out into the light. It was a most miserable little gnome, only about three feet long. It had a sort of ridge, like a cock's comb (only hard), on the top of its head, little pink eyes, and a mouth and chin so large and round that its face looked like that of a pigmy hippopotamus. If they had not been in such a tight place, they would have burst into laughter at the sight of it.

“Now, Earthman,” said the Prince, standing over it and holding his sword point very near the prisoner’s neck, “speak up, like an honest gnome, and you shall go free. Play the knave with us, and you are but a dead Earthman. Good Puddleglum, how can it speak while you hold its mouth tight shut?”

“No, and it can’t bite either,” said Puddleglum. “If I had the silly soft hands that you humans have (saving your Highness’s reverence) I’d have been all over blood by now. Yet even a Marsh-wiggle gets tired of being chewed.”

“Sirrah,” said the Prince to the gnome, “one bite and you die. Let its mouth open, Puddleglum.”

“Oo-ee-ee,” squealed the Earthman, “Let me go, let me go. It isn’t me. I didn’t do it.”

“Didn’t do what?” asked Puddleglum.

“Whatever your Honours say I *did* do,” answered the creature.

“Tell me your name,” said the Prince, “and what you Earthmen are all about to-day.”

“Oh please, your Honours, please, kind gentlemen,” whimpered the gnome. “Promise you will not tell the Queen’s grace anything I say.”

“The Queen’s grace, as you call her,” said the Prince sternly, “is dead. I killed her myself.”

“What!” cried the gnome, opening its ridiculous mouth wider and wider in astonishment. “Dead? The Witch dead? And by your Honour’s hand?” It gave a huge sigh of relief and added, “Why then your Honour is a friend!”

The Prince withdrew his sword an inch or so. Puddleglum let the creature sit up. It looked round on the four travellers with its twinkling, red eyes, chuckled once or twice, and began.

Chapter XIV

THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD

“My name is Golg,” said the gnome. “And I’ll tell your Honours all I know. About an hour ago we were all going about our work — *her* work, I should say — sad and silent, same as we’ve done any other day for years and years. Then there came a great crash and bang. As soon as they heard it, everyone says to himself, I haven’t had a song or a dance or let off a squib for a long time; why’s that? And everyone thinks to himself, Why, I must have been enchanted. And then everyone says to himself, I’m blessed if I know why I’m carrying this load, and I’m not going to carry it any further: that’s that. And down we all throw our sacks and bundles and tools. Then everyone turns and sees the great red glow over yonder. And everyone says to himself, What’s that? And everyone answers himself and says, There’s a crack or chasm split open and a nice warm glow coming up through it from the Really Deep Land, a thousand fathom under us.”

“Great Scott,” exclaimed Eustace, “are there other lands still lower down?”

“Oh yes, your Honour,” said Golg. “Lovely places; what we call the Land of Bism. This country where we are now, the Witch’s country, is what we call the Shallow Lands. It’s a good deal too near the surface to suit us. Ugh! You might almost as well be living outside, on the surface itself. You see, we’re all poor gnomes from Bism whom the Witch has called up here by magic to work for her. But we’d forgotten all about it till that crash came and the spell broke. We didn’t know who we were or where we belonged. We couldn’t do anything, or think anything, except what she put into our heads. And it was glum and gloomy things she put there all those years. I’ve nearly forgotten how to make a joke or dance a jig. But the moment the bang came and the chasm opened and the sea began rising, it all came back. And of course we all set off as quick as we could to get down the crack and home to our own place. And you can see them over there all letting off rockets and standing on their heads for joy. And I’ll be very obliged to your Honours if you’ll soon let me go and join in.”

“I think this is simply splendid,” said Jill. “I’m so glad we freed the gnomes as well as ourselves when we cut off the Witch’s head! And I’m so

glad they aren't really horrid and gloomy any more than the Prince really was — well, what he seemed like."

"That's all very well, Pole," said Puddleglum cautiously. "But those gnomes didn't look to me like chaps who were just running away. It looked more like military formations, if you ask me. Do you look me in the face, Mr. Golg, and tell me you weren't preparing for battle?"

"Of course we were, your Honour," said Golg. "You see, we didn't know the Witch was dead. We thought she'd be watching from the castle. We were trying to slip away without being seen. And then when you four came out with swords and horses, of course everyone says to himself, Here it comes: not knowing that his Honour wasn't on the Witch's side. And we were determined to fight like anything rather than give up the hope of going back to Bism."

"I'll be sworn 'tis an honest gnome," said the Prince. "Let go of it, friend Puddleglum. As for me, good Golg, I have been enchanted like you and your fellows, and have but newly remembered myself. And now, one question more. Do you know the way to those new diggings, by which the sorceress meant to lead out an army against Overland?"

"Ee-ee-ee!" squeaked Golg. "Yes, I know that terrible road. I will show you where it begins. But it is no manner of use your Honour asking me to go with you on it. I'll die rather."

"Why?" asked Eustace anxiously. "What's so dreadful about it?"

"Too near the top, the outside," said Golg, shuddering. "That was the worst thing the Witch did to us. We were going to be led out into the open — onto the outside of the world. They say there's no roof at all there; only a horrible great emptiness called the sky. And the diggings have gone so far that a few strokes of the pick would bring you out to it. I wouldn't dare go near them."

"Hurrah! Now you're talking!" cried Eustace, and Jill said, "But it's not horrid at all up there. We like it. We live there."

"I know you Overlanders live there," said Golg. "But I thought it was because you couldn't find your way down inside. You can't really *like* it — crawling about like flies on the top of the world!"

"What about showing us the road at once?" said Puddleglum.

"In a good hour," cried the Prince. The whole party set out. The Prince remounted his charger, Puddleglum climbed up behind Jill, and Golg led the way. As he went, he kept shouting out the good news that the Witch was

dead and that the four Overlanders were not dangerous. And those who heard him shouted it on to others, so that in a few minutes the whole of Underland was ringing with shouts and cheers, and gnomes by hundreds and thousands, leaping, turning cart-wheels, standing on their heads, playing leap-frog, and letting off huge crackers, came pressing round Coalblack and Snowflake. And the Prince had to tell the story of his own enchantment and deliverance at least ten times.

In this way they came to the edge of the chasm. It was about a thousand feet long and perhaps two hundred wide. They dismounted from their horses and came to the edge, and looked down into it. A strong heat smote up into their faces, mixed with a smell which was quite unlike any they had ever smelled. It was rich, sharp, exciting, and made you sneeze. The depth of the chasm was so bright that at first it dazzled their eyes and they could see nothing. When they got used to it they thought they could make out a river of fire, and, on the banks of that river, what seemed to be fields and groves of an unbearable, hot brilliance — though they were dim compared with the river. There were blues, reds, greens, and whites all jumbled together: a very good stained-glass window with the tropical sun staring straight through it at midday might have something the same effect. Down the rugged sides of the chasm, looking black like flies against all that fiery light, hundreds of Earthmen were climbing.

"Your honours," said Golg (and when they turned to look at him they could see nothing but blackness for a few minutes, their eyes were so dazzled). "Your honours, why don't you come down to Bism? You'd be happier there than in that cold, unprotected, naked country out on top. Or at least come down for a short visit."

Jill took it for granted that none of the others would listen to such an idea for a moment. To her horror she heard the Prince saying:

"Truly, friend Golg, I have half a mind to come down with you. For this is a marvellous adventure, and it may be no mortal man has ever looked into Bism before or will ever have the chance again. And I know not how, as the years pass, I shall bear to remember that it was once in my power to have probed the uttermost pit of Earth and that I forbore. But could a man live there? You do not swim in the fire-river itself?"

"Oh no, your Honour. Not we. It's only salamanders live in the fire itself."

"What kind of beast is your salamander?" asked the Prince.

“It is hard to tell their kind, your Honour,” said Golg. “For they are too white-hot to look at. But they are most like small dragons. They speak to us out of the fire. They are wonderfully clever with their tongues: very witty and eloquent.”

Jill glanced hastily at Eustace. She had felt sure that he would like the idea of climbing down that chasm even less than she did. Her heart sank as she saw that his face was quite changed. He looked much more like the Prince than like the old Scrubb at Experiment House. For all his adventures, and the days when he had sailed with King Caspian, were coming back to him.

“Your Highness,” he said. “If my old friend Reepicheep the Mouse were here, he would say we could not now refuse the adventures of Bism without a great impeachment to our honour.”

“Down there,” said Golg, “I could show you real gold, real silver, real diamonds.”

“Bosh!” said Jill rudely. “As if we didn’t know that we’re below the deepest mines even here.”

“Yes,” said Golg. “I have heard of those little scratches in the crust that you Topdwellers call mines. But that’s where you get dead gold, dead silver, dead gems. Down in Bism we have them alive and growing. There I’ll pick you bunches of rubies that you can eat and squeeze you a cup full of diamond-juice. You won’t care much about fingering the cold, dead treasures of your shallow mines after you have tasted the live ones of Bism.”

“My father went to the world’s end,” said Rilian thoughtfully. “It would be a marvellous thing if his son went to the bottom of the world.”

“If your Highness wants to see your father while he’s still alive, which I think he’d prefer,” said Puddleglum, “it’s about time we were getting onto that road to the diggings.”

“And I won’t go down that hole, whatever anyone says,” added Jill.

“Why, if your Honours are really set to go back to Overworld,” said Golg, “there *is* one bit of the road that’s rather lower than this. And perhaps, if that flood’s still rising — —”

“Oh, do, do, do come on!” begged Jill.

“I fear it must be so,” said the Prince with a deep sigh. “But I have left half of my heart in the land of Bism.”

“Please!” begged Jill.

“Where is the road?” asked Puddleglum.

“There are lamps all the way,” said Golg. “Your Honour can see the beginning of the road on the far side of the chasm.”

“How long will the lamps burn for?” asked Puddleglum.

At that moment a hissing, scorching voice like the voice of Fire itself (they wondered afterwards if it could have been a salamander’s) came whistling up out of the very depths of Bism.

“Quick! Quick! Quick! To the cliffs, to the cliffs, to the cliffs!” it said. “The rift closes. It closes. It closes. Quick! Quick.” And at the same time, with ear-shattering cracks and creaks, the rocks moved. Already, while they looked, the chasm was narrower. From every side belated gnomes were rushing into it. They would not wait to climb down the rocks. They flung themselves headlong and, either because so strong a blast of hot air was beating up from the bottom, or for some other reason, they could be seen floating downwards like leaves. Thicker and thicker they floated, till their blackness almost blotted out the fiery river and the groves of live gems. “Good-bye to your Honours. I’m off,” shouted Golg, and dived. Only a few were left to follow him. The chasm was now no broader than a stream. Now it was narrow as the slit in a pillar-box. Now it was only an intensely bright thread. Then, with a shock like a thousand goods trains crashing into a thousand pairs of buffers, the lips of rock closed. The hot, maddening smell vanished. The travellers were alone in an Underworld which now looked far blacker than before. Pale, dim, and dreary, the lamps marked the direction of the road.

“Now,” said Puddleglum, “it’s ten to one we’ve already stayed too long, but we may as well make a try. Those lamps will give out in five minutes, I shouldn’t wonder.”

They urged the horses to a canter and thundered along the dusky road in fine style. But almost at once it began going downhill. They would have thought Golg had sent them the wrong way if they had not seen, on the other side of the valley, the lamps going on and upwards as far as the eye could reach. But at the bottom of the valley the lamps shone on moving water.

“Haste,” cried the Prince. They galloped down the slope. It would have been nasty enough at the bottom even five minutes later for the tide was running up the valley like a mill-race, and if it had come to swimming, the horses could hardly have won over. But it was still only a foot or two deep,

and though it swished terribly round the horses' legs, they reached the far side in safety.

Then began the slow, weary march uphill with nothing ahead to look at but the pale lamps which went up and up as far as the eye could reach. When they looked back they could see the water spreading. All the hills of Underland were now islands, and it was only on those islands that the lamps remained. Every moment some distant light vanished. Soon there would be total darkness everywhere except on the road they were following; and even on the lower part of it behind them, though no lamps had yet gone out, the lamplight shone on water.

Although they had good reason for hurrying, the horses could not go on for ever without a rest. They halted: and in silence they could hear the lapping of water.

"I wonder is what's his name — Father Time — flooded out now," said Jill. "And all those queer sleeping animals."

"I don't think we're as high as that," said Eustace. "Don't you remember how we had to go downhill to reach the sunless sea? I shouldn't think the water has reached Father Time's cave yet."

"That's as may be," said Puddleglum. "I'm more interested in the lamps on this road. Look a bit sickly, don't they?"

"They always did," said Jill.

"Ah," said Puddleglum. "But they're greener now."

"You don't mean to say you think they're going out?" cried Eustace.

"Well, however they work, you can't expect them to last for ever, you know," replied the Marsh-wiggle. "But don't let your spirits down, Scrubb. I've got my eye on the water too, and I don't think it's rising so fast as it did."

"Small comfort, friend," said the Prince. "If we cannot find our way out. I cry you mercy, all. I am to blame for my pride and fantasy which delayed us by the mouth of the land of Bism. Now, let us ride on."

During the hour or so that followed Jill sometimes thought that Puddleglum was right about the lamps, and sometimes thought it was only her imagination. Meanwhile the land was changing. The roof of Underland was so near that even by that dull light they could now see it quite distinctly. And the great, rugged walls of Underland could be seen drawing closer on each side. The road, in fact, was leading them up into a steep tunnel. They began to pass picks and shovels and barrows and other signs

that the diggers had recently been at work. If only one could be sure of getting out, all this was very cheering. But the thought of going on into a hole that would get narrower and narrower, and harder to turn back in, was very unpleasant.

At last the roof was so low that Puddleglum and the Prince knocked their heads against it. The party dismounted and led the horses. The road was uneven here and one had to pick one's steps with some care. That was how Jill noticed the growing darkness. There was no doubt about it now. The faces of the others looked strange and ghastly in the green glow. Then all at once (she couldn't help it) Jill gave a little scream. One light, the next one ahead, went out altogether. The one behind them did the same. Then they were in absolute darkness.

"Courage, friends," came Prince Rilian's voice. "Whether we live or die Aslan will be our good lord."

"That's right, Sir," said Puddleglum's voice. "And you must always remember there's one good thing about being trapped down here: it'll save funeral expenses."

Jill held her tongue. (If you don't want other people to know how frightened you are, this is always a wise thing to do; it's your voice that gives you away.)

"We might as well go on as stand here," said Eustace; and when she heard the tremble in *his* voice, Jill knew how wise she'd been not to trust her own.

Puddleglum and Eustace went first with their arms stretched out in front of them, for fear of blundering into anything; Jill and the Prince followed, leading the horses.

"I say," came Eustace's voice much later, "are my eyes going queer or is there a patch of light up there?"

Before anyone could answer him, Puddleglum called out: "Stop. I'm up against a dead end. And it's earth, not rock. What were you saying, Scrubb?"

"By the Lion," said the Prince, "Eustace is right. There is a sort of —__"

"But it's not daylight," said Jill. "It's only a cold blue sort of light."

"Better than nothing, though," said Eustace. "Can we get up to it?"

"It's not right overhead," said Puddleglum. "It's above us, but it's in this wall that I've run into. How would it be, Pole, if you got on my shoulders

and saw whether you could get up to it?”

Chapter XV

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JILL

The patch of light did not show up anything down in the darkness where they were standing. The others could only hear, not see, Jill's efforts to get onto the Marsh-wiggle's back. That is, they heard him saying, "You needn't put your finger in my eye," and, "Nor your foot in my mouth either," and, "That's more like it," and, "Now, I'll hold on to your legs. That'll leave your arms free to steady yourself against the earth."

Then they looked up and soon they saw the black shape of Jill's head against the patch of light.

"Well?" they all shouted up anxiously.

"It's a hole," called Jill's voice. "I could get through it if I was a little bit higher."

"What do you see through it?" asked Eustace.

"Nothing much yet," said Jill. "I say, Puddleglum, let go my legs so that I can stand on your shoulders instead of sitting on them. I can steady myself all right against the edge."

They could hear her moving and then much more of her came into sight against the greyness of the opening; in fact all of her down to the waist.

"I say — —" began Jill, but suddenly broke off with a cry: not a sharp cry. It sounded more as if her mouth had been muffled up or had something pushed into it.

After that she found her voice and seemed to be shouting out as loud as she could, but they couldn't hear the words. Two things then happened at the same moment. The patch of light was completely blocked up for a second or so; and they heard both a scuffling, struggling sound and the voice of the Marsh-wiggle gasping: "Quick! Help. Hold onto her legs. Someone's pulling her. There! No, here. Too late!"

The opening, and the cold light which filled it, were now perfectly clear again. Jill had vanished.

"Jill! Jill!" they shouted frantically, but there was no answer.

"Why the dickens couldn't you have held her feet?" said Eustace.

"I don't know, Scrubb," groaned Puddleglum. "Born to be a misfit, I shouldn't wonder. Fated. Fated to be Pole's death, just as I was fated to eat

Talking Stag at Harfang. Not that it isn't my own fault as well, of course."

"This is the greatest shame and sorrow that could have fallen on us," said the Prince. "We have sent a brave lady into the hands of enemies and stayed behind in safety."

"Don't paint it *too* black, Sir," said Puddleglum. "We're not very safe except for death by starvation in this hole."

"I wonder am *I* small enough to get through where Jill did?" said Eustace.

What had really happened to Jill was this. As soon as she got her head out of the hole she found that she was looking down as if from an upstairs window, not up as if through a trap-door. She had been so long in the dark that her eyes couldn't at first take in what they were seeing: except that she was not looking at the daylit, sunny world which she so wanted to see. The air seemed to be deadly cold, and the light was pale and blue. There was also a good deal of noise going on and a lot of white objects flying about in the air. It was at that moment that she had shouted down to Puddleglum to let her stand up on his shoulders.

When she had done this, she could see and hear a good deal better. The noises she had been hearing turned out to be of two kinds: the rhythmical thump of several feet, and the music of four fiddles, three flutes, and a drum. She also got her own position clear. She was looking out of a hole in a steep bank which sloped down and reached the level about fourteen feet below her. Everything was very white. A lot of people were moving about. Then she gasped! The people were trim little Fauns, and Dryads with leaf-crowned hair floating behind them. For a second they looked as if they were moving anyhow; then she saw that they were really doing a dance — a dance with so many complicated steps and figures that it took you some time to understand it. Then it came over her like a thunderclap that the pale, blue light was really moonlight, and the white stuff on the ground was really snow. And of course! There were the stars staring in a black frosty sky overhead. And the tall black things behind the dancers were trees. They had not only got out into the upper world at last, but had come out in the heart of Narnia. Jill felt she could have fainted with delight; and the music — the wild music, intensely sweet and yet just the least bit eerie too, and full of good magic as the Witch's thrumming had been full of bad magic — made her feel it all the more.

All this takes a long time to tell, but of course it took a very short time to see. Jill turned almost at once to shout down to the others, “I say! It’s all right. We’re out, and we’re home.” But the reason she never got further than “I say” was this. Circling round and round the dancers was a ring of Dwarfs, all dressed in their finest clothes; mostly scarlet with fur-lined hoods and golden tassels and big furry top-boots. As they circled round they were all diligently throwing snowballs. (Those were the white things that Jill had seen flying through the air.) They weren’t throwing them at the dancers as silly boys might have been doing in England. They were throwing them through the dance in such perfect time with the music and with such perfect aim that if all the dancers were in exactly the right places at exactly the right moments, no-one would be hit. This is called the Great Snow Dance and it is done every year in Narnia on the first moonlit night when there is snow on the ground. Of course it is a kind of game as well as a dance, because every now and then some dancer will be the least little bit wrong and get a snowball in the face, and then everyone laughs. But a good team of dancers, Dwarfs, and musicians will keep it up for hours without a single hit. On fine nights when the cold and the drum-taps, and the hooting of the owls, and the moonlight, have got into their wild, woodland blood and made it even wilder, they will dance till daybreak. I wish you could see it for yourselves.

What had stopped Jill when she got as far as the say of “I say” was of course simply a fine big snowball that came sailing through the dance from a Dwarf on the far side and got her fair and square in the mouth. She didn’t in the least mind; twenty snowballs would not have damped her spirits at that moment. But however happy you are feeling, you can’t talk with your mouth full of snow. And when, after considerable spluttering, she could speak again, she quite forgot in her excitement that the others, down in the dark, behind her, still didn’t know the good news. She simply leaned as far out of the hole as she could, and yelled to the dancers.

“Help! Help! We’re buried in the hill. Come and dig us out.”

The Narnians, who had not even noticed the little hole in the hillside, were of course very surprised, and looked about in several wrong directions before they found out where the voice was coming from. But when they caught sight of Jill they all came running towards her, and as many as could scrambled up the bank, and a dozen or more hands were stretched up to

help her. And Jill caught hold of them and thus got out of the hole and came slithering down the bank head first, and then picked herself up and said:

“Oh, do go and dig the others out. There are three others, besides the horses. And one of them is Prince Rilian.”

She was already in the middle of a crowd when she said this, for besides the dancers all sorts of people who had been watching the dance, and whom she had not seen at first, came running up. Squirrels came out of the trees in showers, and so did Owls. Hedgehogs came waddling as fast as their short legs would carry them. Bears and Badgers followed at a slower pace. A great Panther, twitching its tail with excitement, was the last to join the party.

But as soon as they understood what Jill was saying, they all became active. “Pick and shovel, boys, pick and shovel. Off for our tools!” said the Dwarfs, and dashed away into the woods at top speed. “Wake up some Moles, they’re the chaps for digging. They’re quite as good as Dwarfs,” said a voice. “What was that she said about Prince Rilian?” said another. “Hush!” said the Panther. “The poor child’s crazed, and no wonder after being lost inside the hill. She doesn’t know what she’s saying.” “That’s right,” said an old Bear. “Why, she said Prince Rilian was a horse!”— “No, she didn’t,” said a Squirrel, very pert. “Yes, she did,” said another Squirrel, even perter.

“It’s quite t-t-t-true. D-d-don’t be so silly,” said Jill. She spoke like that because her teeth were now chattering with the cold.

Immediately one of the Dryads flung round her a furry cloak which some Dwarf had dropped when he rushed to fetch his mining tools, and an obliging Faun trotted off among the trees to a place where Jill could see firelight in the mouth of a cave, to get her a hot drink. But before it came, all the Dwarfs reappeared with spades and pick-axes and charged at the hillside. Then Jill heard cries of “Hi! What are you doing? Put that sword down,” and “Now, young ‘un: none of that,” and, “He’s a vicious one, now, isn’t he?” Jill hurried to the spot and didn’t know whether to laugh or cry when she saw Eustace’s face, very pale and dirty, projecting from the blackness of the hole, and Eustace’s right hand brandishing a sword with which he made lunges at anyone who came near him.

For of course Eustace had been having a very different time from Jill during the last few minutes. He had heard Jill cry out and seen her disappear into the unknown. Like the Prince and Puddleglum, he thought

that some enemies had caught her. And from down below he didn’t see that the pale, blueish light was moonlight. He thought the hole would lead only into some other cave, lit by some ghostly phosphorescence and filled with goodness-knows-what evil creatures of the Underworld. So that when he had persuaded Puddleglum to give him a back, and drawn his sword, and poked out his head, he had really been doing a very brave thing. The others would have done it first if they could, but the hole was too small for them to climb through. Eustace was a little bigger, and a lot clumsier, than Jill, so that when he looked out he bumped his head against the top of the hole and brought a small avalanche of snow down on his face. And so, when he could see again, and saw dozens of figures coming at him as hard as they could run, it is not surprising that he tried to ward them off.

“Stop, Eustace, stop,” cried Jill. “They’re all friends. Can’t you see? We’ve come up in Narnia. Everything’s all right.”

Then Eustace did see, and apologised to the Dwarfs (and the Dwarfs said not to mention it), and dozens of thick, hairy, dwarfish hands helped him out just as they had helped Jill out a few minutes before. Then Jill scrambled up the bank and put her head in at the dark opening and shouted the good news in to the prisoners. As she turned away she heard Puddleglum mutter, “Ah, poor Pole. It’s been too much for her, this last bit. Turned her head, I shouldn’t wonder. She’s beginning to see things.”

Jill rejoined Eustace and they shook one another by both hands and took in great deep breaths of the free midnight air. And a warm cloak was brought for Eustace and hot drinks for both. While they were sipping it, the Dwarfs had already got all the snow and all the sods off a large strip of the hillside round the original hole, and the pickaxes and spades were now going as merrily as the feet of Fauns and Dryads had been going in the dance ten minutes before. Only ten minutes! Yet already it felt to Jill and Eustace as if all their dangers in the dark and heat and general smotheriness of the earth must have been only a dream. Out here, in the cold, with the moon and the huge stars overhead (Narnian stars are nearer than stars in our world) and with kind, merry faces all round them, one couldn’t quite believe in Underland.

Before they had finished their hot drinks, a dozen or so Moles, newly waked and still very sleepy, and not well pleased, had arrived. But as soon as they understood what it was all about, they joined in with a will. Even the Fauns made themselves useful by carting away the earth in little

barrows, and the Squirrels danced and leaped to and fro in great excitement, though Jill never found out exactly what they thought they were doing. The Bears and Owls contented themselves with giving advice, and kept on asking the children if they wouldn't like to come into the cave (that was where Jill had seen the firelight) and get warm and have supper. But the children couldn't bear to go without seeing their friends set free.

No one in our world can work at a job of that sort as Dwarfs and Talking Moles work in Narnia; but then, of course, Moles and Dwarfs don't look on it as work. They like digging. It was therefore not really long before they had opened a great black chasm in the hillside. And out from the blackness into the moonlight — this would have been rather dreadful if one hadn't known who they were — came, first, the long, leggy, steeple-hatted figure of the Marsh-wiggle, and then, leading two great horses, Rilian the Prince himself.

As Puddleglum appeared shouts broke out on every side: "Why, it's a Wiggle — why, it's old Puddleglum — old Puddleglum from the Eastern Marshes — what ever have you been doing, Puddleglum? — there've been search-parties out for you — the Lord Trumpkin has been putting up notices — there's a reward offered!" But all this died away, all in one moment, into dead silence, as quickly as the noise dies away in a rowdy dormitory if the Headmaster opens the door. For now they saw the Prince.

No one doubted for a moment who he was. There were plenty of Beasts and Dryads and Dwarfs and Fauns who remembered him from the days before his enchanting. There were some old ones who could just remember how his father, King Caspian, had looked when he was a young man, and saw the likeness. But I think they would have known him anyway. Pale though he was from long imprisonment in the Deep Lands, dressed in black, dusty, dishevelled, and weary, there was something in his face and air which no one could mistake. That look is in the face of all true kings of Narnia, who rule by the will of Aslan and sit at Cair Paravel on the throne of Peter the High King. Instantly every head was bared and every knee was bent; a moment later such cheering and shouting, such jumps and reels of joy, such hand-shakings and kissings and embracings of everybody by everybody else broke out that the tears came into Jill's eyes. Their quest had been worth all the pains it cost.

"Please it your Highness," said the oldest of the Dwarfs, "there is some attempt at a supper in the cave yonder, prepared against the ending of the

snow-dance — —”

“With a good will, Father,” said the Prince. “For never had any Prince, Knight, Gentleman, or Bear so good a stomach to his victuals as we four wanderers have to-night.”

The whole crowd began to move away through the trees towards the cave. Jill heard Puddleglum saying to those who pressed round him. “No, no, my story can wait. Nothing worth talking about has happened to me. I want to hear the news. Don’t try breaking it to me gently, for I’d rather have it all at once. Has the King been shipwrecked? Any forest fires? No wars on the Calormen border? Or a few dragons, I shouldn’t wonder?” And all the creatures laughed aloud and said, “Isn’t that just like a Marsh-wiggle?”

The two children were nearly dropping with tiredness and hunger, but the warmth of the cave, and the very sight of it, with the firelight dancing on the walls and dressers and cups and saucers and plates and on the smooth stone floor, just as it does in a farmhouse kitchen, revived them a little. All the same they went fast asleep while supper was being got ready. And while they slept Prince Rilian was talking over the whole adventure with the older and wiser Beasts and Dwarfs. And now they all saw what it meant; how a wicked Witch (doubtless the same kind as that White Witch who had brought the Great Winter on Narnia long ago) had contrived the whole thing, first killing Rilian’s mother and enchanting Rilian himself. And they saw how she had dug right under Narnia and was going to break out and rule it through Rilian: and how he had never dreamed that the country of which she would make him king (king in name, but really her slave) was his own country. And from the children’s part of the story they saw how she was in league and friendship with the dangerous giants of Harfang. “And the lesson of it all is, your Highness,” said the oldest Dwarf, “that those Northern Witches always mean the same thing, but in every age they have a different plan for getting it.”

Chapter XVI

THE HEALING OF HARMS

When Jill woke next morning and found herself in a cave, she thought for one horrid moment that she was back in the Underworld. But when she noticed that she was lying on a bed of heather with a furry mantle over her, and saw a cheery fire crackling (as if newly lit) on a stone hearth and, further off, morning sunlight coming in through the cave's mouth, she remembered all the happy truth. They had had a delightful supper, all crowded into that cave, in spite of being so sleepy before it was properly over. She had a vague impression of Dwarfs crowding round the fire with frying-pans rather bigger than themselves, and the hissing, and delicious smell of sausages, and more, and more, and more sausages. And not wretched sausages half full of bread and soya bean either, but real meaty, spicy ones, fat and piping hot and burst and just the tiniest bit burnt. And great mugs of frothy chocolate, and roast potatoes and roast chestnuts, and baked apples with raisins stuck in where the cores had been, and then ices just to freshen you up after all the hot things.

Jill sat up and looked around. Puddleglum and Eustace were lying not far away, both fast asleep.

"Hi, you two!" shouted Jill in a loud voice. "Aren't you ever going to get up?"

"Shoo, shoo!" said a sleepy voice somewhere above her. "Time to be settling down. Have a good snooze, do, do. Don't make a to-do. Tu-whoo!"

"Why, I do believe," said Jill, glancing up at a white bundle of fluffy feathers which was perched on top of a grandfather clock in one corner of the cave, "I do believe it's Glimfeather!"

"True, true," whirred the Owl, lifting its head out from under its wing and opening one eye. "I came up with a message for the Prince at about two. The squirrels brought us the good news. Message for the Prince. He's gone. You're to follow too. Good-day — —" and the head disappeared again.

As there seemed no further hope of getting any information from the Owl, Jill got up and began looking round for any chance of a wash and

some breakfast. But almost at once a little Faun came trotting into the cave with a sharp click-clack of his goaty hoofs on the stone floor.

“Ah! You’ve woken up at last, Daughter of Eve,” he said. “Perhaps you’d better wake the Son of Adam. You’ve got to be off in a few minutes and two Centaurs have very kindly offered to let you ride on their backs down to Cair Paravel.” He added in a lower voice. “Of course, you realise it is a most special and unheard-of honour to be allowed to ride a Centaur. I don’t know that I ever heard of anyone doing it before. It wouldn’t do to keep them waiting.”

“Where’s the Prince?” was the first question of Eustace and Puddleglum as soon as they had been waked.

“He’s gone down to meet the King, his father, at Cair Paravel,” answered the Faun, whose name was Orruns. “His Majesty’s ship is expected in harbour any moment. It seems that the King met Aslan — I don’t know whether it was in a vision or face to face — before he had sailed far, and Aslan turned him back and told him he would find his long-lost son awaiting him when he reached Narnia.”

Eustace was now up and he and Jill set about helping Orruns to get the breakfast. Puddleglum was told to stay in bed. A Centaur called Cloudbirth, a famous healer, or (as Orruns called it) a “leach”, was coming to see to his burnt foot.

“Ah!” said Puddleglum in a tone almost of contentment, “he’ll want to have the leg off at the knee, I shouldn’t wonder. You see if he doesn’t.” But he was quite glad to stay in bed.

Breakfast was scrambled eggs and toast and Eustace tackled it just as if he had not had a very large supper in the middle of the night.

“I say, Son of Adam,” said the Faun, looking with a certain awe at Eustace’s mouthfuls. “There’s no need to hurry *quite* so dreadfully as that. I don’t think the Centaurs have quite finished *their* breakfasts yet.”

“Then they must have got up very late,” said Eustace. “I bet it’s after ten o’clock.”

“Oh no,” said Orruns. “They got up before it was light.”

“Then they must have waited the dickens of a time for breakfast,” said Eustace.

“No, they didn’t,” said Orruns. “They began eating the minute they woke.”

“Golly!” said Eustace. “Do they eat a very big breakfast?”

“Why, Son of Adam, don’t you understand? A Centaur has a man-stomach and a horse-stomach. And of course both want breakfast. So first of all he has porridge and pavenders and kidneys and bacon and omelette and cold ham and toast and marmalade and coffee and beer. And after that he attends to the horse part of himself by grazing for an hour or so and finishing up with a hot mash, some oats and a bag of sugar. That’s why it’s such a serious thing to ask a Centaur to stay for the week-end. A very serious thing indeed.”

At that moment there was a sound of horse-hoofs tapping on rock from the mouth of the cave, and the children looked up. The two Centaurs, one with a black and one with a golden beard flowing over their magnificent bare chests, stood waiting for them, bending their heads a little so as to look into the cave. Then the children became very polite and finished their breakfast very quickly. No one thinks a Centaur funny when he sees it. They are solemn, majestic people, full of ancient wisdom which they learn from the stars, not easily made either merry or angry; but their anger is terrible as a tidal wave when it comes.

“Good-bye, dear Puddleglum,” said Jill, going over to the Marsh-wiggle’s bed. “I’m sorry we called you a wet blanket.”

“So’m I,” said Eustace. “You’ve been the best friend in the world.”

“And I do hope we’ll meet again,” added Jill.

“Not much chance of that, I should say,” replied Puddleglum. “I don’t reckon I’m very likely to see my old wigwam again either. And that Prince — he’s a nice chap — but do you think he’s very strong? Constitution ruined with living underground, I shouldn’t wonder. Looks the sort that might go off any day.”

“Puddleglum!” said Jill. “You’re a regular old humbug. You sound as doleful as a funeral and I believe you’re perfectly happy. And you talk as if you were afraid of everything, when you’re really as brave as — as a lion.”

“Now, speaking of funerals,” began Puddleglum, but Jill, who heard the Centaurs tapping with their hoofs behind her, surprised him very much by flinging her arms round his thin neck and kissing his muddy-looking face, while Eustace wrung his hand. Then they both rushed away to the Centaurs, and the Marsh-wiggle, sinking back on his bed, remarked to himself, “Well, I wouldn’t have dreamt of her doing that. Even though I am a good-looking chap.”

To ride on a Centaur is, no doubt, a great honour (and except Jill and Eustace there is probably no-one alive in the world to-day who has had it) but it is very uncomfortable. For no-one who valued his life would suggest putting a saddle on a Centaur, and riding bare-back is no fun; especially if, like Eustace, you have never learned to ride at all. The Centaurs were very polite in a grave, gracious, grown-up kind of way, and as they cantered through the Narnian woods they spoke, without turning their heads, telling the children about the properties of herbs and roots, the influences of the planets, the nine names of Aslan with their meanings, and things of that sort. But however sore and jolted the two humans were, they would now give anything to have that journey over again: to see those glades and slopes sparkling with last night's snow, to be met by rabbits and squirrels and birds that wished you good morning, to breathe again the air of Narnia and hear the voices of the Narnian trees.

They came down to the river, flowing bright and blue in winter sunshine, far below the last bridge (which is at the snug, red-roofed little town of Beruna) and were ferried across in a flat barge by the ferryman; or rather, by the ferry-wiggle, for it is Marsh-wiggles who do most of the watery and fishy kinds of work in Narnia. And when they had crossed they rode along the south bank of the river and presently came to Cair Paravel itself. And at the very moment of their arrival they saw that same bright ship which they had seen when they first set foot in Narnia, gliding up the river like a huge bird. All the court were once more assembled on the green between the castle and the quay to welcome King Caspian home again. Rilian, who had changed his black clothes and was now dressed in a scarlet cloak over silver mail, stood close to the water's edge, bare-headed, to receive his father; and the Dwarf Trumpkin sat beside him in his little donkey-chair. The children saw there would be no chance of reaching the Prince through all that crowd, and, anyway, they now felt rather shy. So they asked the Centaurs if they might go on sitting on their backs a little longer and thus see everything over the heads of the courtiers. And the Centaurs said they might.

A flourish of silver trumpets came over the water from the ship's deck: the sailors threw a rope; rats (Talking Rats, of course) and Marsh-wiggles made it fast ashore; and the ship was warped in. Musicians, hidden somewhere in the crowd, began to play solemn, triumphal music. And soon the King's galleon was alongside and the Rats ran the gangway on board her.

Jill expected to see the old King come down it. But there appeared to be some hitch. A Lord with a pale face came ashore and knelt to the Prince and to Trumpkin. The three were talking with their heads close together for a few minutes, but no-one could hear what they said. The music played on, but you could feel that everyone was becoming uneasy. Then four Knights, carrying something and going very slowly, appeared on deck. When they started to come down the gangway you could see what they were carrying: it was the old King on a bed, very pale and still. They set him down. The Prince knelt beside him and embraced him. They could see King Caspian raising his hand to bless his son. And everyone cheered, but it was a half-hearted cheer, for they all felt that something was going wrong. Then suddenly the King's head fell back upon his pillows, the musicians stopped and there was a dead silence. The Prince, kneeling by the King's bed, laid down his head upon it and wept.

There were whisperings and goings to and fro. Then Jill noticed that all who wore hats, bonnets, helmets, or hoods were taking them off — Eustace included. Then she heard a rustling and flapping noise up above the castle; when she looked she saw that the great banner with the golden Lion on it was being brought down to half-mast. And after that, slowly, mercilessly, with wailing strings and disconsolate blowing of horns, the music began again: this time, a tune to break your heart.

They both slipped off their Centaurs (who took no notice of them).

"I wish I was at home," said Jill.

Eustace nodded, saying nothing, and bit his lip.

"I have come," said a deep voice behind them. They turned and saw the Lion himself, so bright and real and strong that everything else began at once to look pale and shadowy compared with him. And in less time than it takes to breathe Jill forgot about the dead King of Narnia and remembered only how she had made Eustace fall over the cliff, and how she had helped to muff nearly all the signs, and about all the snappings and quarrellings. And she wanted to say "I'm sorry" but she could not speak. Then the Lion drew them towards him with his eyes, and bent down and touched their pale faces with his tongue, and said:

"Think of that no more. I will not always be scolding. You have done the work for which I sent you into Narnia."

"Please, Aslan," said Jill, "may we go home now?"

“Yes. I have come to bring you Home,” said Aslan. Then he opened his mouth wide and blew. But this time they had no sense of flying through the air: instead, it seemed that they remained still, and the wild breath of Aslan blew away the ship and the dead King and the castle and the snow and the winter sky. For all these things floated off into the air like wreaths of smoke, and suddenly they were standing in a great brightness of mid-summer sunshine, on smooth turf, among mighty trees, and beside a fair, fresh stream. Then they saw that they were once more on the Mountain of Aslan, high up above and beyond the end of that world in which Narnia lies. But the strange thing was that the funeral music for King Caspian still went on, though no one could tell where it came from. They were walking beside the stream and the Lion went before them: and he became so beautiful, and the music so despairing, that Jill did not know which of them it was that filled her eyes with tears.

Then Aslan stopped, and the children looked into the stream. And there, on the golden gravel of the bed of the stream, lay King Caspian, dead, with the water flowing over him like liquid glass. His long white beard swayed in it like water-weed. And all three stood and wept. Even the Lion wept: great Lion-tears, each tear more precious than the Earth would be if it was a single solid diamond. And Jill noticed that Eustace looked neither like a child crying, nor like a boy crying and wanting to hide it, but like a grown-up crying. At least, that is the nearest she could get to it; but really, as she said, people don’t seem to have any particular ages on that mountain.

“Son of Adam,” said Aslan, “go into that thicket and pluck the thorn that you will find there, and bring it to me.”

Eustace obeyed. The thorn was a foot long and sharp as a rapier.

“Drive it into my paw, son of Adam,” said Aslan, holding up his right fore-paw and spreading out the great pad towards Eustace.

“Must I?” said Eustace.

“Yes,” said Aslan.

Then Eustace set his teeth and drove the thorn into the Lion’s pad. And there came out a great drop of blood, redder than all redness that you have ever seen or imagined. And it splashed into the stream over the dead body of the King. At the same moment the doleful music stopped. And the dead King began to be changed. His white beard turned to grey, and from grey to yellow, and got shorter and vanished altogether; and his sunken cheeks grew round and fresh, and the wrinkles were smoothed, and his eyes

opened, and his eyes and lips both laughed, and suddenly he leaped up and stood before them — a very young man, or a boy. (But Jill couldn't say which, because of people having no particular ages in Aslan's country. Even in this world, of course, it is the stupidest children who are most childish and the stupidest grown-ups who are most grown-up.) And he rushed to Aslan and flung his arms as far as they would go round the huge neck; and he gave Aslan the strong kisses of a King, and Aslan gave him the wild kisses of a Lion.

At last Caspian turned to the others. He gave a great laugh of astonished joy.

"Why! Eustace!" he said. "Eustace! So you did reach the end of the world after all. What about my second-best sword that you broke on the sea-serpent?"

Eustace made a step towards him with both hands held out, but then drew back with a somewhat startled expression.

"Look here! I say," he stammered. "It's all very well. But aren't you? — I mean didn't you —— ?"

"Oh, don't be such an ass," said Caspian.

"But," said Eustace, looking at Aslan. "Hasn't he — er — died?"

"Yes," said the Lion in a very quiet voice, almost (Jill thought) as if he were laughing. "He has died. Most people have, you know. Even I have. There are very few who haven't."

"Oh," said Caspian. "I see what's bothering you. You think I'm a ghost, or some nonsense. But don't you see? I would be that if I appeared in Narnia now: because I don't belong there any more. But one can't be a ghost in one's own country. I might be a ghost if I got into your world. I don't know. But I suppose it isn't yours either, now you're here."

A great hope rose in the children's hearts. But Aslan shook his shaggy head. "No, my dears," he said. "When you meet me here again, you will have come to stay. But not now. You must go back to your own world for a while."

"Sir," said Caspian, "I've always wanted to have just one glimpse of *their* world. Is that wrong?"

"You cannot want wrong things any more, now that you have died, my son," said Aslan. "And you shall see their world — for five minutes of *their* time. It will take no longer for you to set things right there." Then Aslan

explained to Caspian what Jill and Eustace were going back to and all about Experiment House: he seemed to know it quite as well as they did.

"Daughter," said Aslan to Jill, "pluck a switch off that bush." She did; and as soon as it was in her hand it turned into a fine new riding crop.

"Now, sons of Adam, draw your swords," said Aslan. "But use only the flat, for it is cowards and children, not warriors, against whom I send you."

"Are you coming with us, Aslan?" said Jill.

"They shall see only my back," said Aslan.

He led them rapidly through the wood, and before they had gone many paces, the wall of Experiment House appeared before them. Then Aslan roared so that the sun shook in the sky and thirty feet of the wall fell down before them. They looked through the gap, down into the school shrubbery and onto the roof of the gym, all under the same dull autumn sky which they had seen before their adventures began. Aslan turned to Jill and Eustace and breathed upon them and touched their foreheads with his tongue. Then he lay down amid the gap he had made in the wall and turned his golden back to England, and his lordly face towards his own lands. At the same moment Jill saw figures whom she knew only too well running up through the laurels towards them. Most of the gang were there — Adela Pennyfather and Cholmondely Major, Edith Winterblott, "Spotty" Sorner, big Bannister, and the two loathsome Garrett twins. But suddenly they stopped. Their faces changed, and all the meanness, conceit, cruelty, and sneakishness almost disappeared in one single expression of terror. For they saw the wall fallen down, and a lion as large as a young elephant lying in the gap, and three figures in glittering clothes with weapons in their hands rushing down upon them. For, with the strength of Aslan in them, Jill plied her crop on the girls and Caspian and Eustace plied the flats of their swords on the boys so well that in two minutes all the bullies were running like mad, crying out, "Murder! Fascists! Lions! It isn't *fair*." And then the Head (who was, by the way, a woman) came running out to see what was happening. And when she saw the lion and the broken wall and Caspian and Jill and Eustace (whom she quite failed to recognise) she had hysterics and went back to the house and began ringing up the police with stories about a lion escaped from a circus, and escaped convicts who broke down walls and carried drawn swords. In the midst of all this fuss Jill and Eustace slipped quietly indoors and changed out of their bright clothes into ordinary things, and Caspian went back into his own world. And the wall, at Aslan's word,

was made whole again. When the police arrived and found no lion, no broken wall, and no convicts, and the Head behaving like a lunatic, there was an inquiry into the whole thing. And in the inquiry all sorts of things about Experiment House came out, and about ten people got expelled. After that, the Head's friends saw that the Head was no use as a Head, so they got her made an Inspector to interfere with other Heads. And when they found she wasn't much good even at that, they got her into Parliament where she lived happily ever after.

Eustace buried his fine clothes secretly one night in the school grounds, but Jill smuggled hers home and wore them at a fancy-dress ball next holidays. And from that day forth things changed for the better at Experiment House, and it became quite a good school. And Jill and Eustace were always friends.

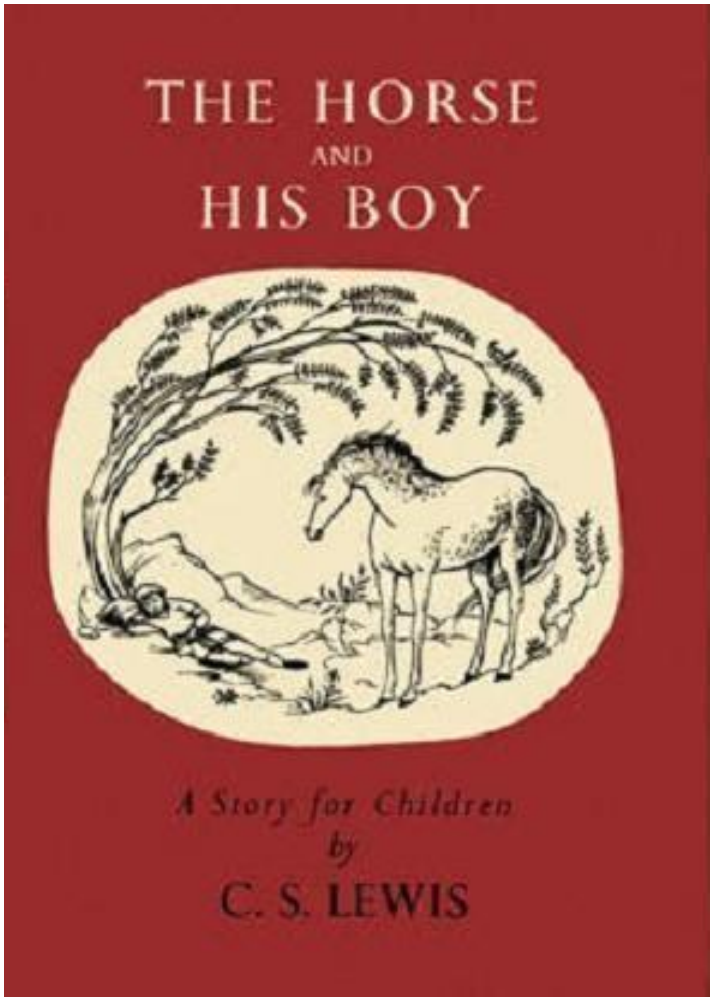
But far off in Narnia, King Rilian buried his father, Caspian the Navigator, Tenth of that name, and mourned for him. He himself ruled Narnia well and the land was happy in his days, though Puddleglum (whose foot was as good as new in three weeks) often pointed out that bright mornings brought on wet afternoons, and that you couldn't expect good times to last. The opening into the hillside was left open, and often in hot summer days the Narnians go in there with ships and lanterns and down to the water and sail to and fro, singing, on the cool, dark underground sea, telling each other stories of the cities that lie fathoms deep below. If ever you have the luck to go to Narnia yourself, do not forget to have a look at those caves.

THE HORSE AND HIS BOY (1954)



The Horse and His Boy was published by Geoffrey Bles in 1954 and is the fifth of seven novels to be released in their order of publication. It is the only book of the Narnia series to feature native Narnia rather than English children as the main characters, and the only volume set entirely in the fantasy world. It is set in the period covered by the last chapter of the inaugural book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, during the reign of the four Pevensie children as Kings and Queens of Narnia. Though the Pevensies appear as minor characters, the main characters are two children and two talking horses, who escape from Calormen north into Narnia. During their travels, they pass through Calormen's capital city, where they learn of Calormen's plan to invade Archenland, Narnia's southern neighbour. When they reach Archenland, they warn the king of the impending invasion.

The adventures in the novel are mentioned twice in *The Silver Chair*, which was released a year before *The Horse and His Boy*. In the latter novel, Lucy and Edmund still retain their memories of their time on Earth, as evidenced by Lucy's retelling of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, although by the end of their time in Narnia, none of the Pevensies remember Earth until crossing back through the wardrobe.



The first edition

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Chapter I

HOW SHASTA SET OUT ON HIS TRAVELS

This is the story of an adventure that happened in Narnia and Calormen and the lands between, in the Golden Age when Peter was High King in Narnia and his brother and his two sisters were King and Queens under him.

In those days, far south in Calormen on a little creek of the sea, there lived a poor fisherman called Arsheesh, and with him there lived a boy who called him Father. The boy's name was Shasta. On most days Arsheesh went out in his boat to fish in the morning, and in the afternoon he harnessed his donkey to a cart and loaded the cart with fish and went a mile or so southward to the village to sell it. If it had sold well he would come home in a moderately good temper and say nothing to Shasta, but if it had sold badly he would find fault with him and perhaps beat him. There was always something to find fault with for Shasta had plenty of work to do, mending and washing the nets, cooking the supper, and cleaning the cottage in which they both lived.

Shasta was not at all interested in anything that lay south of his home because he had once or twice been to the village with Arsheesh and he knew that there was nothing very interesting there. In the village he only met other men who were just like his father — men with long, dirty robes, and wooden shoes turned up at the toe, and turbans on their heads, and beards, talking to one another very slowly about things that sounded dull. But he was very interested in everything that lay to the north because no-one ever went that way and he was never allowed to go there himself. When he was sitting out of doors mending the nets, and all alone, he would often look eagerly to the north. One could see nothing but a grassy slope running up to a level ridge and beyond that the sky with perhaps a few birds in it.

Sometimes if Arsheesh was there Shasta would say, "O my Father, what is there beyond that hill?" And then if the fisherman was in a bad temper he would box Shasta's ears and tell him to attend to his work. Or if he was in a peaceable mood he would say, "O my son, do not allow your mind to be distracted by idle questions. For one of the poets has said, 'Application to business is the root of prosperity, but those who ask questions that do not concern them are steering the ship of folly towards the rock of indigence.'"

Shasta thought that beyond the hill there must be some delightful secret which his father wished to hide from him. In reality, however, the fisherman talked like this because he didn't know what lay to the north. Neither did he care. He had a very practical mind.

One day there came from the south a stranger who was unlike any man that Shasta had seen before. He rode upon a strong dappled horse with flowing mane and tail and his stirrups and bridle were inlaid with silver. The spike of a helmet projected from the middle of his silken turban and he wore a shirt of chain mail. By his side hung a curving scimitar, a round shield studded with bosses of brass hung at his back, and his right hand grasped a lance. His face was dark, but this did not surprise Shasta because all the people of Calormen are like that; what did surprise him was the man's beard which was dyed crimson, and curled and gleaming with scented oil. But Arsheesh knew by the gold ring on the stranger's bare arm that he was a Tarkaan or great lord, and he bowed kneeling before him till his beard touched the earth and made signs to Shasta to kneel also.

The stranger demanded hospitality for the night which of course the fisherman dared not refuse. All the best they had was set before the Tarkaan for supper (and he didn't think much of it) and Shasta, as always happened when the fisherman had company, was given a hunk of bread and turned out of the cottage. On these occasions he usually slept with the donkey in its little thatched stable. But it was much too early to go to sleep yet, and Shasta, who had never learned that it is wrong to listen behind doors, sat down with his ear to a crack in the wooden wall of the cottage to hear what the grown-ups were talking about. And this is what he heard.

"And now, O my host," said the Tarkaan, "I have a mind to buy that boy of yours."

"O my master," replied the fisherman (and Shasta knew by the wheedling tone the greedy look that was probably coming into his face as he said it), "what price could induce your servant, poor though he is, to sell into slavery his only child and his own flesh? Has not one of the poets said, 'Natural affection is stronger than soup and offspring more precious than carbuncles?'"

"It is even so," replied the guest drily. "But another poet has likewise said, 'He who attempts to deceive the judicious is already baring his own back for the scourge.' Do not load your aged mouth with falsehoods. This boy is manifestly no son of yours, for your cheek is as dark as mine but the

boy is fair and white like the accursed but beautiful barbarians who inhabit the remote north."

"How well it was said," answered the fisherman, "that Swords can be kept off with shields but the Eye of Wisdom pierces through every defence! Know then, O my formidable guest, that because of my extreme poverty I have never married and have no child. But in that same year in which the Tisroc (may he live for ever) began his august and beneficent reign, on a night when the moon was at her full, it pleased the gods to deprive me of my sleep. Therefore I arose from my bed in this hovel and went forth to the beach to refresh myself with looking upon the water and the moon and breathing the cool air. And presently I heard a noise as of oars coming to me across the water and then, as it were, a weak cry. And shortly after, the tide brought to the land a little boat in which there was nothing but a man lean with extreme hunger and thirst who seemed to have died but a few moments before (for he was still warm), and an empty water skin, and a child, still living. 'Doubtless,' said I, 'these unfortunates have escaped from the wreck of a great ship, but by the admirable designs of the gods, the elder has starved himself to keep the child alive and has perished in sight of land.' Accordingly, remembering how the gods never fail to reward those who befriend the destitute, and being moved by compassion (for your servant is a man of tender heart) — —"

"Leave out all these idle words in your own praise," interrupted the Tarkaan. "It is enough to know that you took the child — and have had ten times the worth of his daily bread out of him in labour, as anyone can see. And now tell me at once what price you put on him, for I am wearied with your loquacity."

"You yourself have wisely said," answered Arsheesh, "that the boy's labour has been to me of inestimable value. This must be taken into account in fixing the price. For if I sell the boy I must undoubtedly either buy or hire another to do his work."

"I'll give you fifteen crescents for him," said the Tarkaan.

"Fifteen!" cried Arsheesh in a voice that was something between a whine and a scream. "Fifteen! For the prop of my old age and the delight of my eyes! Do not mock my grey beard, Tarkaan though you be. My price is seventy."

At this point Shasta got up and tiptoed away. He had heard all he wanted, for he had often listened when men were bargaining in the village and knew

how it was done. He was quite certain that Arsheesh would sell him in the end for something much more than fifteen crescents and much less than seventy, but that he and the Tarkaan would take hours in getting to an agreement.

You must not imagine that Shasta felt at all as you and I would feel if we had just overheard our parents talking about selling us for slaves. For one thing, his life was already little better than slavery; for all he knew, the lordly stranger on the great horse might be kinder to him than Arsheesh. For another, the story about his own discovery in the boat had filled him with excitement and with a sense of relief. He had often been uneasy because, try as he might, he had never been able to love the fisherman, and he knew that a boy ought to love his father. And now, apparently, he was no relation to Arsheesh at all. That took a great weight off his mind. "Why, I might be anyone!" he thought. "I might be the son of a Tarkaan myself — or the son of the Tisroc (may he live for ever) — or of a god!"

He was standing out in the grassy place before the cottage while he thought these things. Twilight was coming on apace and a star or two was already out, but the remains of the sunset could still be seen in the west. Not far away the stranger's horse, loosely tied to an iron ring in the wall of the donkey's stable, was grazing. Shasta strolled over to it and patted its neck. It went on tearing up the grass and took no notice of him.

Then another thought came into Shasta's mind. "I wonder what sort of a man that Tarkaan is," he said out loud. "It would be splendid if he was kind. Some of the slaves in a great lord's house have next to nothing to do. They wear lovely clothes and eat meat every day. Perhaps he'd take me to the wars and I'd save his life in a battle and then he'd set me free and adopt me as his son and give me a palace and a chariot and a suit of armour. But then he might be a horrid, cruel man. He might send me to work on the fields in chains. I wish I knew. How can I know? I bet this horse knows, if only he could tell me."

The horse had lifted its head. Shasta stroked its smooth-as-satin nose and said, "I wish you could talk, old fellow."

And then for a second he thought he was dreaming, for quite distinctly, though in a low voice, the Horse said, "But I can."

Shasta stared into its great eyes and his own grew almost as big, with astonishment.

"How ever did *you* learn to talk?" he asked.

“Hush! Not so loud,” replied the Horse. “Where I come from, nearly all the animals talk.”

“Where ever is that?” asked Shasta.

“Narnia,” answered the Horse. “The happy land of Narnia — Narnia of the heathery mountains and the thymy downs, Narnia of the many rivers, the plashing glens, the mossy caverns and the deep forests ringing with the hammers of the Dwarfs. Oh the sweet air of Narnia! An hour’s life there is better than a thousand years in Calormen.” It ended with a whinny that sounded very like a sigh.

“How did you get here?” said Shasta.

“Kidnapped,” said the Horse. “Or stolen, or captured — whichever you like to call it. I was only a foal at the time. My mother warned me not to range the southern slopes, into Archenland and beyond, but I wouldn’t heed her. And by the Lion’s Mane I have paid for my folly. All these years I have been a slave to humans, hiding my true nature and pretending to be dumb and witless like *their* horses.”

“Why didn’t you tell them who you were?”

“Not such a fool, that’s why. If they’d once found out I could talk they would have made a show of me at fairs and guarded me more carefully than ever. My last chance of escape would have been gone.”

“And why — —” began Shasta, but the Horse interrupted him.

“Now look,” it said, “we mustn’t waste time on idle questions. You want to know about my master the Tarkaan Anradin. Well, he’s bad. Not too bad to me, for a war horse costs too much to be treated very badly. But you’d better be lying dead to-night than go to be a human slave in his house to-morrow.”

“Then I’d better run away,” said Shasta, turning very pale.

“Yes, you had,” said the Horse. “But why not run away with me?”

“Are you going to run away too?” said Shasta.

“Yes, if you’ll come with me,” answered the Horse. “This is the chance for both of us. You see if I run away without a rider, everyone who sees me will say ‘Stray horse’ and be after me as quick as he can. With a rider I’ve a chance to get through. That’s where you can help me. On the other hand, you can’t get very far on those two silly legs of yours (what absurd legs humans have!) without being overtaken. But on me you can outdistance any other horse in this country. That’s where I can help you. By the way, I suppose you know how to ride?”

“Oh yes, of course,” said Shasta. “At least, I’ve ridden the donkey.”

“Ridden the *what*?” retorted the Horse with extreme contempt. (At least, that is what he meant. Actually it came out in a sort of neigh— “Ridden the wha-ha-ha-ha-ha.” Talking horses always become more horsey in accent when they are angry.)

“In other words,” it continued, “you *can’t* ride. That’s a drawback. I’ll have to teach you as we go along. If you can’t ride, can you fall?”

“I suppose anyone can fall,” said Shasta.

“I mean can you fall and get up again without crying and mount again and fall again and yet not be afraid of falling?”

“I — I’ll try,” said Shasta.

“Poor little beast,” said the Horse in a gentler tone. “I forget you’re only a foal. We’ll make a fine rider of you in time. And now — we mustn’t start until those two in the hut are asleep. Meantime we can make our plans. My Tarkaan is on his way north to the great city, to Tashbaan itself and the court of the Tisroc — —”

“I say,” put in Shasta in rather a shocked voice, “oughtn’t you to say May he live for ever?”

“Why?” asked the Horse. “I’m a free Narnian. And why should I talk slaves’ and fools’ talk? I don’t want him to live for ever, and I know that he’s not going to live for ever whether I want him to or not. And I can see you’re from the free north too. No more of this southern jargon between you and me! And now, back to our plans. As I said, my human was on his way north to Tashbaan.”

“Does that mean we’d better go to the south?”

“I think not,” said the Horse. “You see, he thinks I’m dumb and witless like his other horses. Now if I really were, the moment I got loose I’d go back home to my stable and paddock; back to his palace which is two days’ journey south. That’s where he’ll look for me. He’d never dream of my going on north on my own. And anyway he will probably think that someone in the last village who saw him ride through has followed us to here and stolen me.”

“Oh hurrah!” said Shasta. “Then we’ll go north. I’ve been longing to go to the north all my life.”

“Of course you have,” said the Horse. “That’s because of the blood that’s in you. I’m sure you’re true northern stock. But not too loud. I should think they’d be asleep soon now.”

“I’d better creep back and see,” suggested Shasta.

“That’s a good idea,” said the Horse. “But take care you’re not caught.”

It was a good deal darker now and very silent except for the sound of the waves on the beach, which Shasta hardly noticed because he had been hearing it day and night as long as he could remember. The cottage, as he approached it, showed no light. When he listened at the front there was no noise. When he went round to the only window, he could hear, after a second or two, the familiar noise of the old fisherman’s squeaky snore. It was funny to think that if all went well he would never hear it again. Holding his breath and feeling a little bit sorry, but much less sorry than he was glad, Shasta glided away over the grass and went to the donkey’s stable, groped along to a place he knew where the key was hidden, opened the door and found the Horse’s saddle and bridle which had been locked up there for the night. He bent forward and kissed the donkey’s nose. “I’m sorry we can’t take *you*,” he said.

“There you are at last,” said the Horse when he got back to it. “I was beginning to wonder what had become of you.”

“I was getting your things out of the stable,” replied Shasta. “And now, can you tell me how to put them on?”

For the next few minutes Shasta was at work, very cautiously to avoid jingling, while the Horse said things like, “Get that girth a bit tighter,” or “You’ll find a buckle lower down,” or “You’ll need to shorten those stirrups a good bit.” When all was finished it said:

“Now; we’ve got to have reins for the look of the thing, but you won’t be using them. Tie them to the saddle-bow: very slack so that I can do what I like with my head. And remember — you are not to touch them.”

“What are they for, then?” asked Shasta.

“Ordinarily they are for directing me,” replied the Horse. “But as I intend to do all the directing on this journey, you’ll please keep your hands to yourself. And there’s another thing. I’m not going to have you grabbing my mane.”

“But, I say,” pleaded Shasta. “If I’m not to hold on by the reins or by your mane, what am I to hold on by?”

“You hold on with your knees,” said the Horse. “That’s the secret of good riding. Grip my body between your knees as hard as you like; sit straight up, straight as a poker; keep your elbows in. And by the way, what did you do with the spurs?”

“Put them on my heels, of course,” said Shasta. “I do know that much.”

“Then you can take them off and put them in the saddle-bag. We may be able to sell them when we get to Tashbaan. Ready? And now I think you can get up.”

“Ooh! You’re a dreadful height,” gasped Shasta after his first, and unsuccessful attempt.

“I’m a horse, that’s all,” was the reply. “Anyone would think I was a haystack from the way you’re trying to climb up me! There, that’s better. Now sit *up* and remember what I told you about your knees. Funny to think of me who has led cavalry charges and won races having a potato-sack like you in the saddle! However, off we go.” It chuckled, not unkindly.

And it certainly began their night journey with great caution. First of all it went just south of the fisherman’s cottage to the little river which there ran into the sea, and took care to leave in the mud some very plain hoof-marks pointing south. But as soon as they were in the middle of the ford it turned upstream and waded till they were about a hundred yards further inland than the cottage. Then it selected a nice gravelly bit of bank which would take no footprints and came out on the northern side. Then, still at a walking pace, it went northward till the cottage, the one tree, the donkey’s stable, and the creek — everything, in fact, that Shasta had ever known — had sunk out of sight in the grey summer-night darkness. They had been going uphill and now were at the top of the ridge — that ridge which had always been the boundary of Shasta’s known world. He could not see what was ahead except that it was all open and grassy. It looked endless; wild and lonely and free.

“I say!” observed the Horse. “What a place for a gallop, eh?”

“Oh don’t let’s,” said Shasta. “Not yet. I don’t know how to — please, Horse. I don’t know your name.”

“Breehy-hinny-brinny-hoohy-hah,” said the Horse.

“I’ll never be able to say that,” said Shasta. “Can I call you Bree?”

“Well, if it’s the best you can do, I suppose you must,” said the Horse. “And what shall I call you?”

“I’m called Shasta.”

“H’m,” said Bree. “Well now, there’s a name that’s *really* hard to pronounce. But now about this gallop. It’s a good deal easier than trotting if you only knew, because you don’t have to rise and fall. Grip with your knees and keep your eyes straight ahead between my ears. Don’t look at the

ground. If you think you're going to fall just grip harder and sit up straighter. Ready? Now: for Narnia and the North."

Chapter II

A WAYSIDE ADVENTURE

It was nearly noon on the following day when Shasta was wakened by something warm and soft moving over his face. He opened his eyes and found himself staring into the long face of a horse; its nose and lips were almost touching his. He remembered the exciting events of the previous night and sat up. But as he did so he groaned.

"Ow, Bree," he gasped. "I'm so sore. All over. I can hardly move."

"Good morning, small one," said Bree. "I was afraid you might feel a bit stiff. It can't be the falls. You didn't have more than a dozen or so, and it was all lovely, soft springy turf that must have been almost a pleasure to fall on. And the only one that might have been nasty was broken by that gorse bush. No: it's the riding itself that comes hard at first. What about breakfast? I've had mine."

"Oh bother breakfast. Bother everything," said Shasta. "I tell you I can't move." But the horse nuzzled at him with its nose and pawed him gently with a hoof till he had to get up. And then he looked about him and saw where they were. Behind them lay a little copse. Before them the turf, dotted with white flowers sloped down to the brow of a cliff. Far below them, so that the sound of the breaking waves was very faint, lay the sea. Shasta had never seen it from such a height and never seen so much of it before, nor dreamed how many colours it had. On either hand the coast stretched away, headland after headland, and at the points you could see the white foam running up the rocks but making no noise because it was so far off. There were gulls flying overhead and the heat shivered on the ground; it was a blazing day. But what Shasta chiefly noticed was the air. He couldn't think what was missing, until at last he realised that there was no smell of fish in it. For of course, neither in the cottage nor among the nets, had he ever been away from that smell in his life. And this new air was so delicious, and all his old life seemed so far away, that he forgot for a moment about his bruises and his aching muscles and said:

"I say, Bree, didn't you say something about breakfast?"

"Yes, I did," answered Bree. "I think you'll find something in the saddle-bags. They're over there on that tree where you hung them up last night —

or early this morning, rather."

They investigated the saddle-bags and the results were cheering — a meat pasty, only slightly stale, a lump of dried figs and another lump of green cheese, a little flask of wine, and some money; about forty crescents in all, which was more than Shasta had ever seen.

While Shasta sat down — painfully and cautiously — with his back against a tree and started on the pasty, Bree had a few more mouthfuls of grass to keep him company.

"Won't it be stealing to use the money?" asked Shasta.

"Oh," said the Horse, looking up with its mouth full of grass, "I never thought of that. A free horse and a talking horse mustn't steal, of course. But I think it's all right. We're prisoners and captives in enemy country. That money is booty, spoil. Besides, how are we to get any food for you without it? I suppose, like all humans, you won't eat natural food like grass and oats."

"I can't."

"Ever tried?"

"Yes, I have. I can't get it down at all. You couldn't either if you were me."

"You're rum little creatures, you humans," remarked Bree.

When Shasta had finished his breakfast (which was by far the nicest he had ever eaten) Bree said, "I think I'll have a nice roll before we put on that saddle again." And he proceeded to do so. "That's good. That's very good," he said, rubbing his back on the turf and waving all four legs in the air. "You ought to have one too, Shasta," he snorted. "It's most refreshing."

But Shasta burst out laughing and said, "You do look funny when you're on your back!"

"I look nothing of the sort," said Bree. But then suddenly he rolled round on his side, raised his head and looked hard at Shasta, blowing a little.

"Does it really look funny?" he asked in an anxious voice.

"Yes, it does," replied Shasta. "But what does it matter?"

"You don't think, do you," said Bree, "that it might be a thing *talking* horses never do? — a silly, clownish trick I've learned from the dumb ones? It would be dreadful to find, when I get back to Narnia, that I've picked up a lot of low, bad habits. What do you think, Shasta? Honestly, now. Don't spare my feelings. Should you think the real, free horses — the talking kind — do roll?"

“How should I know? Anyway I don’t think I should bother about it if I were you. We’ve got to get there first. Do you know the way?”

“I know my way to Tashbaan. After that comes the desert. Oh, we’ll manage the desert somehow, never fear. Why, we’ll be in sight of the Northern mountains then. Think of it! To Narnia and the North! Nothing will stop us then. But I’d be glad to be past Tashbaan. You and I are safer away from cities.”

“Can’t we avoid it?”

“Not without going a long way inland, and that would take us into cultivated land and main roads; and I wouldn’t know the way. No, we’ll just have to creep along the coast. Up here on the downs we’ll meet nothing but sheep and rabbits and gulls and a few shepherds. And by the way, what about starting?”

Shasta’s legs ached terribly as he saddled Bree and climbed into the saddle, but the Horse was kindly to him and went at a soft pace all afternoon. When evening twilight came they dropped by steep tracks into a valley and found a village. Before they got into it Shasta dismounted and entered it on foot to buy a loaf and some onions and radishes. The Horse trotted round by the fields in the dusk and met Shasta at the far side. This became their regular plan every second night.

These were great days for Shasta, and every day better than the last as his muscles hardened and he fell less often. Even at the end of his training Bree still said he sat like a bag of flour in the saddle. “And even if it was safe, young ‘un, I’d be ashamed to be seen with you on the main road.” But in spite of his rude words Bree was a patient teacher. No one can teach riding so well as a horse. Shasta learned to trot, to canter, to jump, and to keep his seat even when Bree pulled up suddenly or swung unexpectedly to the left or the right — which, as Bree told him, was a thing you might have to do at any moment in a battle. And then of course Shasta begged to be told of the battles and wars in which Bree had carried the Tarkaan. And Bree would tell of forced marches and the fording of swift rivers, of charges and of fierce fights between cavalry and cavalry, when the war horses fought as well as the men, being all fierce stallions, trained to bite and kick, and to rear at the right moment so that the horse’s weight as well as the rider’s would come down on an enemy’s crest in the stroke of sword or battleaxe. But Bree did not want to talk about the wars as often as Shasta wanted to hear about them. “Don’t speak of them, youngster,” he would say.

“They were only the Tisroc’s wars and I fought in them as a slave and a dumb beast. Give me the Narnian wars where I shall fight as a free Horse among my own people! Those will be wars worth talking about. Narnia and the North! Bra-ha-ha! Broo Hoo!”

Shasta soon learned, when he heard Bree talking like that, to prepare for a gallop.

After they had travelled on for weeks and weeks past more bays and headlands and rivers and villages than Shasta could remember, there came a moonlit night when they started their journey at evening, having slept during the day. They had left the downs behind them and were crossing a wide plain with a forest about half a mile away on their left. The sea, hidden by low sand-hills, was about the same distance on their right. They had jogged along for about an hour, sometimes trotting and sometimes walking, when Bree suddenly stopped.

“What’s up?” said Shasta.

“S-s-ssh!” said Bree, craning his neck round and twitching his ears. “Did you hear something? Listen.”

“It sounds like another horse — between us and the wood,” said Shasta after he had listened for about a minute.

“It *is* another horse,” said Bree. “And that’s what I don’t like.”

“Isn’t it probably just a farmer riding home late?” said Shasta with a yawn.

“Don’t tell me!” said Bree. “*That’s* not a farmer’s riding. Nor a farmer’s horse either. Can’t you tell by the sound? That’s quality, that horse is. And it’s being ridden by a real horseman. I tell you what it is, Shasta. There’s a Tarkaan under the edge of that wood. Not on his war horse — it’s too light for that. On a fine blood mare, I should say.”

“Well it’s stopped now, whatever it is,” said Shasta.

“You’re right,” said Bree. “And why should he stop just when we do? Shasta, my boy, I do believe there’s someone shadowing us at last.”

“What shall we do?” said Shasta in a lower whisper than before. “Do you think he can see us as well as hear us?”

“Not in this light so long as we stay quite still,” answered Bree. “But look! There’s a cloud coming up. I’ll wait till that gets over the moon. Then we’ll get off to our right as quietly as we can, down to the shore. We can hide among the sandhills if the worst comes to the worst.”

They waited till the cloud covered the moon and then, first at a walking pace and afterwards at a gentle trot, made for the shore.

The cloud was bigger and thicker than it had looked at first and soon the night grew very dark. Just as Shasta was saying to himself "We must be nearly at those sandhills by now" his heart leaped into his mouth because an appalling noise had suddenly risen up out of the darkness ahead; a long snarling roar, melancholy and utterly savage. Instantly Bree swerved round and began galloping inland again as fast as he could gallop.

"What is it?" gasped Shasta.

"Lions!" said Bree, without checking his pace or turning his head.

After that there was nothing but sheer galloping for some time. At last they splashed across a wide, shallow stream and Bree came to a stop on the far side. Shasta noticed that he was trembling and sweating all over.

"That water may have thrown the brute off our scent," panted Bree when he had partly got his breath again. "We can walk for a bit now."

As they walked Bree said, "Shasta, I'm ashamed of myself. I'm just as frightened as a common, dumb Calormene horse. I am really. I don't feel like a Talking Horse at all. I don't mind swords and lances and arrows but I can't bear — those creatures. I think I'll trot for a bit."

About a minute later, however, he broke into a gallop again, and no wonder. For the roar broke out again, this time on their left from the direction of the forest.

"Two of them," moaned Bree.

When they had galloped for several minutes without any further noise from the lions Shasta said, "I say! That other horse is galloping beside us now. Only a stone's throw away."

"All the b-better," panted Bree. "Tarkaan on it — will have a sword — protect us all."

"But Bree!" said Shasta. "We might just as well be killed by lions as caught. Or *I* might. They'll hang me for horse-stealing." He was feeling less frightened of lions than Bree because he had never met a lion; Bree had.

Bree only snorted in answer but he did sheer away to his right. Oddly enough the other horse seemed also to be sheering away to the left, so that in a few seconds the space between them had widened a good deal. But as soon as it did so there came two more lions' roars, immediately after one another, one on the right and the other on the left, and the horses began drawing nearer together. So, apparently, did the lions. The roaring of the

brutes on each side was horribly close and they seemed to be keeping up with the galloping horses quite easily. Then the cloud rolled away. The moonlight, astonishingly bright, showed up everything almost as if it were broad day. The two horses and the two riders were galloping neck to neck and knee to knee just as if they were in a race. Indeed Bree said (afterwards) that a finer race had never been seen in Calormen.

Shasta now gave himself up for lost and began to wonder whether lions killed you quickly or played with you as a cat plays with a mouse and how much it would hurt. At the same time (one sometimes does this at the most frightful moments) he noticed everything. He saw that the other rider was a very small, slender person, mail-clad (the moon shone on the mail) and riding magnificently. He had no beard.

Something flat and shining was spread out before them. Before Shasta had time even to guess what it was there was a great splash and he found his mouth half full of salt water. The shining thing had been a long inlet of the sea. Both horses were swimming and the water was up to Shasta's knees. There was an angry roaring behind them and looking back Shasta saw a great, shaggy, and terrible shape crouched on the water's edge; but only one. "We must have shaken off the other lion," he thought.

The lion apparently did not think its prey worth a wetting; at any rate it made no attempt to take the water in pursuit. The two horses, side by side, were now well out into the middle of the creek and the opposite shore could be clearly seen. The Tarkaan had not yet spoken a word. "But he will," thought Shasta. "As soon as we have landed. What am I to say? I must begin thinking out a story."

Then, suddenly, two voices spoke at his side.

"Oh, I *am* so tired," said the one.

"Hold your tongue, Hwin, and don't be a fool," said the other.

"I'm dreaming," thought Shasta. "I could have sworn that other horse spoke."

Soon the horses were no longer swimming but walking and soon with a great sound of water running off their sides and tails and with a great crunching of pebbles under eight hoofs, they came out on the further beach of the inlet. The Tarkaan, to Shasta's surprise, showed no wish to ask questions. He did not even look at Shasta but seemed anxious to urge his horse straight on. Bree, however, at once shouldered himself in the other horse's way.

“Broo-hoo-hah!” he snorted. “Steady there! I *heard* you, I did. There’s no good pretending, Ma’am. *I* heard you. You’re a Talking Horse, a Narnian horse just like me.”

“What’s it got to do with you if she is?” said the strange rider fiercely, laying hand on sword-hilt. But the voice in which the words were spoken had already told Shasta something.

“Why, it’s only a girl!” he exclaimed.

“And what business is it of yours if I am *only* a girl?” snapped the stranger. “You’re only a boy: a rude, common little boy — a slave probably, who’s stolen his master’s horse.”

“That’s all *you* know,” said Shasta.

“He’s not a thief, little Tarkheena,” said Bree. “At least, if there’s been any stealing, you might just as well say I stole *him*. And as for its not being my business, you wouldn’t expect me to pass a lady of my own race in this strange country without speaking to her? It’s only natural I should.”

“I think it’s very natural too,” said the mare.

“I wish you’d held your tongue, Hwin,” said the girl. “Look at the trouble you’ve got us into.”

“I don’t know about trouble,” said Shasta. “You can clear off as soon as you like. We shan’t keep you.”

“No, you shan’t,” said the girl.

“What quarrelsome creatures these humans are,” said Bree to the mare. “They’re as bad as mules. Let’s try to talk a little sense. I take it, Ma’am, your story is the same as mine? Captured in early youth — years of slavery among the Calormenes?”

“Too true, sir,” said the mare with a melancholy whinny.

“And now, perhaps — escape?”

“Tell him to mind his own business, Hwin,” said the girl.

“No, I won’t, Aravis,” said the mare, putting her ears back. “This is my escape just as much as yours. And I’m sure a noble war-horse like this is not going to betray us. We are trying to escape, to get to Narnia.”

“And so, of course, are we,” said Bree. “Of course you guessed that at once. A little boy in rags riding (or trying to ride) a war horse at dead of night couldn’t mean anything but an escape of some sort. And, if I may say so, a high-born Tarkheena riding alone at night — dressed up in her brother’s armour — and very anxious for everyone to mind their own business and ask her no questions — well, if that’s not fishy, call me a cob!”

“All right then,” said Aravis. “You’ve guessed it. Hwin and I are running away. We are trying to get to Narnia. And now, what about it?”

“Why, in that case, what is to prevent us all going together?” said Bree. “I trust, Madam Hwin, you will accept such assistance and protection as I may be able to give you on the journey?”

“Why do you keep on talking to my horse instead of to me?” asked the girl.

“Excuse me, Tarkheena,” said Bree (with just the slightest backward tilt of his ears), “but that’s Calormene talk. We’re free Narnians, Hwin and I, and I suppose, if you’re running away to Narnia, you want to be one too. In that case Hwin isn’t *your* horse any longer. One might just as well say you’re *her* human.”

The girl opened her mouth to speak and then stopped. Obviously she had not quite seen it in that light before.

“Still,” she said after a moment’s pause, “I don’t know that there’s so much point in all going together. Aren’t we more likely to be noticed?”

“Less,” said Bree; and the mare said, “Oh do let’s. I should feel much more comfortable. We’re not even certain of the way. I’m sure a great charger like this knows far more than we do.”

“Oh come on, Bree,” said Shasta, “and let them go their own way. Can’t you see they don’t want us?”

“We do,” said Hwin.

“Look here,” said the girl. “I don’t mind going with you, Mr. War-Horse, but what about this boy? How do I know he’s not a spy?”

“Why don’t you say at once that you think I’m not good enough for you?” said Shasta.

“Be quiet, Shasta,” said Bree. “The Tarkheena’s question is quite reasonable. I’ll vouch for the boy, Tarkheena. He’s been true to me and a good friend. And he’s certainly either a Narnian or an Archenlander.”

“All right, then. Let’s go together.” But she didn’t say anything to Shasta and it was obvious that she wanted Bree, not him.

“Splendid!” said Bree. “And now that we’ve got the water between us and those dreadful animals, what about you two humans taking off our saddles and our all having a rest and hearing one another’s stories.”

Both the children unsaddled their horses and the horses had a little grass and Aravis produced rather nice things to eat from her saddlebag. But Shasta sulked and said No thanks, and that he wasn’t hungry. And he tried

to put on what he thought very grand and stiff manners, but as a fisherman's hut is not usually a good place for learning grand manners, the result was dreadful. And he half knew that it wasn't a success and then became sulkier and more awkward than ever. Meanwhile the two horses were getting on splendidly. They remembered the very same places in Narnia— "the grasslands up above Beaversdam" and found that they were some sort of second cousins once removed. This made things more and more uncomfortable for the humans until at last Bree said, "And now, Tarkheena, tell us your story. And don't hurry it — I'm feeling comfortable now."

Aravis immediately began, sitting quite still and using a rather different tone and style from her usual one. For in Calormen, story-telling (whether the stories are true or made up) is a thing you're taught, just as English boys and girls are taught essay-writing. The difference is that people want to hear the stories, whereas I never heard of anyone who wanted to read the essays.

Chapter III

AT THE GATES OF TASHBAAN

“My name,” said the girl at once, “is Aravis Tarkheena and I am the only daughter of Kidrash Tarkaan, the son of Rishti Tarkaan, the son of Kidrash Tarkaan, the son of Ilsombreh Tisroc, the son of Ardeeb Tisroc who was descended in a right line from the god Tash. My father is lord of the province of Calavar and is one who has the right of standing on his feet in his shoes before the face of the Tisroc himself (may he live for ever). My mother (on whom be the peace of the gods) is dead and my father has married another wife. One of my brothers has fallen in battle against the rebels in the far west and the other is a child. Now it came to pass that my father’s wife, my stepmother, hated me and the sun appeared dark in her eyes as long as I lived in my father’s house. And so she persuaded my father to promise me in marriage to Ahoshta Tarkaan. Now this Ahoshta is of base birth, though in these latter years he has won the favour of the Tisroc (may he live for ever) by flattery and evil counsels, and is now made a Tarkaan and lord of many cities and is likely to be chosen as the Grand Vizier when the present Grand Vizier dies. Moreover he is at least sixty years old and has a hump on his back and his face resembles that of an ape. Nevertheless my father, because of the wealth and power of this Ahoshta, and being persuaded by his wife, sent messengers offering me in marriage, and the offer was favourably accepted and Ahoshta sent word that he would marry me this very year at the time of high summer.

“When this news was brought to me the sun appeared dark in my eyes and I laid myself on my bed and wept for a day. But on the second day I rose up and washed my face and caused my mare Hwin to be saddled and took with me a sharp dagger which my brother had carried in the western wars and rode out alone. And when my father’s house was out of sight and I was come to a green open place in a certain wood where there were no dwellings of men, I dismounted from Hwin my mare and took out the dagger. Then I parted my clothes where I thought the readiest way lay to my heart and I prayed to all the gods that as soon as I was dead I might find myself with my brother. After that I shut my eyes and my teeth and prepared to drive the dagger into my heart. But before I had done so, this

mare spoke with the voice of one of the daughters of men and said, ‘O my mistress, do not by any means destroy yourself, for if you live you may yet have good fortune but all the dead are dead alike.’”

“I didn’t say it half so well as that,” muttered the mare.

“Hush, Ma’am, hush,” said Bree, who was thoroughly enjoying the story. “She’s telling it in the grand Calormene manner and no story-teller in a Tisroc’s court could do it better. Pray go on, Tarkheena.”

“When I heard the language of men uttered by my mare,” continued Aravis, “I said to myself, the fear of death has disordered my reason and subjected me to delusions. And I became full of shame for none of my lineage ought to fear death more than the biting of a gnat. Therefore I addressed myself a second time to the stabbing, but Hwin came near to me and put her head in between me and the dagger and discoursed to me most excellent reasons and rebuked me as a mother rebukes her daughter. And now my wonder was so great that I forgot about killing myself and about Ahoshta and said, ‘O my mare, how have you learned to speak like one of the daughters of men?’ And Hwin told me what is known to all this company, that in Narnia there are beasts that talk, and how she herself was stolen from thence when she was a little foal. She told me also of the woods and waters of Narnia and the castles and the great ships, till I said, ‘In the name of Tash and Azaroth and Zardeenah Lady of the Night, I have a great wish to be in that country of Narnia.’ ‘O my mistress,’ answered the mare, ‘if you were in Narnia you would be happy, for in that land no maiden is forced to marry against her will.’

“And when we had talked together for a great time hope returned to me and I rejoiced that I had not killed myself. Moreover it was agreed between Hwin and me that we should steal ourselves away together and we planned it in this fashion. We returned to my father’s house and I put on my gayest clothes and sang and danced before my father and pretended to for delighted with the marriage which he had prepared be me. Also I said to him, ‘O my father and O the delight of my eyes, give me your licence and permission to go with one of my maidens alone for three days into the woods to do secret sacrifices to Zardeenah, Lady of the Night and of Maidens, as is proper and customary for damsels when they must bid farewell to the service of Zardeenah and prepare themselves for marriage.’ And he answered, ‘O my daughter and O the delight of my eyes, so shall it be.’

“But when I came out from the presence of my father I went immediately to the oldest of his slaves, his secretary, who had dandled me on his knees when I was a baby and loved me more than the air and the light. And I swore him to be secret and begged him to write a certain letter for me. And he wept and implored me to change my resolution but in the end he said, ‘To hear is to obey,’ and did all my will. And I sealed the letter and hid it in my bosom.”

“But what was in the letter?” asked Shasta.

“Be quiet, youngster,” said Bree. “You’re spoiling the story. She’ll tell us all about the letter in the right place. Go on, Tarkheena.”

“Then I called the maid who was to go with me to the woods and perform the rites of Zardeenah and told her to wake me very early in the morning. And I became merry with her and gave her wine to drink; but I had mixed such things in her cup that I knew she must sleep for a night and a day. As soon as the household of my father had committed themselves to sleep I arose and put on an armour of my brother’s which I always kept in my chamber in his memory. I put into my girdle all the money I had and certain choice jewels and provided myself also with food, and saddled the mare with my own hands and rode away in the second watch of the night. I directed my course not to the woods where my father supposed that I would go but north and east to Tashbaan.

“Now for three days and more I knew that my father would not seek me, being deceived by the words I had said to him. And on the fourth day we arrived at the city of Azim Balda. Now Azim Balda stands at the meeting of many roads and from it the posts of the Tisroc (may he live for ever) ride on swift horses to every part of the empire: and it is one of the rights and privileges of the greater Tarkaans to send messages by them. I therefore went to the Chief of the Messengers in the House of Imperial Posts in Azim Balda and said, ‘O dispatcher of messages, here is a letter from my uncle Ahoshta Tarkaan to Kidrash Tarkaan lord of Calavar. Take now these five crescents and cause it to be sent to him.’ And the Chief of the Messengers said, ‘To hear is to obey.’

“This letter was feigned to be written by Ahoshta and this was the signification of the writing: ‘Ahoshta Tarkaan to Kidrash Tarkaan, salutation and peace. In the name of Tash the irresistible, the inexorable. Be it known to you that as I made my journey towards your house to perform the contract of marriage between me and your daughter Aravis Tarkheena, it

pleased fortune and the gods that I fell in with her in the forest when she had ended the rites and sacrifices of Zardeenah according to the custom of maidens. And when I learned who she was, being delighted with her beauty and discretion, I became inflamed with love and it appeared to me that the sun would be dark to me if I did not marry her at once. Accordingly I prepared the necessary sacrifices and married your daughter the same hour that I met her and have returned with her to my own house. And we both pray and charge you to come hither as speedily as you may that we may be delighted with your face and speech; and also that you may bring with you the dowry of my wife, which, by reason of my great charges and expenses, I require without delay. And because thou and I are as brothers I assure myself that you will not be angered by the haste of my marriage which is wholly occasioned by the great love I bear your daughter. And I commit you to the care of all the gods.'

"As soon as I had done this I rode on in all haste from Azim Balda, fearing no pursuit and expecting that my father, having received such a letter, would send messages to Ahoshta or go to him himself, and that before the matter was discovered I should be beyond Tashbaan. And that is the pith of my story until this very night when I was chased by lions and met you at the swimming of the salt water."

"And what happened to the girl — the one you drugged?" asked Shasta.

"Doubtless she was beaten for sleeping late," said Aravis coolly. "But she was a tool and spy of my stepmother's. I am very glad they should beat her."

"I say, that was hardly fair," said Shasta.

"I did not do any of these things for the sake of pleasing *you*," said Aravis.

"And there's another thing I don't understand about that story," said Shasta. "You're not grown up, I don't believe you're any older than I am. I don't believe you're as old. How could you be getting married at your age?"

Aravis said nothing, but Bree at once said, "Shasta, don't display your ignorance. They're always married at that age in the great Tarkaan families."

Shasta turned very red (though it was hardly light enough for the others to see this) and felt snubbed. Aravis asked Bree for his story. Bree told it, and Shasta thought that he put in a great deal more than he needed about the

falls and the bad riding. Bree obviously thought it very funny, but Aravis did not laugh. When Bree had finished they all went to sleep.

Next day all four of them, two horses and two humans, continued their journey together. Shasta thought it had been much pleasanter when he and Bree were on their own. For now it was Bree and Aravis who did nearly all the talking. Bree had lived a long time in Calormen and had always been among Tarkaans and Tarkaans' horses, and so of course he knew a great many of the same people and places that Aravis knew. She would always be saying things like "But if you were at the fight of Zulindreh you would have seen my cousin Alimash," and Bree would answer, "Oh, yes, Alimash, he was only captain of the chariots, you know. I don't quite hold with chariots or the kind of horses who draw chariots. That's not real cavalry. But he is a worthy nobleman. He filled my nosebag with sugar after the taking of Teebeth." Or else Bree would say, "I was down at the lake of Mezreel that summer," and Aravis would say, "Oh, Mezreel! I had a friend there, Lasaraleen Tarkheena. What a delightful place it is. Those gardens, and the Valley of the Thousand Perfumes!" Bree was not in the least trying to leave Shasta out of things, though Shasta sometimes nearly thought he was. People who know a lot of the same things can hardly help talking about them, and if you're there you can hardly help feeling that you're out of it.

Hwin the mare was rather shy before a great war-horse like Bree and said very little. And Aravis never spoke to Shasta at all if she could help it.

Soon, however, they had more important things to think of. They were getting near Tashbaan. There were more, and larger, villages, and more people on the roads. They now did nearly all their travelling by night and hid as best they could during the day. And at every halt they argued and argued about what they were to do when they reached Tashbaan. Everyone had been putting off this difficulty, but now it could be put off no longer. During these discussions Aravis became a little, a very little, less unfriendly to Shasta; one usually gets on better with people when one is making plans than when one is talking about nothing in particular.

Bree said the first thing now to do was to fix a place where they would all promise to meet on the far side of Tashbaan even if, by any ill luck, they got separated in passing the city. He said the best place would be the Tombs of the Ancient Kings on the very edge of the desert. "Things like great stone bee-hives," he said, "you can't possibly miss them. And the best of it is that none of the Calormenes will go near them because they think the place is

haunted by ghouls and are afraid of it." Aravis asked if it wasn't really haunted by ghouls. But Bree said he was a free Narnian horse and didn't believe in these Calormene tales. And then Shasta said he wasn't a Calormene either and didn't care a straw about these old stories of ghouls. This wasn't quite true. But it rather impressed Aravis (though at the moment it annoyed her too) and of course she said she didn't mind any number of ghouls either. So it was settled that the Tombs should be their assembly place on the other side of Tashbaan, and everyone felt they were getting on very well till Hwin humbly pointed out that the real problem was not where they should go when they had got through Tashbaan but how they were to get through it.

"We'll settle that to-morrow, Ma'am," said Bree. "Time for a little sleep now."

But it wasn't easy to settle. Aravis's first suggestion was that they should swim across the river below the city during the night and not go into Tashbaan at all. But Bree had two reasons against this. One was that the river-mouth was very wide and it would be far too long a swim for Hwin to do, especially with a rider on her back. (He thought it would be too long for himself too, but he said much less about that.) The other was that it would be full of shipping and of course anyone on the deck of a ship who saw two horses swimming past would be almost certain to be inquisitive.

Shasta thought they should go up the river above Tashbaan and cross it where it was narrower. But Bree explained that there were gardens and pleasure houses on both banks of the river for miles and that there would be Tarkaans and Tarkheenas living in them and riding about the roads and having water parties on the river. In fact it would be the most likely place in the world for meeting someone who would recognise Aravis or even himself.

"We'll have to have a disguise," said Shasta.

Hwin said it looked to her as if the safest thing was to go right through the city itself from gate to gate because one was less likely to be noticed in the crowd. But she approved of the idea of disguise as well. She said, "Both the humans will have to dress in rags and look like peasants or slaves. And all Aravis's armour and our saddles and things must be made into bundles and put on our backs, and the children must pretend to drive us and people will think we're only pack-horses."

“My dear Hwin!” said Aravis rather scornfully. “As if anyone could mistake Bree for anything but a war-horse however you disguised him!”

“I should think not, indeed,” said Bree, snorting and letting his ears go ever so little back.

“I know it’s not a very good plan,” said Hwin. “But I think it’s our only chance. And we haven’t been groomed for ages and we’re not looking quite ourselves (at least, I’m sure I’m not). I do think if we get well plastered with mud and go along with our heads down as if we’re tired and lazy — and don’t lift our hooves hardly at all — we might not be noticed. And our tails ought to be cut shorter: not neatly, you know, but all ragged.”

“My dear Madam,” said Bree. “Have you pictured to yourself how very disagreeable it would be to arrive in Narnia in *that* condition?”

“Well,” said Hwin humbly (she was a very sensible mare), “the main thing is to get there.”

Though nobody much liked it, it was Hwin’s plan which had to be adopted in the end. It was a troublesome one and involved a certain amount of what Shasta called stealing, and Bree called “raiding”. One farm lost a few sacks that evening and another lost a coil of rope the next: but some tattered old boy’s clothes for Aravis to wear had to be fairly bought and paid for in a village. Shasta returned with them in triumph just as evening was closing in. The others were waiting for him among the trees at the foot of a low range of wooded hills which lay right across their path. Everyone was feeling excited because this was the last hill; when they reached the ridge at the top they would be looking down on Tashbaan. “I do wish we were safely past it,” muttered Shasta to Hwin. “Oh I do, I do,” said Hwin fervently.

That night they wound their way through the woods up to the ridge by a wood-cutter’s track. And when they came out of the woods at the top they could see thousands of lights in the valley down below them. Shasta had had no notion of what a great city would be like and it frightened him. They had their supper and the children got some sleep. But the horses woke them very early in the morning.

The stars were still out and the grass was terribly cold and wet, but daybreak was just beginning, far to their right across the sea. Aravis went a few steps away into the wood and came back looking odd in her new, ragged clothes and carrying her real ones in a bundle. These, and her armour and shield and scimitar and the two saddles and the rest of the

horses' fine furnishings were put into the sacks. Bree and Hwin had already got themselves as dirty and bedraggled as they could and it only remained to shorten their tails. As the only tool for doing this was Aravis's scimitar, one of the packs had to be undone again in order to get it out. It was a longish job and rather hurt the horses.

"My word!" said Bree, "if I wasn't a Talking Horse what a lovely kick in the face I could give you! I thought you were going to cut it, not pull it out. That's what it feels like."

But in spite of semi-darkness and cold fingers all was done in the end, the big packs bound on the horses, the rope halters (which they were now wearing instead of bridles and reins) in the children's hands, and the journey began.

"Remember," said Bree. "Keep together if we possibly can. If not, meet at the Tombs of the Ancient Kings, and whoever gets there first must wait for the others."

"And remember," said Shasta. "Don't you two horses forget yourselves and start *talking*, whatever happens."

Chapter IV

SHASTA FALLS IN WITH THE NARNIANS

At first Shasta could see nothing in the valley below him but a sea of mist with a few domes and pinnacles rising from it; but as the light increased and the mist cleared away he saw more and more. A broad river divided itself into two streams and on the island between them stood the city of Tashbaan, one of the wonders of the world. Round the very edge of the island, so that the water lapped against the stone, ran high walls strengthened with so many towers that he soon gave up trying to count them. Inside the walls the island rose in a hill and every bit of that hill, up to the Tisroc's palace and the great temple of Tash at the top, was completely covered with buildings — terrace above terrace, street above street, zigzag roads or huge flights of steps bordered with orange trees and lemon trees, roof-gardens, balconies, deep archways, pillared colonnades, spires, battlements, minarets, pinnacles. And when at last the sun rose out of the sea and the great silver-plated dome of the temple flashed back its light, he was almost dazzled.

"Get on, Shasta," Bree kept saying.

The river banks on each side of the valley were such a mass of gardens that they looked at first like forest, until you got closer and saw the white walls of innumerable houses peeping out from beneath the trees. Soon after that, Shasta noticed a delicious smell of flowers and fruit. About fifteen minutes later they were down among them, plodding on a level road with white walls on each side and trees bending over the walls.

"I say," said Shasta in an awed voice. "This is a wonderful place!"

"I daresay," said Bree. "But I wish we were safely through it and out at the other side. Narnia and the north!"

At that moment a low, throbbing noise began which gradually swelled louder and louder till the whole valley seemed to be swaying with it. It was a musical noise, but so strong and solemn as to be a little frightening.

"That's the horns blowing for the city gates to be open," said Bree. "We shall be there in a minute. Now, Aravis, do droop your shoulders a bit and step heavier and try to look less like a princess. Try to imagine you've been kicked and cuffed and called names all your life."

“If it comes to that,” said Aravis, “what about you drooping your head a bit more and arching your neck a bit less and trying to look less like a war-horse?”

“Hush,” said Bree. “Here we are.”

And they were. They had come to the river’s edge and the road ahead of them ran along a many-arched bridge. The water danced brightly in the early sunlight; away to their right nearer the river’s mouth, they caught a glimpse of ships’ masts. Several other travellers were before them on the bridge, mostly peasants driving laden donkeys and mules or carrying baskets on their heads. The children and the horses joined the crowd.

“Is anything wrong?” whispered Shasta to Aravis, who had an odd look on her face.

“Oh it’s all very well for *you*,” whispered Aravis rather savagely. “What do *you* care about Tashbaan? But I ought to be riding in on a litter with soldiers before me and slaves behind, and perhaps going to a great feast in the Tisroc’s palace (may he live for ever) — not sneaking in like this. It’s different for you.”

Shasta thought all this very silly.

At the far end of the bridge the walls of the city towered high above them and the brazen gates stood open in the gateway which was really wide but looked narrow because it was so very high. Half a dozen soldiers, leaning on their spears, stood on each side. Aravis couldn’t help thinking, “They’d all jump to attention and salute me if they knew whose daughter I am.” But the others were only thinking of how they’d get through and hoping the soldiers would not ask any questions. Fortunately they did not. But one of them picked a carrot out of a peasants’ basket and threw it at Shasta with a rough laugh, saying:

“Hey! Horse-boy! You’ll catch it if your master finds you’ve been using his saddle-horse for pack work.”

This frightened him badly for of course it showed that no one who knew anything about horses would mistake Bree for anything but a charger.

“It’s my master’s orders, so there!” said Shasta. But it would have been better if he had held his tongue for the soldier gave him a box on the side of his face that nearly knocked him down and said, “Take that, you young filth, to teach you how to talk to freemen.” But they all slunk into the city without being stopped. Shasta cried only a very little; he was used to hard knocks.

Inside the gates Tashbaan did not at first seem so splendid as it had looked from a distance. The first street was narrow and there were hardly any windows in the walls on each side. It was much more crowded than Shasta had expected: crowded partly by the peasants (on their way to market) who had come in with them, but also with water-sellers, sweetmeat sellers, porters, soldiers, beggars, ragged children, hens, stray dogs, and bare-footed slaves. What you would chiefly have noticed if you had been there was the smells, which came from unwashed people, unwashed dogs, scent, garlic, onions, and the piles of refuse which lay everywhere.

Shasta was pretending to lead but it was really Bree, who knew the way and kept guiding him by little nudges with his nose. They soon turned to the left and began going up a steep hill. It was much fresher and pleasanter, for the road was bordered by trees and there were houses only on the right side; on the other they looked out over the roofs of houses in the lower town and could see some way up the river. Then they went round a hairpin bend to their right and continued rising. They were zigzagging up to the centre of Tashbaan. Soon they came to finer streets. Great statues of the gods and heroes of Calormen — who are mostly impressive rather than agreeable to look at — rose on shining pedestals. Palm trees and pillared arcades cast shadows over the burning pavements. And through the arched gateways of many a palace Shasta caught sight of green branches, cool fountains, and smooth lawns. It must be nice inside, he thought.

At every turn Shasta hoped they were getting out of the crowd, but they never did. This made their progress very slow, and every now and then they had to stop altogether. This usually happened because a loud voice shouted out “Way, way way, for the Tarkaan”, or “for the Tarkheena”, or “for the fifteenth Vizier”, or “for the Ambassador”, and everyone in the crowd would crush back against the walls; and above their heads Shasta would sometimes see the great lord or lady for whom all the fuss was being made, lolling upon a litter which four or even six gigantic slaves carried on their bare shoulders. For in Tashbaan there is only one traffic regulation, which is that everyone who is less important has to get out of the way for everyone who is more important; unless you want a cut from a whip or a punch from the butt end of a spear.

It was in a splendid street very near the top of the city (the Tisroc’s palace was the only thing above it) that the most disastrous of these stoppages occurred.

“Way! Way! Way!” came the voice. “Way for the White Barbarian King, the guest of the Tisroc (may he live for ever)! Way for the Narnian lords.”

Shasta tried to get out of the way and to make Bree go back. But no horse, not even a talking horse from Narnia, backs easily. And a woman with a very edgy basket in her hands, who was just behind Shasta, pushed the basket hard against his shoulders, and said, “Now then! Who are you shoving!” And then someone else jostled him from the side and in the confusion of the moment he lost hold of Bree. And then the whole crowd behind him became so stiffened and packed tight that he couldn’t move at all. So he found himself, unintentionally, in the first row and had a fine sight of the party that was coming down the street.

It was quite unlike any other party they had seen that day. The crier who went before it shouting “Way, way!” was the only Calormene in it. And there was no litter; everyone was on foot. There were about half a dozen men and Shasta had never seen anyone like them before. For one thing, they were all as fair-skinned as himself, and most of them had fair hair. And they were not dressed like men of Calormen. Most of them had legs bare to the knee. Their tunics were of fine, bright, hardy colours — woodland green, or gay yellow, or fresh blue. Instead of turbans they wore steel or silver caps, some of them set with jewels, and one with little wings on each side of it. A few were bare-headed. The swords at their sides were long and straight, not curved like Calormene scimitars. And instead of being grave and mysterious like most Calormenes, they walked with a swing and let their arms and shoulders go free, and chatted and laughed. One was whistling. You could see that they were ready to be friends with anyone who was friendly and didn’t give a fig for anyone who wasn’t. Shasta thought he had never seen anything so lovely in his life.

But there was no time to enjoy it for at once a really dreadful thing happened. The leader of the fair-headed men suddenly pointed at Shasta, cried out, “There he is! There’s our runaway!” and seized him by the shoulder. Next moment he gave Shasta a smack — not a cruel one to make you cry but a sharp one to let you know you are in disgrace — and added, shaking him:

“Shame on you, my lord! Fie for shame! Queen Susan’s eyes are red with weeping because of you. What! Truant for a whole night! Where have you been?”

Shasta would have darted under Bree's body and tried to make himself scarce in the crowd if he had had the least chance; but the fair-haired men were all round him by now and he was held firm.

Of course his first impulse was to say that he was only poor Arsheesh the fisherman's son and that the foreign lord must have mistaken him for someone else. But then, the very last thing he wanted to do in that crowded place was to start explaining who he was and what he was doing. If he started on that, he would soon be asked where he had got his horse from, and who Aravis was — and then, good-bye to any chance of getting through Tashbaan. His next impulse was to look at Bree for help. But Bree had no intention of letting all that crowd know that he could talk, and stood looking just as stupid as a horse can. As for Aravis, Shasta did not even dare to look at her for fear of drawing attention. And there was no time to think, for the leader of the Narnians said at once:

"Take one of his little lordship's hands, Peridan, of your courtesy and I'll take the other. And now, on. Our royal sister's mind will be greatly eased when she sees our young scapegrace safe in our lodging."

And so, before they were half-way through Tashbaan, all their plans were ruined, and without even a chance to say good-bye to the others Shasta found himself being marched off among strangers and quite unable to guess what might be going to happen next. The Narnian King — for Shasta began to see by the way the rest spoke to him that he must be a king — kept on asking him questions; where he had been, how he had got out, what he had done with his clothes, and didn't he know that he had been very naughty. Only the king called it "naught" instead of naughty.

And Shasta said nothing in answer, because he couldn't think of anything to say that would not be dangerous.

"What! All mum?" asked the king. "I must plainly tell you, prince, that this hangdog silence becomes one of your blood even less than the scape itself. To run away might pass for a boy's frolic with some spirit in it. But the king's son of Archenland should avouch his deed: not hang his head like a Calormene slave."

This was very unpleasant, for Shasta felt all the time that this young king was the very nicest kind of grown-up and would have liked to make a good impression on him.

The strangers led him — held tightly by both hands — along a narrow street and down a flight of shallow stairs and then up another to a wide

doorway in a white wall with two tall, dark cypress trees, one on each side of it. Once through the arch, Shasta found himself in a courtyard which was also a garden. A marble basin of clear water in the centre was kept continually rippling by the fountain that fell into it. Orange trees grew round it out of smooth grass, and the four white walls which surrounded the lawn were covered with climbing roses. The noise and dust and crowding of the streets seemed suddenly far away. He was led rapidly across the garden and then into a dark doorway. The crier remained outside. After that they took him along a corridor, where the stone floor felt beautifully cool to his hot feet, and up some stairs. A moment later he found himself blinking in the light of a big, airy room with wide open windows, all looking north so that no sun came in. There was a carpet on the floor more wonderfully coloured than anything he had ever seen and his feet sank down into it as if he were treading in thick moss. All round the walls there were low sofas with rich cushions on them, and the room seemed to be full of people; very queer people some of them, thought Shasta. But he had no time to think of that before the most beautiful lady he had ever seen rose from her place and threw her arms round him and kissed him, saying:

"Oh Corin, Corin, how could you? And thou and I such close friends ever since thy mother died. And what should I have said to thy royal father if I came home without thee? Would have been a cause almost of war between Archenland and Narnia which are friends time out of mind. It was naught, playmate, very naught of thee to use us so."

"Apparently," thought Shasta to himself, "I'm being mistaken for a prince of Archenland, wherever that is. And these must be the Narnians. I wonder where the real Corin is?" But these thoughts did not help him to say anything out loud.

"Where hast been, Corin?" said the lady, her hands still on Shasta's shoulders.

"I — I don't know," stammered Shasta.

"There it is, Susan," said the King. "I could get no tale out of him, true or false."

"Your Majesties! Queen Susan! King Edmund!" said a voice: and when Shasta turned to look at the speaker he nearly jumped out of his skin with surprise. For this was one of those queer people whom he had noticed out of the corner of his eye when he first came into the room. He was about the same height as Shasta himself. From the waist upwards he was like a man,

but his legs were hairy like a goat's, and shaped like a goat's and he had goat's hooves and a tail. His skin was rather red and he had curly hair and a short pointed beard and two little horns. He was in fact a Faun, which is a creature Shasta had never seen a picture of or even heard of. And if you've read a book called *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* you may like to know that this was the very same Faun, Tumnus by name, whom Queen Susan's sister Lucy had met on the very first day when she found her way into Narnia. But he was a good deal older now for by this time Peter and Susan and Edmund and Lucy had been Kings and Queens of Narnia for several years.

"Your Majesties," he was saying, "His little Highness has had a touch of the sun. Look at him! He is dazed. He does not know where he is."

Then of course everyone stopped scolding Shasta and asking him questions and he was made much of and laid on a sofa and cushions were put under his head and he was given iced sherbet in a golden cup to drink and told to keep very quiet.

Nothing like this had ever happened to Shasta in his life before. He had never even imagined lying on anything so comfortable as that sofa or drinking anything so delicious as that sherbet. He was still wondering what had happened to the others and how on earth he was going to escape and meet them at the Tombs, and what would happen when the real Corin turned up again. But none of these worries seemed so pressing now that he was comfortable. And perhaps, later on, there would be nice things to eat!

Meanwhile the people in that cool, airy room were very interesting. Besides the Faun there were two Dwarfs (a kind of creature he had never seen before) and a very large Raven. The rest were all humans; grown-ups, but young, and all of them, both men and women, had nicer faces and voices than most Calormenes. And soon Shasta found himself taking an interest in the conversation.

"Now, Madam," the King was saying to Queen Susan (the lady who had kissed Shasta). "What think you? We have been in this city fully three weeks. Have you yet settled in your mind whether you will marry this dark-faced lover of yours, this Prince Rabadash, or no?"

The lady shook her head. "No, brother," she said, "not for all the jewels in Tashbaan." ("Hullo!" thought Shasta. "Although they're king and queen, they're brother and sister, not married to one another.")

“Truly, sister,” said the King, “I should have loved you the less if you had taken him. And I tell you that at the first coming of the Tisroc’s ambassadors into Narnia to treat of this marriage, and later when the Prince was our guest at Cair Paravel, it was a wonder to me that ever you could find it in your heart to show him so much favour.”

“That was my folly, Edmund,” said Queen Susan, “of which I cry you mercy. Yet when he was with us in Narnia, truly this Prince bore himself in another fashion than he does now in Tashbaan. For I take you all to witness what marvellous feats he did in that great tournament and hastilude which our brother the High King made for him, and how meekly and courteously he consorted with us the space of seven days. But here, in his own city, he has shown another face.”

“Ah!” croaked the Raven. “It is an old saying: see the bear in his own den before you judge of his conditions.”

“That’s very true, Sallowpad,” said one of the Dwarfs. “And another is, Come, live with me and you’ll know me.”

“Yes,” said the King. “We have now seen him for what he is: that is, a most proud, bloody, luxurious, cruel and self-pleasing tyrant.”

“Then in the name of Aslan,” said Susan, “let us leave Tashbaan this very day.”

“There’s the rub, sister,” said Edmund. “For now I must open to you all that has been growing in my mind these last two days and more. Peridan, of your courtesy look to the door and see that there is no spy upon us. All well? So. For now we must be secret.”

Everyone had begun to look very serious. Queen Susan jumped up and ran to her brother. “Oh, Edmund,” she cried. “What is it? There is something dreadful in your face.”

Chapter V

PRINCE CORIN

“My dear sister and very good Lady,” said King Edmund, “you must now show your courage. For I tell you plainly we are in no small danger.”

“What is it, Edmund?” asked the Queen.

“It is this,” said Edmund. “I do not think we shall find it easy to leave Tashbaan. While the Prince had hope that you would take him, we were honoured guests. But by the Lion’s Mane, I think that as soon as he has your flat denial we shall be no better than prisoners.”

One of the Dwarfs gave a low whistle.

“I warned your Majesties, I warned you,” said Sallowpad the Raven. “Easily in but not easily out, as the lobster said in the lobster pot!”

“I have been with the Prince this morning,” continued Edmund. “He is little used (more’s the pity) to having his will crossed. And he is very chafed at your long delays and doubtful answers. This morning he pressed very hard to know your mind. I put it aside — meaning at the same time to diminish his hopes — with some light common jests about women’s fancies, and hinted that his suit was likely to be cold. He grew angry and dangerous. There was a sort of threatening, though still veiled under a show of courtesy, in every word he spoke.”

“Yes,” said Tumnus. “And when I supped with the Grand Vizier last night, it was the same. He asked me how I liked Tashbaan. And I (for I could not tell him I hated every stone of it and I would not lie) told him that now, when high summer was coming on, my heart turned to the cool woods and dewy slopes of Narnia. He gave a smile that meant no good and said, ‘There is nothing to hinder you from dancing there again, little goatfoot; *always provided you leave us in exchange a bride for our prince*.’”

“Do you mean he would make me his wife by force?” exclaimed Susan.

“That’s my fear, Susan,” said Edmund. “Wife: or slave, which is worse.”

“But how can he? Does the Tisroc think our brother the High King would suffer such an outrage?”

“Sire,” said Peridan to the King. “They would not be so mad. Do they think there are no swords and spears in Narnia?”

“Alas,” said Edmund. “My guess is that the Tisroc has very small fear of Narnia. We are a little land. And little lands on the borders of a great empire were always hateful to the lords of the great empire. He longs to blot them out, gobble them up. When first he suffered the Prince to come to Cair Paravel as your lover, sister, it may be that he was only seeking an occasion against us. Most likely he hopes to make one mouthful of Narnia and Archenland both.”

“Let him try,” said the second Dwarf. “At sea we are as big as he is. And if he assaults us by land, he has the desert to cross.”

“True, friend,” said Edmund. “But is the desert a sure defence? What does Sallowpad say?”

“I know that desert well,” said the Raven. “For I have flown above it far and wide in my younger days” (you may be sure that Shasta pricked up his ears at this point). “And this is certain; that if the Tisroc goes by the great oasis he can never lead a great army across it into Archenland. For though they could reach the oasis by the end of their first day’s march, yet the springs there would be too little for the thirst of all those soldiers and their beasts. But there is another way.”

Shasta listened more attentively still.

“He that would find that way,” said the Raven, “must start from the Tombs of the Ancient Kings and ride north-west so that the double peak of Mount Pire is always straight ahead of him. And so, in a day’s riding or a little more, he shall come to the head of a stony valley, which is so narrow that a man might be within a furlong of it a thousand times and never know that it was there. And looking down this valley he will see neither grass nor water nor anything else good. But if he rides on down it he will come to a river and can ride by that water all the way into Archenland.”

“And do the Calormenes know of this western way?” asked the Queen.

“Friends, friends,” said Edmund, “what is the use of all this discourse? We are not asking whether Narnia or Calormen would win if war arose between them. We are asking how to save the honour of the Queen and our own lives out of this devilish city. For though my brother, Peter the High King, defeated the Tisroc a dozen times over, yet long before that day our throats would be cut and the Queen’s grace would be the wife, or more likely, the slave, of this prince.”

“We have our weapons, King,” said the first Dwarf. “And this is a reasonably defensible house.”

“As to that,” said the King, “I do not doubt that every one of us would sell our lives dearly in the gate and they would not come at the Queen but over our dead bodies. Yet we should be merely rats fighting in a trap when all’s said.”

“Very true,” croaked the Raven. “These last stands in a house make good stories, but nothing ever came of them. After their first few repulses the enemy always set the house on fire.”

“I am the cause of all this,” said Susan, bursting into tears. “Oh, if only I had never left Cair Paravel. Our last happy day was before those ambassadors came from Calormen. The Moles were planting an orchard for us ... oh ... oh.” And she buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

“Courage, Su, courage,” said Edmund. “Remember — but what is the matter with you, Master Tumnus?” For the Faun was holding both his horns with his hands as if he were trying to keep his head on by them and writhing to and fro as if he had a pain in his inside.

“Don’t speak to me, don’t speak to me,” said Tumnus. “I’m thinking. I’m thinking so that I can hardly breathe. Wait, wait, do wait.”

There was a moment’s puzzled silence and then the Faun looked up, drew a long breath, mopped its forehead and said:

“The only difficulty is how to get down to our ship — with some stores, too — without being seen and stopped.”

“Yes,” said a Dwarf drily. “Just as the beggar’s only difficulty about riding is that he has no horse.”

“Wait, wait,” said Mr. Tumnus impatiently. “All we need is some pretext for going down to our ship to-day and taking stuff on board.”

“Yes,” said King Edmund doubtfully.

“Well, then,” said the Faun, “how would it be if your Majesties bade the Prince to a great banquet to be held on board our own galleon, the *Splendour Hyaline,* to-morrow night? And let the message be worded as graciously as the Queen can contrive without pledging her honour: so as to give the Prince a hope that she is weakening.”

“This is very good counsel, Sire,” croaked the Raven.

“And then,” continued Tumnus excitedly, “everyone will expect us to be going down to the ship all day, making preparations for our guests. And let some of us go to the bazaars and spend every minim we have at the fruiterers and the sweetmeat sellers and the wine merchants, just as we would if we were really giving a feast. And let us order magicians and

jugglers and dancing girls and flute players, all to be on board to-morrow night."

"I see, I see," said King Edmund, rubbing his hands.

"And then," said Tumnus, "we'll all be on board to-night. And as soon as it is quite dark — —"

"Up sails and out oars — !" said the King.

"And so to sea," cried Tumnus, leaping up and beginning to dance.

"And our nose northward," said the first Dwarf.

"Running for home! Hurrah for Narnia and the North!" said the other.

"And the Prince waking next morning and finding his birds flown!" said Peridan, clapping his hands.

"Oh Master Tumnus, dear Master Tumnus," said the Queen, catching his hands and swinging with him as he danced. "You have saved us all."

"The Prince will chase us," said another lord, whose name Shasta had not heard.

"That's the least of my fears," said Edmund. "I have seen all the shipping in the river and there's no tall ship of war nor swift galley there. I wish he may chase us! For the *Splendour Hyaline* could sink anything he has to send after her — if we were overtaken at all."

"Sire," said the Raven. "You shall hear no better plot than the Faun's though we sat in council for seven days. And now, as we birds say, nests before eggs. Which is as much as to say, let us all take our food and then at once be about our business."

Everyone arose at this and the doors were opened and the lords and the creatures stood aside for the King and Queen to go out first. Shasta wondered what he ought to do, but Mr. Tumnus said, "Lie there, your Highness, and I will bring you up a little feast to yourself in a few moments. There is no need for you to move until we are all ready to embark." Shasta laid his head down again on the pillows and soon he was alone in the room.

"This is perfectly dreadful," thought Shasta. It never came into his head to tell these Narnians the whole truth and ask for their help. Having been brought up by a hard, close-fisted man like Arsheesh, he had a fixed habit of never telling grown-ups anything if he could help it: he thought they would always spoil or stop whatever you were trying to do. And he thought that even if the Narnian King might be friendly to the two horses, because they were Talking Beasts of Narnia, he would hate Aravis, because she was a Calormene, and either sell her for a slave or send her back to her father.

As for himself, “I simply daren’t tell them I’m not Prince Corin *now*,” thought Shasta. “I’ve heard all their plans. If they knew I wasn’t one of themselves, they’d never let me out of this house alive. They’d be afraid I’d betray them to the Tisroc. They’d kill me. And if the real Corin turns up, it’ll all come out, and they *will*!” He had, you see, no idea of how noble and free-born people behave.

“What am I to do? What am I to do?” he kept saying to himself. “What — hullo, here comes that goaty little creature again.”

The Faun trotted in, half dancing, with a tray in its hands which was nearly as large as itself. This he set on an inlaid table beside Shasta’s sofa, and sat down himself on the carpeted floor with his goaty legs crossed.

“Now, princeling,” he said. “Make a good dinner. It will be your last meal in Tashbaan.”

It was a fine meal after the Calormene fashion. I don’t know whether you would have liked it or not, but Shasta did. There were lobsters, and salad, and snipe stuffed with almonds and truffles, and a complicated dish made of chicken-livers and rice and raisins and nuts, and there were cool melons and gooseberry fools and mulberry fools, and every kind of nice thing that can be made with ice. There was also a little flagon of the sort of wine that is called “white” though it is really yellow.

While Shasta was eating, the good little Faun, who thought he was still dazed with sunstroke, kept talking to him about the fine times he would have when they all got home; about his good old father King Lune of Archenland and the little castle where he lived on the southern slopes of the pass. “And don’t forget,” said Mr. Tumnus, “that you are promised your first suit of armour and your first war horse on your next birthday. And then your Highness will begin to learn how to tilt and joust. And in a few years, if all goes well, King Peter has promised your royal father that he himself will make you Knight at Cair Paravel. And in the meantime there will be plenty of comings and goings between Narnia and Archenland across the neck of the mountains. And of course you remember you have promised to come for a whole week to stay with me for the Summer Festival, and there’ll be bonfires and all-night dances of Fauns and Dryads in the heart of the woods and, who knows? — we might see Aslan himself!”

When the meal was over the Faun told Shasta to stay quietly where he was. “And it wouldn’t do you any harm to have a little sleep,” he added.

“I’ll call you in plenty of time to get on board. And then, Home. Narnia and the North!”

Shasta had so enjoyed his dinner and all the things Tumnus had been telling him that when he was left alone his thoughts took a different turn. He only hoped now that the real Prince Corin would not turn up until it was too late and that he would be taken away to Narnia by ship. I am afraid he did not think at all of what might happen to the real Corin when he was left behind in Tashbaan. He was a little worried about Aravis and Bree waiting for him at the Tombs. But then he said to himself, “Well, how can I help it?” and, “Anyway, that Aravis thinks she’s too good to go about with me, so she can jolly well go alone,” and at the same time he couldn’t help feeling that it would be much nicer going to Narnia by sea than toiling across the desert.

When he had thought all this he did what I expect you would have done if you had been up very early and had a long walk and a great deal of excitement and then a very good meal, and were lying on a sofa in a cool room with no noise in it except when a bee came buzzing in through the wide open windows. He fell asleep.

What woke him was a loud crash. He jumped up off the sofa, staring. He saw at once from the mere look of the room — the lights and shadows all looked different — that he must have slept for several hours. He saw also what had made the crash: a costly porcelain vase which had been standing on the window-sill lay on the floor broken into about thirty pieces. But he hardly noticed all these things. What he did notice was two hands gripping the window-sill from outside. They gripped harder and harder (getting white at the knuckles) and then up came a head and a pair of shoulders. A moment later there was a boy of Shasta’s own age sitting astride of the sill with one leg hanging down inside the room.

Shasta had never seen his own face in a looking-glass. Even if he had, he might not have realised that the other boy was (at ordinary times) almost exactly like himself. At the moment this boy was not particularly like anyone for he had the finest black eye you ever saw, and a tooth missing, and his clothes (which must have been splendid ones when he put them on) were torn and dirty, and there was both blood and mud on his face.

“Who are you?” said the boy in a whisper.

“Are you Prince Corin?” said Shasta.

“Yes, of course,” said the other. “But who are you?”

“I’m nobody, nobody in particular, I mean,” said Shasta. “King Edmund caught me in the street and mistook me for you. I suppose we must look like one another. Can I get out the way you’ve got in?”

“Yes, if you’re any good at climbing,” said Corin. “But why are you in such a hurry? I say: we ought to be able to get some fun out of this being mistaken for one another.”

“No, no,” said Shasta. “We must change places at once. It’ll be simply frightful if Mr. Tumnus comes back and finds us both here. I’ve had to pretend to be you. And you’re starting to-night — secretly. And where were you all this time?”

“A boy in the street made a beastly joke about Queen Susan,” said Prince Corin, “so I knocked him down. He ran howling into a house and his big brother came out. So I knocked the big brother down. Then they all followed me until we ran into three old men with spears who are called the Watch. So I fought with the Watch and they knocked me down. It was getting dark by now. Then the Watch took me along to lock me up somewhere. So I asked them if they’d like a stoup of wine and they said they didn’t mind if they did. Then I took them to a wine shop and got them some and they all sat down and drank till they fell asleep. I thought it was time for me to be off so I came out quietly and then I found the first boy — the one who had started all the trouble — still hanging about. So I knocked him down again. After that I climbed up a pipe on to the roof of a house and lay quiet till it began to get light this morning. Ever since that I’ve been finding my way back. I say, is there anything to drink?”

“No, I drank it,” said Shasta. “And now, show me how you got in. There’s not a minute to lose. You’d better lie down on the sofa and pretend — but I forgot. It’ll be no good with all those bruises and black eye. You’ll just have to tell them the truth, once I’m safely away.”

“What else did you think I’d be telling them?” asked the Prince with a rather angry look. “And who are *you*?”

“There’s no time,” said Shasta in a frantic whisper. “I’m a Narnian, I believe; something northern anyway. But I’ve been brought up all my life in Calormen. And I’m escaping: across the desert; with a talking Horse called Bree. And now, quick! How do I get away?”

“Look,” said Corin. “Drop from this window on to the roof of the verandah. But you must do it lightly, on your toes, or someone will hear you. Then along to your left and you can get up to the top of that wall if

you’re any good at all as a climber. Then along the wall to the corner. Drop onto the rubbish heap you will find outside, and there you are.”

“Thanks,” said Shasta, who was already sitting on the sill. The two boys were looking into each other’s faces and suddenly found that they were friends.

“Good-bye,” said Corin. “And *good* luck. I do hope you get safe away.”

“Good-bye,” said Shasta. “I say, you have been having some adventures!”

“Nothing to yours,” said the Prince. “Now drop; lightly —— I say,” he added as Shasta dropped, “I hope we meet in Archenland. Go to my father King Lune and tell him you’re a friend of mine. Look out! I hear someone coming.”

Chapter VI

SHASTA AMONG THE TOMBS

Shasta ran lightly along the roof on tiptoes. It felt hot to his bare feet. He was only a few seconds scrambling up the wall at the far end and when he got to the corner he found himself looking down into a narrow, smelly street, and there was a rubbish heap against the outside of the wall just as Corin had told him. Before jumping down he took a rapid glance round him to get his bearings. Apparently he had now come over the crown of the island-hill on which Tashbaan is built. Everything sloped away before him, flat roofs below flat roofs, down to the towers and battlements of the city's northern wall. Beyond that was the river and beyond the river a short slope covered with gardens. But beyond that again there was something he had never seen the like of — a great yellowish-grey thing, flat as a calm sea, and stretching for miles. On the far side of it were huge blue things, lumpy but with jagged edges, and some of them with white tops. "The desert! the mountains!" thought Shasta.

He jumped down onto the rubbish and began trotting along downhill as fast as he could in the narrow lane, which soon brought him into a wider street where there were more people. No-one bothered to look at a little ragged boy running along on bare feet. Still, he was anxious and uneasy till he turned a corner and there saw the city gate in front of him. Here he was pressed and jostled a bit, for a good many other people were also going out; and on the bridge beyond the gate the crowd became quite a slow procession, more like a queue than a crowd. Out there, with clear running water on each side, it was deliciously fresh after the smell and heat and noise of Tashbaan.

When once Shasta had reached the far end of the bridge he found the crowd melting away; everyone seemed to be going either to the left or right along the river bank. He went straight ahead up a road that did not appear to be much used, between gardens. In a few paces he was alone, and a few more brought him to the top of the slope. There he stood and stared. It was like coming to the end of the world for all the grass stopped quite suddenly a few feet before him and the sand began: endless level sand like on a sea shore but a bit rougher because it was never wet. The mountains, which

now looked further off than before, loomed ahead. Greatly to his relief he saw, about five minutes' walk away on his left, what must certainly be the Tombs, just as Bree had described them; great masses of mouldering stone shaped like gigantic bee-hives, but a little narrower. They looked very black and grim, for the sun was now setting right behind them.

He turned his face West and trotted towards the tombs. He could not help looking out very hard for any sign of his friends, though the setting sun shone in his face so that he could see hardly anything. "And anyway," he thought, "of course they'll be round on the far side of the farthest Tomb, not this side where anyone might see them from the city."

There were about twelve Tombs, each with a low arched doorway that opened into absolute blackness. They were dotted about in no kind of order, so that it took a long time, going round this one and going round that one, before you could be sure that you had looked round every side of every tomb. This was what Shasta had to do. There was nobody there.

It was very quiet here out on the edge of the desert; and now the sun had really set.

Suddenly from somewhere behind him there came a terrible sound. Shasta's heart gave a great jump and he had to bite his tongue to keep himself from screaming. Next moment he realised what it was: the horns of Tashbaan blowing for the closing of the gates. "Don't be a silly little coward," said Shasta to himself. "Why, it's only the same noise you heard this morning." But there is a great difference between a noise heard letting you in with your friends in the morning, and a noise heard alone at nightfall, shutting you out. And now that the gates were shut he knew there was no chance of the others joining him that evening. "Either they're shut up in Tashbaan for the night," thought Shasta, "or else they've gone on without me. It's just the sort of thing that Aravis would do. But Bree wouldn't. Oh, he wouldn't — now, would he?"

In this idea about Aravis Shasta was once more quite wrong. She was proud and could be hard enough but she was as true as steel and would never have deserted a companion, whether she liked him or not.

Now that Shasta knew he would have to spend the night alone (it was getting darker every minute) he began to like the look of the place less and less. There was something very uncomfortable about those great, silent shapes of stone. He had been trying his hardest for a long time not to think of ghouls: but he couldn't keep it up any longer.

“Ow! Ow! Help!” he shouted suddenly, for at that very moment he felt something touch his leg. I don’t think anyone can be blamed for shouting if something comes up from behind and touches him; not in such a place and at such a time, when he is frightened already. Shasta at any rate was too frightened to run. Anything would be better than being chased round and round the burial places of the Ancient Kings with something he dared not look at behind him. Instead, he did what was really the most sensible thing he could do. He looked round; and his heart almost burst with relief. What had touched him was only a cat.

The light was too bad now for Shasta to see much of the cat except that it was big and very solemn. It looked as if it might have lived for long, long years among the tombs, alone. Its eyes made you think it knew secrets it would not tell.

“Puss, puss,” said Shasta. “I suppose you’re not a *talking* cat.”

The cat stared at him harder than ever. Then it started walking away, and of course Shasta followed it. It led him right through the Tombs and out on the desert side of them. There it sat down bolt upright with its tail curled round its feet and its face set towards the desert and towards Narnia and the North, as still as if it were watching for some enemy. Shasta lay down beside it with his back against the cat and his face towards the Tombs, because if one is nervous there’s nothing like having your face towards the danger and having something warm and solid at your back. The sand wouldn’t have seemed very comfortable to you, but Shasta had been sleeping on the ground for weeks and hardly noticed it. Very soon he fell asleep, though even in his dreams he went on wondering what had happened to Bree and Aravis and Hwin.

He was wakened suddenly by a noise he had never heard before. “Perhaps it was only a nightmare,” said Shasta to himself. At the same moment he noticed that the cat had gone from his back, and he wished it hadn’t. But he lay quite still without even opening his eyes because he felt sure he would be more frightened if he sat up and looked round at the Tombs and the loneliness: just as you or I might lie still with the clothes over our heads. But then the noise came again — a harsh, piercing cry from behind him out of the desert. Then of course he had to open his eyes and sit up.

The moon was shining brightly. The Tombs — far bigger and nearer than he had thought they would be — looked grey in the moonlight. In fact, they

looked horribly like huge people, draped in grey robes that covered their heads and faces. They were not at all nice things to have near you when spending a night alone in a strange place. But the noise had come from the opposite side, from the desert. Shasta had to turn his back on the Tombs (he didn't like that much) and stare out across the level sand. The wild cry rang out again.

"I hope it's not more lions," thought Shasta. It was in fact not very like the lion's roars he had heard on the night when they met Hwin and Aravis, and was really the cry of a jackal. But of course Shasta did not know this. Even if he had known, he would not have wanted very much to meet a jackal.

The cries rang out again and again. "There's more than one of them, whatever they are," thought Shasta. "And they're coming nearer."

I suppose that if he had been an entirely sensible boy he would have gone back through the Tombs nearer to the river where there were houses, and wild beasts would be less likely to come. But then there were (or he thought there were) the ghouls. To go back through the Tombs would mean going past those dark openings in the Tombs; and what might come out of them? It may have been silly, but Shasta felt he had rather risk the wild beasts. Then, as the cries came nearer and nearer, he began to change his mind.

He was just going to run for it when suddenly, between him and the desert, a huge animal bounded into view. As the moon was behind it, it looked quite black, and Shasta did not know what it was, except that it had a very big, shaggy head and went on four legs. It did not seem to have noticed Shasta, for it suddenly stopped, turned its head towards the desert and let out a roar which re-echoed through the Tombs and seemed to shake the sand under Shasta's feet. The cries of the other creatures suddenly stopped and he thought he could hear feet scampering away. Then the great beast turned to examine Shasta.

"It's a lion, I know it's a lion," thought Shasta. "I'm done. I wonder will it hurt much. I wish it was over. I wonder does anything happen to people after they're dead. O-o-oh! Here it comes!" And he shut his eyes and his teeth tight.

But instead of teeth and claws he only felt something warm lying down at his feet. And when he opened his eyes he said, "Why, it's not nearly as big as I thought! It's only half the size. No, it isn't even quarter the size. I

do declare it's only the cat!! I must have dreamed all that about its being as big as a horse."

And whether he really had been dreaming or no, what was now lying at his feet, and staring him out of countenance with its big, green, unwinking eyes, was the cat; though certainly one of the largest cats he had ever seen.

"Oh Puss," gasped Shasta. "I am so glad to see you again. I've been having such horrible dreams." And he at once lay down again, back to back with the cat as they had been at the beginning of the night. The warmth from it spread all over him.

"I'll never do anything nasty to a cat again as long as I live," said Shasta, half to the cat and half to himself. "I did once, you know. I threw stones at a half-starved mangy old stray. Hey! Stop that." For the cat had turned round and given him a scratch. "None of that," said Shasta. "It isn't as if you could understand what I'm saying." Then he dozed off.

Next morning when he woke, the cat was gone, the sun was already up, and the sand hot. Shasta, very thirsty, sat up and rubbed his eyes. The desert was blindingly white and, though there was a murmur of noises from the city behind him, where he sat everything was perfectly still. When he looked a little left and west, so that the sun was not in his eyes, he could see the mountains on the far side of the desert, so sharp and clear that they looked only a stone's throw away. He particularly noticed one blue height that divided into two peaks at the top and decided that it must be Mount Pire. "That's our direction, judging by what the Raven said," he thought, "so I'll just make sure of it, so as not to waste any time when the others turn up." So he made a good, deep straight furrow with his foot pointing exactly to Mount Pire.

The next job, clearly, was to get something to eat and drink. Shasta trotted back through the Tombs — they looked quite ordinary now and he wondered how he could ever have been afraid of them — and down into the cultivated land by the river's side. There were a few people about but not very many, for the city gates had been open several hours and the early morning crowds had already gone in. So he had no difficulty in doing a little "raiding" (as Bree called it). It involved a climb over a garden wall and the results were three oranges, a melon, a fig or two, and a pomegranate. After that, he went down to the river bank, but not too near the bridge and had a drink. The water was so nice that he took off his hot, dirty clothes and had a dip; for of course Shasta, having lived on the shore

all his life, had learned to swim almost as soon as he had learned to walk. When he came out he lay on the grass looking across the water at Tashbaan — all the splendour and strength and glory of it. But that made him remember the dangers of it too. He suddenly realised that the others might have reached the Tombs while he was bathing ("and gone on without me, as likely as not"), so he dressed in a fright and tore back at such a speed that he was all hot and thirsty when he arrived and so the good of his bathe was gone.

Like most days when you are alone and waiting for something this day seemed about a hundred hours long. He had plenty to think of, of course, but sitting alone, just thinking, is pretty slow. He thought a good deal about the Narnians and especially about Corin. He wondered what had happened when they discovered that the boy who had been lying on the sofa and hearing all their secret plans wasn't really Corin at all. It was very unpleasant to think of all those nice people imagining him a traitor.

But as the sun slowly, slowly climbed up to the top of the sky and then slowly, slowly began going downwards to the West, and no-one came and nothing at all happened, he began to get more and more anxious. And of course he now realised that when they arranged to wait for one another at the Tombs no-one had said anything about How Long. He couldn't wait here for the rest of his life! And soon it would be dark again, and he would have another night just like last night. A dozen different plans went through his head, all wretched ones, and at last he fixed on the worst plan of all. He decided to wait till it was dark and then go back to the river and steal as many melons as he could carry and set out for Mount Pire alone, trusting for his direction to the line he had drawn that morning in the sand. It was a crazy idea and if he had read as many books as you have about journeys over deserts he would never have dreamed of it. But Shasta had read no books at all.

But before the sun set something did happen. Shasta was sitting in the shadow of one of the Tombs when he looked up and saw two horses coming towards him. Then his heart gave a great leap, for he recognised them as Bree and Hwin. But next moment his heart went down into his toes again. There was no sign of Aravis. The horses were being led by a strange man, an armed man pretty handsomely dressed like an upper slave in a great family. Bree and Hwin were no longer got up like packhorses, but saddled and bridled. And what could it all mean? "It's a trap," thought Shasta.

“Somebody has caught Aravis and perhaps they’ve tortured her and she’s given the whole thing away. They want me to jump out and run up and speak to Bree and then I’ll be caught too! And yet if I don’t, I may be losing my only chance to meet the others. Oh I do wish I knew what had happened.” And he skulked behind the Tomb, looking out every few minutes, and wondering which was the least dangerous thing to do.

Chapter VII

ARAVIS IN TASHBAAN

What had really happened was this. When Aravis saw Shasta hurried away by the Narnians and found herself alone with two horses who (very wisely) wouldn't say a word, she never lost her head even for a moment. She grabbed Bree's halter and stood still, holding both the horses; and though her heart was beating as hard as a hammer, she did nothing to show it. As soon as the Narnian lords had passed she tried to move on again. But before she could take a step, another crier ("Bother all these people" thought Aravis) was heard shouting out, "Way, way, way! Way for the Tarkheena Lasaraleen!" and immediately, following the crier, came four armed slaves and then four bearers carrying a litter which was all a-flutter with silken curtains and all a-jingle with silver bells and which scented the whole street with perfumes and flowers. After the litter, female slaves in beautiful clothes, and then a few grooms, runners, pages, and the like. And now Aravis made her first mistake.

She knew Lasaraleen quite well — almost as if they had been at school together — because they had often stayed in the same houses and been to the same parties. And Aravis couldn't help looking up to see what Lasaraleen looked like now that she was married and a very great person indeed.

It was fatal. The eyes of the two girls met. And immediately Lasaraleen sat up in the litter and burst out at the top of her voice.

"Aravis! What on earth are you doing here? Your father — —"

There was not a moment to lose. Without a second's delay Aravis let go the horses, caught the edge of the litter, swung herself up beside Lasaraleen and whispered furiously in her ear.

"Shut up! Do you hear! Shut up. You must hide me. Tell your people — —"

"But darling — —" began Lasaraleen in the same loud voice. (She didn't in the least mind making people stare; in fact she rather liked it.)

"Do what I tell you or I'll never speak to you again," hissed Aravis. "Please, please be quick, Las. It's frightfully important. Tell your people to

bring those two horses along. Pull all the curtains of the litter and get away somewhere where I can't be found. And do hurry."

"All right, darling," said Lasaraleen in her lazy voice. "Here. Two of you take the Tarkheena's horses." (This was to the slaves.) "And now home. I say, darling, do you think we really want the curtains drawn on a day like this? I mean to say — —"

But Aravis had already drawn the curtains, enclosing Lasaraleen and herself in a rich and scented, but rather stuffy, kind of tent.

"I mustn't be seen," she said. "My father doesn't know I'm here. I'm running away."

"My dear, how perfectly thrilling," said Lasaraleen. "I'm dying to hear all about it. Darling, you're sitting on my dress. Do you mind? That's better. It is a new one. Do you like it? I got it at — —"

"Oh Las, do be serious," said Aravis. "Where is my father?"

"Didn't you know?" said Lasaraleen. "He's here, of course. He came to town yesterday and is asking about you everywhere. And to think of you and me being here together and his not knowing anything about it! It's the funniest thing I ever heard." And she went off into giggles. She always had been a terrible giggler, as Aravis now remembered.

"It isn't funny at all," she said. "It's dreadfully serious. Where can you hide me?"

"No difficulty at all, my dear girl," said Lasaraleen. "I'll take you home. My husband's away and no-one will see you. Phew! It's not much fun with the curtains drawn. I want to see people. There's no point in having a new dress on if one's to go about shut up like this."

"I hope no-one heard you when you shouted out to me like that," said Aravis.

"No, no, of course, darling," said Lasaraleen absent-mindedly. "But you haven't even told me yet what you think of the dress."

"Another thing," said Aravis. "You must tell your people to treat those two horses very respectfully. That's part of the secret. They're really Talking Horses from Narnia."

"Fancy!" said Lasaraleen. "How exciting! And oh, darling, have you seen the barbarian queen from Narnia? She's staying in Tashbaan at present. They say Prince Rabadash is madly in love with her. There have been the most wonderful parties and hunts and things all this last fortnight. I can't see that she's so very pretty myself. But some of the Narnian men are

lovely. I was taken out on a river party the day before yesterday, and I was wearing my — —”

“How shall we prevent your people telling everyone that you’ve got a visitor — dressed like a beggar’s brat — in your house? It might so easily get round to my father.”

“Now don’t keep on fussing, there’s a dear,” said Lasaraleen. “We’ll get you some proper clothes in a moment. And here we are!”

The bearers had stopped and the litter was being lowered. When the curtains had been drawn Aravis found that she was in a courtyard-garden very like the one that Shasta had been taken into a few minutes earlier in another part of the city. Lasaraleen would have gone indoors at once but Aravis reminded her in a frantic whisper to say something to the slaves about not telling anyone of their mistress’s strange visitor.

“Sorry, darling, it had gone right out of my head,” said Lasaraleen. “Here. All of you. And you, doorkeeper. No-one is to be let out of the house to-day. And anyone I catch talking about this young lady will be first beaten to death and then burned alive and after that be kept on bread and water for six weeks. There.”

Although Lasaraleen had said she was dying to hear Aravis’s story, she showed no sign of really wanting to hear it at all. She was, in fact, much better at talking than at listening. She insisted on Aravis having a long and luxurious bath (Calormene baths are famous) and then dressing her up in the finest clothes before she would let her explain anything. The fuss she made about choosing the dresses nearly drove Aravis mad. She remembered now that Lasaraleen had always been like that, interested in clothes and parties and gossip. Aravis had always been more interested in bows and arrows and horses and dogs and swimming. You will guess that each thought the other silly. But when at last they were both seated after a meal (it was chiefly of the whipped cream and jelly and fruit and ice sort) in a beautiful pillared room (which Aravis would have liked better if Lasaraleen’s spoiled pet monkey hadn’t been climbing about it all the time) Lasaraleen at last asked her why she was running away from home.

When Aravis had finished telling her story, Lasaraleen said, “But darling, why *don’t* you marry Ahoshta Tarkaan? Everyone’s crazy about him. My husband says he is beginning to be one of the greatest men in Calormen. He has just been made Grand Vizier now old Axartha has died. Didn’t you know?”

“I don’t care. I can’t stand the sight of him,” said Aravis.

“But darling, only think! Three palaces, and one of them that beautiful one down on the lake at Ilkeen. Positively ropes of pearls, I’m told. Baths of asses’ milk. And you’d see such a lot of *me*.”

“He can keep his pearls and palaces as far as I’m concerned,” said Aravis.

“You always *were* a queer girl, Aravis,” said Lasaraleen. “What more *do* you want?”

In the end, however, Aravis managed to make her friend believe that she was in earnest and even to discuss plans. There would be no difficulty now about getting the two horses out of the North gate and then on to the Tombs. No-one would stop or question a groom in fine clothes leading a war horse and a lady’s saddle horse down to the river, and Lasaraleen had plenty of grooms to send. It wasn’t so easy to decide what to do about Aravis herself. She suggested that she could be carried out in the litter with the curtains drawn. But Lasaraleen told her that litters were only used in the city and the sight of one going out through the gate would be certain to lead to questions.

When they had talked for a long time — and it was all the longer because Aravis found it hard to keep her friend to the point — at last Lasaraleen clapped her hands and said, “Oh, I have an idea. There is *one* way of getting out of the city without using the gates. The Tisroc’s garden (may he live for ever!) runs right down to the water and there is a little water-door. Only for the palace people of course — but then you know, dear (here she tittered a little) we almost *are* palace people. I say, it is lucky for you that you came to *me*. The dear Tisroc (may he live for ever!) is so kind. We’re asked to the palace almost every day and it is like a second home. I love all the dear princes and princesses and I positively adore Prince Rabadash. I might run in and see any of the palace ladies at any hour of the day or night. Why shouldn’t I slip in with you, after dark, and let you out by the water-door? There are always a few punts and things tied up outside it. And even if we were caught — —”

“All would be lost,” said Aravis.

“Oh darling, don’t get so excited,” said Lasaraleen. “I was going to say, even if we were caught everyone would only say it was one of my mad jokes. I’m getting quite well known for them. Only the other day — do listen, dear, this is frightfully funny — —”

“I meant, all would be lost *for me*,” said Aravis a little sharply.

“Oh — ah — yes — I *do* see what you mean, darling. Well, can you think of any better plan?”

Aravis couldn’t, and answered, “No. We’ll have to risk it. When can we start?”

“Oh, not to-night,” said Lasaraleen. “Of course not to-night. There’s a great feast on to-night (I must start getting my hair done for it in a few minutes) and the whole place will be a blaze of lights. And such a crowd too! It would have to be to-morrow night.”

This was bad news for Aravis, but she had to make the best of it. The afternoon passed very slowly and it was a relief when Lasaraleen went out to the banquet, for Aravis was very tired of her giggling and her talk about dresses and parties, weddings and engagements and scandals. She went to bed early and that part she did enjoy: it was so nice to have pillows and sheets again.

But the next day passed very slowly. Lasaraleen wanted to go back on the whole arrangement and kept on telling Aravis that Narnia was a country of perpetual snow and ice inhabited by demons and sorcerers, and she was mad to think of going there. “And with a peasant boy, too!” said Lasaraleen. “Darling, think of it! It’s not Nice.” Aravis had thought of it a good deal, but she was so tired of Lasaraleen’s silliness by now that, for the first time, she began to think that travelling with Shasta was really rather more fun than fashionable life in Tashbaan. So she only replied, “You forget that I’ll be a nobody, just like him, when we get to Narnia. And anyway, I promised.”

“And to think,” said Lasaraleen, almost crying, “that if only you had sense you could be the wife of a Grand Vizier!” Aravis went away to have a private word with the horses.

“You must go with a groom a little before sunset down to the Tombs,” she said. “No more of those packs. You’ll be saddled and bridled again. But there’ll have to be food in Hwin’s saddle-bags and a full water-skin behind yours, Bree. The man has orders to let you both have a good long drink at the far side of the bridge.”

“And then, Narnia and the North!” whispered Bree. “But what if Shasta is not at the Tombs?”

“Wait for him of course,” said Aravis. “I hope you’ve been quite comfortable.”

“Never better stabled in my life,” said Bree. “But if the husband of that tittering Tarkheena friend of yours is paying his head groom to get the best oats, then I think the head groom is cheating him.”

Aravis and Lasaraleen had supper in the pillared room.

About two hours later they were ready to start. Aravis was dressed to look like a superior slave-girl in a great house and wore a veil over her face. They had agreed that if any questions were asked Lasaraleen would pretend that Aravis was a slave she was taking as a present to one of the princesses.

The two girls went out on foot. A very few minutes brought them to the palace gates. Here there were of course soldiers on guard but the officer knew Lasaraleen quite well and called his men to attention and saluted. They passed at once into the Hall of Black Marble. A fair number of courtiers, slaves and others were still moving about here but this only made the two girls less conspicuous. They passed on into the Hall of Pillars and then into the Hall of Statues and down the colonnade, passing the great beaten-copper doors of the throne room. It was all magnificent beyond description; what they could see of it in the dim light of the lamps.

Presently they came out into the garden-court which sloped downhill in a number of terraces. On the far side of that they came to the Old Palace. It had already grown almost quite dark and they now found themselves in a maze of corridors lit only by occasional torches fixed in brackets to the walls. Lasaraleen halted at a place where you had to go either left or right.

“Go on, do go on,” whispered Aravis, whose heart was beating terribly and who still felt that her father might run into them at any corner.

“I’m just wondering...” said Lasaraleen. “I’m not absolutely sure which way we go from here. I *think* it’s the left. Yes, I’m almost sure it’s the left. What fun this is!”

They took the left hand way and found themselves in a passage that was hardly lighted at all and which soon began going down steps.

“It’s all right,” said Lasaraleen. “I’m sure we’re right now. I remember these steps.” But at that moment a moving light appeared ahead. A second later there appeared from round a distant corner, the dark shapes of two men walking backwards and carrying tall candles. And of course it is only before royalties that people walk backwards. Aravis felt Lasaraleen grip her arm — that sort of sudden grip which is almost a pinch and which means that the person who is gripping you is very frightened indeed. Aravis thought it odd that Lasaraleen should be so afraid of the Tisroc if he were really such a

friend of hers, but there was no time to go on thinking. Lasaraleen was hurrying her back to the top of the steps, on tiptoe, and groping wildly along the wall.

"Here's a door," she whispered. "Quick."

They went in, drew the door very softly behind them, and found themselves in pitch darkness. Aravis could hear by Lasaraleen's breathing that she was terrified.

"Tash preserve us!" whispered Lasaraleen. "What *shall* we do if he comes in here. Can we hide?"

There was a soft carpet under their feet. They groped forward into the room and blundered onto a sofa.

"Let's lie down behind it," whimpered Lasaraleen. "Oh, I *do* wish we hadn't come."

There was just room between the sofa and the curtained wall and the two girls got down. Lasaraleen managed to get the better position and was completely covered. The upper part of Aravis's face stuck out beyond the sofa, so that if anyone came into that room with a light and happened to look in exactly the right place they would see her. But of course, because she was wearing a veil, what they saw would not at once look like a forehead and a pair of eyes. Aravis shoved desperately to try to make Lasaraleen give her a little more room. But Lasaraleen, now quite selfish in her panic, fought back and pinched her feet. They gave it up and lay still, panting a little. Their own breath seemed dreadfully noisy, but there was no other noise.

"Is it safe?" said Aravis at last in the tiniest possible whisper.

"I — I — *think* so," began Lasaraleen. "But my poor nerves — —" and then came the most terrible noise they could have heard at that moment: the noise of the door opening. And then came light. And because Aravis couldn't get her head any further in behind the sofa, she saw everything.

First came the two slaves (deaf and dumb, as Aravis rightly guessed, and therefore used at the most secret councils) walking backwards and carrying the candles. They took up their stand one at each end of the sofa. This was a good thing, for of course it was now harder for anyone to see Aravis once a slave was in front of her and she was looking between his heels. Then came an old man, very fat, wearing a curious pointed cap by which she immediately knew that he was the Tisroc. The least of the jewels with which he was covered was worth more than all the clothes and weapons of

the Narnian lords put together: but he was so fat and such a mass of frills and pleats and bobbles and buttons and tassels and talismans that Aravis couldn’t help thinking the Narnian fashions (at any rate for men) looked nicer. After him came a tall young man with a feathered and jewelled turban on his head and an ivory-sheathed scimitar at his side. He seemed very excited and his eyes and teeth flashed fiercely in the candlelight. Last of all came a little hump-backed, wizened old man in whom she recognised with a shudder the new Grand Vizier and her own betrothed husband, Ahoshta Tarkaan himself.

As soon as all three had entered the room and the door was shut, the Tisroc seated himself on the divan with a sigh of contentment, the young man took his place, standing, before him and the Grand Vizier got down on his knees and elbows and laid his face flat on the carpet.

Chapter VIII

IN THE HOUSE OF THE TISROC

"Oh-my-father-and-oh-the-delight-of-my-eyes," began the young man, muttering the words very quickly and sulkily and not at all as if the Tisroc were the delight of his eyes. "May you live for ever, but you have utterly destroyed me. If you had given me the swiftest of the galleys at sunrise when I first saw that the ship of the accursed barbarians was gone from her place I would perhaps have overtaken them. But you persuaded me to send first and see if they had not merely moved round the point into better anchorage. And now the whole day has been wasted. And they are gone — gone — out of my reach! The false jade, the — —" and here he added a great many descriptions of Queen Susan which would not look at all nice in print. For of course this young man was Prince Rabadash and of course the false jade was Susan of Narnia.

"Compose yourself, O my son," said the Tisroc. "For the departure of guests makes a wound that is easily healed in the heart of a judicious host."

"But I *want* her," cried the Prince. "I must have her. I shall die if I do not get her — false, proud, black-hearted daughter of a dog that she is! I cannot sleep and my food has no savour and my eyes are darkened because of her beauty. I must have the barbarian queen."

"How well it was said by a gifted poet," observed the Vizier, raising his face (in a somewhat dusty condition) from the carpet, "that deep draughts from the fountain of reason are desirable in order to extinguish the fire of youthful love."

This seemed to exasperate the Prince. "Dog," he shouted, directing a series of well-aimed kicks at the hindquarters of the Vizier, "do not dare to quote the poets to me. I have had maxims and verses flung at me all day and I can endure them no more." I am afraid Aravis did not feel at all sorry for the Vizier.

The Tisroc was apparently sunk in thought, but when, after a long pause, he noticed what was happening, he said tranquilly:

"My son, by all means desist from kicking the venerable and enlightened Vizier: for as a costly jewel retains its value even if hidden in a dung-hill, so

old age and discretion are to be respected even in the vile persons of our subjects. Desist therefore, and tell us what you desire and propose."

"I desire and propose, O my father," said Rabadash, "that you immediately call out your invincible armies and invade the thrice-accursed land of Narnia and waste it with fire and sword and add it to your illimitable empire, killing their High King and all of his blood except the Queen Susan. For I must have her as my wife, though she shall learn a sharp lesson first."

"Understand, O my son," said the Tisroc, "that no words you can speak will move me to an open war against Narnia."

"If you were not my father, O ever-living Tisroc," said the Prince, grinding his teeth. "I should say that was the word of a coward."

"And if you were not my son, O most inflammable Rabadash," replied his father, "your life would be short and your death slow when you had said it." (The cool, placid voice in which he spoke these words made Aravis's blood run cold.)

"But why, O my father," said the Prince — this time in a much more respectful voice, "why should we think twice about punishing Narnia any more than about hanging an idle slave or sending a worn-out horse to be made into dog's-meat? It is not the fourth size of one of your least provinces. A thousand spears could conquer it in five weeks. It is an unseemly blot on the skirts of your empire."

"Most undoubtedly," said the Tisroc. "These little barbarian countries that call themselves *free* (which is as much as to say, idle, disordered, and unprofitable) are hateful to the gods and to all persons of discernment."

"Then why have we suffered such a land as Narnia to remain thus long unsubdued?"

"Know, O enlightened Prince," said the Grand Vizier, "that until the year in which your exalted father began his salutary and unending reign, the land of Narnia was covered with ice and snow and was moreover ruled by a most powerful enchantress."

"This I know very well, O loquacious Vizier," answered the Prince. "But I know also that the enchantress is dead. And the ice and snow have vanished, so that Narnia is now wholesome, fruitful, and delicious."

"And this change, O most learned Prince, has doubtless been brought to pass by the powerful incantations of those wicked persons who now call themselves kings and queens of Narnia."

“I am rather of the opinion,” said Rabadash, “that it has come about by the alteration of the stars and the operation of natural causes.”

“All this,” said the Tisroc, “is a question for the disputations of learned men. I will never believe that so great an alteration, and the killing of the old enchantress, were effected without the aid of strong magic. And such things are to be expected in that land, which is chiefly inhabited by demons in the shape of beasts that talk like men, and monsters that are half man and half beast. It is commonly reported that the High King of Narnia (whom may the gods utterly reject) is supported by a demon of hideous aspect and irresistible maleficence who appears in the shape of a Lion. Therefore the attacking of Narnia is a dark and doubtful enterprise, and I am determined not to put my hand out farther than I can draw it back.”

“How blessed is Calormen,” said the Vizier, popping up his face again, “on whose ruler the gods have been pleased to bestow prudence and circumspection! Yet as the irrefutable and sapient Tisroc has said it is very grievous to be constrained to keep our hands off such a dainty dish as Narnia. Gifted was that poet who said — —” but at this point Ahoshta noticed an impatient movement of the Prince’s toe and became suddenly silent.

“It is very grievous,” said the Tisroc in his deep, quiet voice. “Every morning the sun is darkened in my eyes, and every night my sleep is the less refreshing, because I remember that Narnia is still free.”

“O my father,” said Rabadash. “How if I show you a way by which you can stretch out your arm to take Narnia and yet draw it back unharmed if the attempt prove unfortunate?”

“If you can show me that, O Rabadash,” said the Tisroc, “you will be the best of sons.”

“Hear then, O father. This very night and in this hour I will take but two hundred horse and ride across the desert. And it shall seem to all men that you know nothing of my going. On the second morning I shall be at the gates of King Lune’s castle of Anvard in Archenland. They are at peace with us and unprepared and I shall take Anvard before they have bestirred themselves. Then I will ride through the pass above Anvard and down through Narnia to Cair Paravel. The High King will not be there; when I left them he was already preparing a raid against the giants on his northern border. I shall find Cair Paravel, most likely, with open gates and ride in. I shall exercise prudence and courtesy and spill as little Narnian blood as I

can. And what then remains but to sit there till the *Splendour Hyaline* puts in, with Queen Susan on board, catch my strayed bird as she sets foot ashore, swing her into the saddle, and then ride, ride, ride back to Anvard?"

"But is it not probable, O my son," said the Tisroc, "that at the taking of the woman either King Edmund or you will lose his life?"

"They will be a small company," said Rabadash, "and I will order ten of my men to disarm and bind him: restraining my vehement desire for his blood so that there shall be no deadly cause of war between you and the High King."

"And how if the *Splendour Hyaline* is at Cair Paravel before you?"

"I do not look for that with these winds, O my father."

"And lastly, O my resourceful son," said the Tisroc, "you have made clear how all this might give you the barbarian woman, but not how it helps me to the overthrowing of Narnia."

"O my father, can it have escaped you that though I and my horsemen will come and go through Narnia like an arrow from a bow, yet we shall have Anvard for ever? And when you hold Anvard you sit in the very gate of Narnia, and your garrison in Anvard can be increased by little and little till it is a great host."

"It is spoken with understanding and foresight. But how do I draw back my arm if all this miscarries?"

"You shall say that I did it without your knowledge and against your will, and without your blessing, being constrained by the violence of my love and the impetuosity of youth."

"And how if the High King then demands that we send back the barbarian woman, his sister?"

"O my father, be assured that he will not. For though the fancy of a woman has rejected this marriage, the High King Peter is a man of prudence and understanding who will in no way wish to lose the high honour and advantage of being allied to our House and seeing his nephew and grand nephew on the throne of Calormen."

"He will not see that if I live for ever as is no doubt your wish," said the Tisroc in an even drier voice than usual.

"And also, O my father and O the delight of my eyes," said the Prince, after a moment of awkward silence, "we shall write letters as if from the Queen to say that she loves me and has no desire to return to Narnia. For it is well known that women are as changeable as weather-cocks. And even if

they do not wholly believe the letters, they will not dare to come to Tashbaan in arms to fetch her."

"O enlightened Vizier," said the Tisroc, "bestow your wisdom upon us concerning this strange proposal."

"O eternal Tisroc," answered Ahoshta, "the strength of paternal affection is not unknown to me and I have often heard that sons are in the eyes of their fathers more precious than carbuncles. How then shall I dare freely to unfold to you my mind in a matter which may imperil the life of this exalted Prince?"

"Undoubtedly you will dare," replied the Tisroc. "Because you will find that the dangers of not doing so are at least equally great."

"To hear is to obey," moaned the wretched man. "Know then, O most reasonable Tisroc, in the first place, that the danger of the Prince is not altogether so great as might appear. For the gods have withheld from the barbarians the light of discretion, as that their poetry is not, like ours, full of choice apophthegms and useful maxims, but is all of love and war. Therefore nothing will appear to them more noble and admirable than such a mad enterprise as this of — ow!" For the Prince, at the word "mad", had kicked him again.

"Desist, O my son," said the Tisroc. "And you, estimable Vizier, whether he desists or not, by no means allow the flow of your eloquence to be interrupted. For nothing is more suitable to persons of gravity and decorum than to endure minor inconveniences with constancy."

"To hear is to obey," said the Vizier, wriggling himself round a little so as to get his hinder parts further away from Rabadash's toe. "Nothing, I say, will seem as pardonable, if not estimable, in their eyes as this — er — hazardous attempt, especially because it is undertaken for the love of a woman. Therefore, if the Prince by misfortune fell into their hands, they would assuredly not kill him. Nay, it may even be, that though he failed to carry off the queen, yet the sight of his great valour and of the extremity of his passion might incline her heart to him."

"That is a good point, old babbler," said Rabadash. "Very good, however it came into your ugly head."

"The praise of my masters is the light of my eyes," said Ahoshta. "And secondly, O Tisroc, whose reign must and shall be interminable, I think that with the aid of the gods it is very likely that Anvard will fall into the Prince's hands. And if so, we have Narnia by the throat."

There was a long pause and the room became so silent that the two girls hardly dared to breathe. At last the Tisroc spoke.

“Go, my son,” he said. “And do as you have said. But expect no help nor countenance from me. I will not avenge you if you are killed and I will not deliver you if the barbarians cast you into prison. And if, either in success or failure, you shed a drop more than you need of Narnian noble blood and open war arises from it, my favour shall never fall upon you again and your next brother shall have your place in Calormen. Now go. Be swift, secret, and fortunate. May the strength of Tash the inexorable, the irresistible be in your sword and lance.”

“To hear is to obey,” cried Rabadash, and after kneeling for a moment to kiss his father’s hands he rushed from the room. Greatly to the disappointment of Aravis, who was now horribly cramped, the Tisroc and the Vizier remained.

“O Vizier,” said the Tisroc, “is it certain that no living soul knows of this council we three have held here to-night?”

“O my master,” said Ahoshta, “it is not possible that any should know. For that very reason I proposed, and you in your infallible wisdom agreed, that we should meet here in the Old Palace where no council is ever held and none of the household has any occasion to come.”

“It is well,” said the Tisroc. “If any man knew, I would see to it that he died before an hour had passed. And do you also, O prudent Vizier, forget it. I sponge away from my own heart and from yours all knowledge of the Prince’s plans. He is gone without my knowledge or my consent, I know not whither, because of his violence and the rash and disobedient disposition of youth. No man will be more astonished than you and I to hear that Anvard is in his hands.”

“To hear is to obey,” said Ahoshta.

“That is why you will never think even in your secret heart that I am the hardest hearted of fathers who thus send my first-born son on an errand so likely to be his death; pleasing as it must be to you who do not love the Prince. For I see into the bottom of your mind.”

“O impeccable Tisroc,” said the Vizier. “In comparison with you I love neither the Prince nor my own life nor bread nor water nor the light of the sun.”

“Your sentiments,” said the Tisroc, “are elevated and correct. I also love none of these things in comparison with the glory and strength of my

throne. If the Prince succeeds, we have Archenland, and perhaps hereafter Narnia. If he fails — I have eighteen other sons and Rabadash, after the manner of the eldest sons of kings, was beginning to be dangerous. More than five Tisrocs in Tashbaan have died before their time because their eldest sons, enlightened princes, grew tired of waiting for their throne. He had better cool his blood abroad than boil it in inaction here. And now, O excellent Vizier, the excess of my paternal anxiety inclines me to sleep. Command the musicians to my chamber. But before you lie down, call back the pardon we wrote for the third cook. I feel within me the manifest prognostics of indigestion."

"To hear is to obey," said the Grand Vizier. He crawled backwards on all fours to the door, rose, bowed, and went out. Even then the Tisroc remained seated in silence on the divan till Aravas almost began to be afraid that he had dropped asleep. But at last with a great creaking and sighing he heaved up his enormous body, signed to the slaves to precede him with the lights and went out. The door closed behind him, the room was once more totally dark, and the two girls could breathe freely again.

Chapter IX

ACROSS THE DESERT

“How dreadful! How perfectly dreadful!” whimpered Lasaraleen. “Oh darling, I *am* so frightened. I’m shaking all over. Feel me.”

“Come on,” said Aravis, who was trembling herself. “They’ve gone back to the new palace. Once we’re out of this room we’re safe enough. But it’s wasted a terrible time. Get me down to that water-gate as quick as you can.”

“Darling, how *can* you?” squeaked Lasaraleen. “I can’t do anything — not now. My poor nerves! No: we must just lie still a bit and then go back.”

“Why back?” asked Aravis.

“Oh, you don’t understand. You’re so unsympathetic,” said Lasaraleen, beginning to cry. Aravis decided it was no occasion for mercy.

“Look here!” she said, catching Lasaraleen and giving her a good shake. “If you say another word about going back, and if you don’t start taking me to that water-gate at once — do you know what I’ll do? I’ll rush out into that passage and scream. Then we’ll both be caught.”

“But we shall both be k-k-killed!” said Lasaraleen. “Didn’t you hear what the Tisroc (may he live for ever) said?”

“Yes, and I’d sooner be killed than married to Ahoshta. So come *on*.”

“Oh you *are* unkind,” said Lasaraleen. “And I in such a state!”

But in the end she had to give in to Aravis. She led the way down the steps they had already descended, and along another corridor and so finally out into the open air. They were now in the palace garden which sloped down in terraces to the city wall. The moon shone brightly. One of the drawbacks about adventures is that when you come to the most beautiful places you are often too anxious and hurried to appreciate them; so that Aravis (though she remembered them years later) had only a vague impression of grey lawns, quietly bubbling fountains, and the long black shadows of cypress trees.

When they reached the very bottom and the wall rose frowning above them, Lasaraleen was shaking so that she could not unbolt the gate. Aravis did it. There, at last, was the river, full of reflected moonlight, and a little landing stage and a few pleasure boats.

“Good-bye,” said Aravis, “and thank you. I’m sorry if I’ve been a pig. But think what I’m flying from!”

“Oh Aravis darling,” said Lasaraleen. “Won’t you change your mind? Now that you’ve seen what a very great man Ahoshta is!”

“Great man!” said Aravis. “A hideous grovelling slave who flatters when he’s kicked but treasures it all up and hopes to get his own back by egging on that horrible Tisroc to plot his son’s death. Faugh! I’d sooner marry my father’s scullion than a creature like that.”

“Oh Aravis, Aravis! How can you say such dreadful things; and about the Tisroc (may he live for ever) too. It must be right if *he’s* going to do it!”

“Good-bye,” said Aravis, “and I thought your dresses lovely. And I think your house is lovely too. I’m sure you’ll have a lovely life — though it wouldn’t suit me. Close the door softly behind me.”

She tore herself away from her friend’s affectionate embraces, stepped into a punt, cast off, and a moment later was out in midstream, with a huge real moon overhead and a huge reflected moon down, deep down, in the river. The air was fresh and cool and as she drew near the further bank she heard the hooting of an owl. “Ah! That’s better!” thought Aravis. She had always lived in the country and had hated every minute of her time in Tashbaan.

When she stepped ashore she found herself in darkness for the rise of the ground, and the trees, cut off the moonlight. But she managed to find the same road that Shasta had found, and came just as he had done to the end of the grass and the beginning of the sand, and looked (like him) to her left and saw the big, black Tombs. And now at last, brave girl though she was, her heart quailed. Supposing the others weren’t there! Supposing the ghouls were! But she stuck out her chin (and a little bit of her tongue too) and went straight towards them.

But before she had reached them she saw Bree and Hwin and the groom.

“You can go back to your mistress now,” said Aravis (quite forgetting that he couldn’t, until the city gates opened next morning). “Here is money for your pains.”

“To hear is to obey,” said the groom, and at once set off at a remarkable speed in the direction of the city. There was no need to tell him to make haste: he also had been thinking a good deal about ghouls.

For the next few seconds Aravis was busy kissing the noses and patting the necks of Hwin and Bree just as if they were quite ordinary horses.

“And here comes Shasta! Thanks be to the Lion!” said Bree.

Aravis looked round, and there, right enough, was Shasta who had come out of hiding the moment he saw the groom going away.

“And now,” said Aravis. “There’s not a moment to lose.” And in hasty words she told them about Rabadash’s expedition.

“Treacherous hounds!” said Bree, shaking his mane and stamping with his hoof. “An attack in time of peace, without defiance sent! But we’ll grease his oats for him. We’ll be there before he is.”

“Can we?” said Aravis, swinging herself into Hwin’s saddle. Shasta wished he could mount like that.

“Brooh-hooh!” snorted Bree. “Up you get, Shasta. Can we! And with a good start too!”

“He said he was going to start at once,” said Aravis.

“That’s how humans talk,” said Bree. “But you don’t get a company of two hundred horse and horsemen watered and victualled and armed and saddled and started all in a minute. Now: what’s our direction? Due North?”

“No,” said Shasta. “I know about that. I’ve drawn a line. I’ll explain later. Bear a bit to our left, both you horses. Ah — here it is!”

“Now,” said Bree. “All that about galloping for a day and a night, like in stories, can’t really be done. It must be walk and trot: but brisk trots and short walks. And whenever we walk you two humans can slip off and walk too. Now. Are you ready, Hwin? Off we go. Narnia and the North!”

At first it was delightful. The night had now been going on for so many hours that the sand had almost finished giving back all the sun-heat it had received during the day, and the air was cool, fresh, and clear. Under the moonlight the sand, in every direction and as far as they could see, gleamed as if it were smooth water or a great silver tray. Except for the noise of Bree’s and Hwin’s hoofs there was not a sound to be heard. Shasta would nearly have fallen asleep if he had not had to dismount and walk every now and then.

This seemed to last for hours. Then there came a time when there was no longer any moon. They seemed to ride in the dead darkness for hours and hours. And after that there came a moment when Shasta noticed that he could see Bree’s neck and head in front of him a little more clearly than before; and slowly, very slowly, he began to notice the vast grey flatness on every side. It looked absolutely dead, like something in a dead world; and Shasta felt quite terribly tired and noticed that he was getting cold and that

his lips were dry. And all the time the squeak of the leather, the jingle of the bits, and the noise of the hoofs — not *Propputty-propputty* as it would be on a hard road, but *Thubbudy-thubbudy* on the dry sand.

At last, after hours of riding, far away on his right there came a single long streak of paler grey, low down on the horizon. Then a streak of red. It was the morning at last, but without a single bird to sing about it. He was glad of the walking bits now, for he was colder than ever.

Then suddenly the sun rose and everything changed in a moment. The grey sand turned yellow and twinkled as if it was strewn with diamonds. On their left the shadows of Shasta and Hwin and Bree and Aravis, enormously long, raced beside them. The double peak of Mount Pire, far ahead, flashed in the sunlight and Shasta saw they were a little out of the course. “A bit left, a bit left,” he sang out. Best of all, when you looked back, Tashbaan was already small and remote. The Tombs were quite invisible: swallowed up in that single, jagged-edged hump which was the city of the Tisroc. Everyone felt better.

But not for long. Though Tashbaan looked very far away when they first saw it, it refused to look any further away as they went on. Shasta gave up looking back at it, for it only gave him the feeling that they were not moving at all. Then the light became a nuisance. The glare of the sand made his eyes ache: but he knew he mustn’t shut them. He must screw them up and keep on looking ahead at Mount Pire and shouting out directions. Then came the heat. He noticed it for the first time when he had to dismount and walk: as he slipped down to the sand the heat from it struck up into his face as if from the opening of an oven door. Next time it was worse. But the third time, as his bare feet touched the sand he screamed with pain and got one foot back in the stirrup and the other half over Bree’s back before you could have said knife.

“Sorry, Bree,” he gasped. “I can’t walk. It burns my feet.”

“Of course!” panted Bree. “Should have thought of that myself. Stay on. Can’t be helped.”

“It’s all right for *you*,” said Shasta to Aravis who was walking beside Hwin. “You’ve got shoes on.”

Aravis said nothing and looked prim. Let’s hope she didn’t mean to, but she did.

On again, trot and walk and trot, jingle-jingle-jingle, squeak-squeak-squeak, smell of hot horse, smell of hot self, blinding glare, headache. And

nothing at all different for mile after mile. Tashbaan would never look any further away. The mountains would never look any nearer. You felt this had been going on for always — jingle-jingle-jingle, squeak-squeak-squeak, smell of hot horse, smell of hot self.

Of course one tried all sorts of games with oneself to try to make the time pass: and of course they were all no good. And one tried very hard not to think of drinks — iced sherbet in a palace at Tashbaan, clear spring water tinkling with a dark earthy sound, cold, smooth milk just creamy enough and not too creamy — and the harder you tried not to think, the more you thought.

At last there was something different — a mass of rock sticking up out of the sand about fifty yards long and thirty feet high. It did not cast much shadow, for the sun was now very high, but it cast a little. Into that shade they crowded. There they ate some food and drank a little water. It is not easy giving a horse a drink out of a skin bottle, but Bree and Hwin were clever with their lips. No-one had anything like enough. No-one spoke. The horses were flecked with foam and their breathing was noisy. The children were pale.

After a very short rest they went on again. Same noises, same smells, same glare, till at last their shadows began to fall on their right, and then got longer and longer till they seemed to stretch out to the eastern end of the world. Very slowly the sun drew nearer to the western horizon. And now at last he was down and, thank goodness, the merciless glare was gone, though the heat coming up from the sand was still as bad as ever. Four pairs of eyes were looking out eagerly for any sign of the valley that Sallowpad the Raven had spoken about. But, mile after mile, there was nothing but level sand. And now the day was quite definitely done, and most of the stars were out, and still the Horses thundered on and the children rose and sank in their saddles, miserable with thirst and weariness. Not till the moon had risen did Shasta — in the strange, barking voice of someone whose mouth is perfectly dry — shout out:

“There it is!”

There was no mistaking it now. Ahead, and a little to their right, there was at last a slope: a slope downward and hummocks of rock on each side. The Horses were far too tired to speak but they swung round towards it and in a minute or two they were entering the gully. At first it was worse in there than it had been out in the open desert, for there was a breathless

stuffiness between the rocky walls and less moonlight. The slope continued steeply downwards and the rocks on either hand rose to the height of cliffs. Then they began to meet vegetation — prickly cactus-like plants and coarse grass of the kind that would prick your fingers. Soon the horse-hoofs were falling on pebbles and stones instead of sand. Round every bend of the valley — and it had many bends — they looked eagerly for water. The Horses were nearly at the end of their strength now, and Hwin, stumbling and panting, was lagging behind Bree. They were almost in despair before at last they came to a little muddiness and a tiny trickle of water through softer and better grass. And the trickle became a brook, and the brook became a stream with bushes on each side, and the stream became a river, and there came (after more disappointments than I could possibly describe) a moment when Shasta, who had been in a kind of doze, suddenly realised that Bree had stopped and found himself slipping off. Before them a little cataract of water poured into a broad pool: and both the Horses were already in the pool with their heads down, drinking, drinking, drinking. “O-o-oh,” said Shasta and plunged in — it was about up to his knees — and stooped his head right into the cataract. It was perhaps the loveliest moment in his life.

It was about ten minutes later when all four of them (the two children wet nearly all over) came out and began to notice their surroundings. The moon was now high enough to peep down into the valley. There was soft grass on both sides of the river, and beyond the grass, trees and bushes sloped up to the bases of the cliffs. There must have been some wonderful flowering shrubs hidden in that shadowy undergrowth for the whole glade was full of the coolest and most delicious smells. And out of the darkest recess among the trees there came a sound Shasta had never heard before — a nightingale.

Everyone was much too tired to speak or to eat. The Horses, without waiting to be unsaddled, lay down at once. So did Aravis and Shasta.

About ten minutes later the careful Hwin said, “But we mustn’t go to sleep. We’ve got to keep ahead of that Rabadash.”

“No,” said Bree very slowly. “Mustn’t go sleep. Just a little rest.”

Shasta knew (for a moment) that they would all go to sleep if he didn’t get up and do something about it, and felt that he ought to. In fact he decided that he would get up and persuade them to go on. But presently; not yet: not just yet....

Very soon the moon shone and the nightingale sang over two horses and two human children, all fast asleep.

It was Aravis who awoke first. The sun was already high in the heavens and the cool morning hours were already wasted. “It’s my fault,” she said to herself furiously as she jumped up and began rousing the others. “One wouldn’t expect Horses to keep awake after a day’s work like that, even if they *can* talk. And of course that Boy wouldn’t; he’s had no decent training. But *I* ought to have known better.”

The others were dazed and stupid with the heaviness of their sleep.

“Heigh-ho — broo-hoo,” said Bree. “Been sleeping in my saddle, eh? I’ll never do that again. Most uncomfortable — —”

“Oh come on, come on,” said Aravis. “We’ve lost half the morning already. There isn’t a moment to spare.”

“A fellow’s got to have a mouthful of grass,” said Bree.

“I’m afraid we can’t wait,” said Aravis.

“What’s the terrible hurry?” said Bree. “We’ve crossed the desert, haven’t we?”

“But we’re not in Archenland yet,” said Aravis. “And we’ve got to get there before Rabadash.”

“Oh, we must be miles ahead of him,” said Bree. “Haven’t we been coming a shorter way? Didn’t that Raven friend of yours say this was a short cut, Shasta?”

“He didn’t say anything about *shorter*,” answered Shasta. “He only said *better*, because you got to a river this way. If the oasis is due North of Tashbaan, then I’m afraid this may be longer.”

“Well I can’t go on without a snack,” said Bree. “Take my bridle off, Shasta.”

“P-please,” said Hwin, very shyly, “I feel just like Bree that I *can’t* go on. But when Horses have humans (with spurs and things) on their backs, aren’t they often made to go on when they’re feeling like this? and then they find they can. I m-mean — oughtn’t we to be able to do even more, now that we’re free. It’s all for Narnia.”

“I think, Ma’am,” said Bree very crushingly, “that I know a little more about campaigns and forced marches and what a horse can stand than you do.”

To this Hwin made no answer, being, like most highly bred mares, a very nervous and gentle person who was easily put down. In reality she was

quite right, and if Bree had had a Tarkaan on his back at that moment to make him go on, he would have found that he was good for several hours' hard going. But one of the worst results of being a slave and being forced to do things is that when there is no-one to force you any more you find you have almost lost the power of forcing yourself.

So they had to wait while Bree had a snack and a drink, and of course Hwin and the children had a snack and a drink too. It must have been nearly eleven o'clock in the morning before they finally got going again. And even then Bree took things much more gently than yesterday. It was really Hwin, though she was the weaker and more tired of the two, who set the pace.

The valley itself, with its brown, cool river, and grass and moss and wild flowers and rhododendrons, was such a pleasant place that it made you want to ride slowly.

Chapter X

THE HERMIT OF THE SOUTHERN MARCH

After they had ridden for several hours down the valley, it widened out and they could see what was ahead of them. The river which they had been following here joined a broader river, wide and turbulent, which flowed from their left to their right, towards the east. Beyond this new river a delightful country rose gently in low hills, ridge beyond ridge, to the Northern Mountains themselves. To the right there were rocky pinnacles, one or two of them with snow clinging to the ledges. To the left, pine-clad slopes, frowning cliffs, narrow gorges, and blue peaks stretched away as far as the eye could reach. He could no longer make out Mount Pire. Straight ahead the mountain range sank to a wooded saddle which of course must be the pass from Archenland into Narnia.

"Broo-hoo-hoo, the North, the green North!" neighed Bree: and certainly the lower hills looked greener and fresher than anything that Aravis and Shasta, with their southern-bred eyes, had ever imagined. Spirits rose as they clattered down to the water's-meet of the two rivers.

The eastern-flowing river, which was pouring from the higher mountains at the western end of the range, was far too swift and too broken with rapids for them to think of swimming it; but after some casting about, up and down the bank, they found a place shallow enough to wade. The roar and clatter of water, the great swirl against the horses' fetlocks, the cool, stirring air and the darting dragon-flies, filled Shasta with a strange excitement.

"Friends, we are in Archenland!" said Bree proudly as he splashed and churned his way out on the northern bank. "I think that river we've just crossed is called the Winding Arrow."

"I hope we're in time," murmured Hwin.

Then they began going up, slowly and zigzagging a good deal, for the hills were steep. It was all open park-like country with no roads or houses in sight. Scattered trees, never thick enough to be a forest, were everywhere. Shasta, who had lived all his life in an almost tree-less grassland, had never seen so many or so many kinds. If you had been there you would probably have known (he didn't) that he was seeing oaks, beeches, silver birches, rowans and sweet chestnuts. Rabbits scurried away in every direction as

they advanced, and presently they saw a whole herd of fallow deer making off among the trees.

“Isn’t it simply glorious!” said Aravis.

At the first ridge Shasta turned in the saddle and looked back. There was no sign of Tashbaan; the desert, unbroken except by the narrow green crack which they had travelled down, spread to the horizon.

“Hullo!” he said suddenly. “What’s that?”

“What’s what?” said Bree, turning round. Hwin and Aravis did the same.

“That,” said Shasta, pointing. “It looks like smoke. Is it a fire?”

“Sand-storm, I should say,” said Bree.

“Not much wind to raise it,” said Aravis.

“Oh!” exclaimed Hwin. “Look! There are things flashing in it. Look! They’re helmets — and armour. And it’s moving: moving this way.”

“By Tash!” said Aravis. “It’s the army. It’s Rabadash.”

“Of course it is,” said Hwin. “Just what I was afraid of. Quick! We must get to Anvard before it.” And without another word she whisked round and began galloping north. Bree tossed his head and did the same.

“Come on, Bree, come on,” yelled Aravis over her shoulder.

This race was very gruelling for the Horses. As they topped each ridge they found another valley and another ridge beyond it; and though they knew they were going in more or less the right direction, no one knew how far it was to Anvard. From the top of the second ridge Shasta looked back again. Instead of a dust-cloud well out in the desert he now saw a black, moving mass, rather like ants, on the far bank of the Winding Arrow. They were doubtless looking for a ford.

“They’re on the river!” he yelled wildly.

“Quick! Quick!” shouted Aravis. “We might as well not have come at all if we don’t reach Anvard in time. Gallop, Bree, gallop. Remember you’re a war-horse.”

It was all Shasta could do to prevent himself from shouting out similar instructions; but he thought, “The poor chap’s doing all he can already,” and held his tongue. And certainly both Horses were doing, if not all they could, all they thought they could; which is not quite the same thing. Bree had caught up with Hwin and they thundered side by side over the turf. It didn’t look as if Hwin could possibly keep it up much longer.

At that moment everyone’s feelings were completely altered by a sound from behind. It was not the sound they had been expecting to hear — the

noise of hoofs and jingling armour, mixed, perhaps, with Calormene battle-cries. Yet Shasta knew it at once. It was the same snarling roar he had heard that moonlit night when they first met Aravis and Hwin. Bree knew it too. His eyes gleamed red and his ears lay flat back on his skull. And Bree now discovered that he had not really been going as fast — not quite as fast — as he could. Shasta felt the change at once. Now they were really going all out. In a few seconds they were well ahead of Hwin.

"It's not fair," thought Shasta. "I *did* think we'd be safe from lions here!"

He looked over his shoulder. Everything was only too clear. A huge tawny creature, its body low to the ground, like a cat streaking across the lawn to a tree when a strange dog has got into the garden, was behind them. And it was nearer every second and half second.

He looked forward again and saw something which he did not take in, or even think about. Their way was barred by a smooth green wall about ten feet high. In the middle of that wall there was a gate, open. In the middle of the gateway stood a tall man dressed, down to his bare feet, in a robe coloured like autumn leaves, leaning on a straight staff. His beard fell almost to his knees.

Shasta saw all this in a glance and looked back again. The lion had almost got Hwin now. It was making snaps at her hind legs, and there was no hope now in her foam-flecked, wide-eyed face.

"Stop," bellowed Shasta in Bree's ear. "Must go back. Must help!"

Bree always said afterwards that he never heard, or never understood this; and as he was in general a very truthful horse we must accept his word.

Shasta slipped his feet out of the stirrups, slid both his legs over on the left side, hesitated for one hideous hundredth of a second, and jumped. It hurt horribly and nearly winded him; but before he knew how it hurt him he was staggering back to help Aravis. He had never done anything like this in his life before and hardly knew why he was doing it now.

One of the most terrible noises in the world, a horse's scream, broke from Hwin's lips. Aravis was stooping low over Hwin's neck and seemed to be trying to draw her sword. And now all three — Aravis, Hwin, and the lion — were almost on top of Shasta. Before they reached him the lion rose on its hind legs, larger than you would have believed a lion could be, and jabbed at Aravis with its right paw. Shasta could see all the terrible claws extended. Aravis screamed and reeled in the saddle. The lion was tearing her shoulders. Shasta, half mad with horror, managed to lurch towards the

brute. He had no weapon, not even a stick or a stone. He shouted out, idiotically, at the lion as one would at a dog. “Go home! Go home!” For a fraction of a second he was staring right into its wide-opened, raging mouth. Then, to his utter astonishment, the lion, still on its hind legs, checked itself suddenly, turned head over heels, picked itself up, and rushed away.

Shasta did not for a moment suppose it had gone for good. He turned and raced for the gate in the green wall which, now for the first time, he remembered seeing. Hwin, stumbling and nearly fainting, was just entering the gate: Aravis still kept her seat but her back was covered with blood.

“Come in, my daughter, come in,” the robed and bearded man was saying, and then “Come in, my son” as Shasta panted up to him. He heard the gate closed behind him; and the bearded stranger was already helping Aravis off her horse.

They were in a wide and perfectly circular enclosure, protected by a high wall of green turf. A pool of perfectly still water, so full that the water was almost exactly level with the ground, lay before him. At one end of the pool, completely overshadowing it with its branches, there grew the hugest and most beautiful tree that Shasta had ever seen. Beyond the pool was a little low house of stone roofed with deep and ancient thatch. There was a sound of bleating and over at the far side of the enclosure there were some goats. The level ground was completely covered with the finest grass.

“Are — are — are you,” panted Shasta. “Are you King Lune of Archenland?”

The old man shook his head. “No,” he replied in a quiet voice, “I am the Hermit of the Southern March. And now, my son, waste no time on questions, but obey. This damsel is wounded. Your horses are spent. Rabadash is at this moment finding a ford over the Winding Arrow. If you run now, without a moment’s rest, you will still be in time to warn King Lune.”

Shasta’s heart fainted at these words for he felt he had no strength left. And he writhed inside at what seemed the cruelty and unfairness of the demand. He had not yet learned that if you do one good deed your reward usually is to be set to do another and harder and better one. But all he said out loud was:

“Where is the King?”

The Hermit turned and pointed with his staff. “Look,” he said. “There is another gate, right opposite to the one you entered by. Open it and go

straight ahead: always straight ahead, over level or steep, over smooth or rough, over dry or wet. I know by my art that you will find King Lune straight ahead. But run, run: always run."

Shasta nodded his head, ran to the northern gate and disappeared beyond it. Then the Hermit took Aravis, whom he had all this time been supporting with his left arm, and half led, half carried her into the house. After a long time he came out again.

"Now, cousins," he said to the Horses. "It is your turn."

Without waiting for an answer — and indeed they were too exhausted to speak — he took the bridles and saddles off both of them. Then he rubbed them both down, so well that a groom in a king's stable could not have done it better.

"There, cousins," he said, "dismiss it all from your minds and be comforted. Here is water and there is grass. You shall have a hot mash when I have milked my other cousins, the goats."

"Sir," said Hwin, finding her voice at last, "will the Tarkheena live? Has the lion killed her?"

"I who know many present things by my art," replied the Hermit with a smile, "have yet little knowledge of things future. Therefore I do not know whether any man or woman or beast in the whole world will be alive when the sun sets to-night. But be of good hope. The damsel is likely to live as long as any of her age."

When Aravis came to herself she found that she was lying on her face on a low bed of extraordinary softness in a cool, bare room with walls of undressed stone. She couldn't understand why she had been laid on her face; but when she tried to turn and felt the hot, burning pains all over her back, she remembered, and realised why. She couldn't understand what delightfully springy stuff the bed was made of, because it was made of heather (which is the best bedding) and heather was a thing she had never seen or heard of.

The door opened and the Hermit entered, carrying a large wooden bowl in his hand. After carefully setting this down, he came to the bedside, and asked:

"How do you find yourself, my daughter?"

"My back is very sore, father," said Aravis, "but there is nothing else wrong with me."

He knelt beside her, laid his hand on her forehead, and felt her pulse.

“There is no fever,” he said. “You will do well. Indeed there is no reason why you should not get up to-morrow. But now, drink this.”

He fetched the wooden bowl and held it to her lips. Aravis couldn’t help making a face when she tasted it, for goats’ milk is rather a shock when you are not used to it. But she was very thirsty and managed to drink it all and felt better when she had finished.

“Now, daughter, you may sleep when you wish,” said the Hermit. “For your wounds are washed and dressed and though they smart they are no more serious than if they had been the cuts of a whip. It must have been a very strange lion; for instead of catching you out of the saddle and getting his teeth into you, he has only drawn his claws across your back. Ten scratches: sore, but not deep or dangerous.”

“I say!” said Aravis. “I *have* had luck.”

“Daughter,” said the Hermit, “I have now lived a hundred and nine winters in this world and have never yet met any such thing as Luck. There is something about all this that I do not understand: but if ever we need to know it, you may be sure that we shall.”

“And what about Rabadash and his two hundred horse?” asked Aravis.

“They will not pass this way, I think,” said the Hermit. “They must have found a ford by now well to the east of us. From there they will try to ride straight to Anvard.”

“Poor Shasta!” said Aravis. “Has he far to go? Will he get there first?”

“There is good hope of it,” said the old man.

Aravis lay down again (on her side this time) and said, “Have I been asleep for a long time? It seems to be getting dark.”

The Hermit was looking out of the only window, which faced north. “This is not the darkness of night,” he said presently. “The clouds are rolling down from Stormness Head. Our foul weather always comes from there in these parts. There will be thick fog to-night.”

Next day, except for her sore back, Aravis felt so well that after breakfast (which was porridge and cream) the Hermit said she could get up. And of course she at once went out to speak to the Horses. The weather had changed and the whole of that green enclosure was filled, like a great green cup, with sunlight. It was a very peaceful place, lonely and quiet.

Hwin at once trotted across to Aravis and gave her a horse-kiss.

“But where’s Bree?” said Aravis when each had asked after the other’s health and sleep.

“Over there,” said Hwin, pointing with her nose to the far side of the circle. “And I wish you’d come and talk to him. There’s something wrong, I can’t get a word out of him.”

They strolled across and found Bree lying with his face towards the wall, and though he must have heard them coming, he never turned his head or spoke a word.

“Good morning, Bree,” said Aravis. “How are you this morning?”

Bree muttered something that no one could hear.

“The Hermit says that Shasta probably got to King Lune in time,” continued Aravis, “so it looks as if all our troubles were over. Narnia, at last, Bree!”

“I shall never see Narnia,” said Bree in a low voice.

“Aren’t you well, Bree dear?” said Aravis.

Bree turned round at last, his face mournful as only a horse’s can be.

“I shall go back to Calormen,” he said.

“What?” said Aravis. “Back to slavery!”

“Yes,” said Bree. “Slavery is all I’m fit for. How can I ever show my face among the free Horses of Narnia? — I who left a mare and a girl and a boy to be eaten by lions while I galloped all I could to save my own wretched skin!”

“We all ran as hard as we could,” said Hwin.

“Shasta didn’t!” snorted Bree. “At least he ran in the right direction: ran *back*. And that is what shames me most of all. I, who called myself a war-horse and boasted of a hundred fights, to be beaten by a little human boy — a child, a mere foal, who had never held a sword nor had any good nurture or example in his life!”

“I know,” said Aravis. “I felt just the same. Shasta was marvellous. I’m just as bad as you, Bree. I’ve been snubbing him and looking down on him ever since you met us and now he turns out to be the best of us all. But I think it would be better to stay and say we’re sorry than to go back to Calormen.”

“It’s all very well for you,” said Bree. “You haven’t disgraced yourself. But I’ve lost everything.”

“My good Horse,” said the Hermit, who had approached them unnoticed because his bare feet made so little noise on that sweet, dewy grass. “My good Horse, you’ve lost nothing but your self-conceit. No, no, cousin. Don’t put back your ears and shake your mane at me. If you are really so

humbled as you sounded a minute ago, you must learn to listen to sense. You're not quite the great horse you had come to think, from living among poor dumb horses. Of course you were braver and cleverer than *them*. You could hardly help being that. It doesn't follow that you'll be anyone very special in Narnia. But as long as you know you're nobody very special, you'll be a very decent sort of Horse, on the whole, and taking one thing with another. And now, if you and my other four-footed cousin will come round to the kitchen door we'll see about the other half of that mash."

Chapter XI

THE UNWELCOME FELLOW TRAVELLER

When Shasta went through the gate he found a slope of grass and a little heather running up before him to some trees. He had nothing to think about now and no plans to make: he had only to run, and that was quite enough. His limbs were shaking, a terrible stitch was beginning in his side, and the sweat that kept dropping into his eyes blinded them and made them smart. He was unsteady on his feet too, and more than once he nearly turned his ankle on a loose stone.

The trees were thicker now than they had yet been and in the more open spaces there was bracken. The sun had gone in without making it any cooler. It had become one of those hot, grey days when there seem to be twice as many flies as usual. Shasta's face was covered with them; he didn't even try to shake them off — he had too much else to do.

Suddenly he heard a horn — not a great throbbing horn like the horns of Tashbaan but a merry call, Ti-ro-to-to-ho! Next moment he came out into a wide glade and found himself in a crowd of people.

At least, it looked a crowd to him. In reality there were about fifteen or twenty of them, all gentlemen in green hunting dress, with their horses; some in the saddle and some standing by their horses' heads. In the centre someone was holding the stirrup for a man to mount. And the man he was holding it for was the jolliest, fat, apple-cheeked, twinkling-eyed King you could imagine.

As soon as Shasta came in sight this King forgot all about mounting his horse. He spread out his arms to Shasta, his face lit up, and he cried out in a great, deep voice that seemed to come from the bottom of his chest.

"Corin! My son! And on foot, and in rags! What — —"

"No," panted Shasta, shaking his head. "Not Prince Corin. I — I — know I'm like him... saw his Highness in Tashbaan ... sent his greetings."

The King was staring at Shasta with an extraordinary expression on his face.

"Are you K-King Lune?" gasped Shasta. And then, without waiting for an answer, "Lord King — fly — Anvard — shut the gates — enemies upon you — Rabadash and two hundred horse."

“Have you assurance of this, boy?” asked one of the other gentlemen.

“My own eyes,” said Shasta. “I’ve seen them. Raced them all the way from Tashbaan.”

“On foot?” said the gentleman, raising his eyebrows a little.

“Horses — with the Hermit,” said Shasta.

“Question him no more, Darrin,” said King Lune. “I see truth in his face. We must ride for it, gentlemen. A spare horse there, for the boy. You can ride fast, friend?”

For answer Shasta put his foot in the stirrup of the horse which had been led towards him and a moment later he was in the saddle. He had done it a hundred times with Bree in the last few weeks, and his mounting was very different now from what it had been on that first night when Bree had said that he climbed up a horse as if he were climbing a haystack.

He was pleased to hear the Lord Darrin say to the King, “The boy has a true horseman’s seat, Sire. I’ll warrant there’s noble blood in him.”

“His blood, aye, there’s the point,” said the King. And he stared hard at Shasta again with that curious expression, almost a hungry expression, in his steady, grey eyes.

But by now the whole party was moving off at a brisk canter. Shasta’s seat was excellent but he was sadly puzzled what to do with his reins, for he had never touched the reins while he was on Bree’s back. But he looked very carefully out of the corners of his eyes to see what the others were doing (as some of us have done at parties when we weren’t quite sure which knife or fork we were meant to use) and tried to get his fingers right. But he didn’t dare to try really directing the horse; he trusted it would follow the rest. The horse was of course an ordinary horse, not a Talking Horse; but it had quite wits enough to realise that the strange boy on its back had no whip and no spurs and was not really master of the situation. That was why Shasta soon found himself at the tail end of the procession.

Even so, he was going pretty fast. There were no flies now and the air in his face was delicious. He had got his breath back too. And his errand had succeeded. For the first time since the arrival at Tashbaan (how long ago it seemed!) he was beginning to enjoy himself.

He looked up to see how much nearer the mountain tops had come. To his disappointment he could not see them at all: only a vague greyness, rolling down towards them. He had never been in mountain country before and was surprised. “It’s a cloud,” he said to himself, “a cloud coming down.

I see. Up here in the hills one is really in the sky. I shall see what the inside of a cloud is like. What fun! I've often wondered." Far away on his left, and a little behind him, the sun was getting ready to set.

They had come to a rough kind of road by now and were making very good speed. But Shasta's horse was still the last of the lot. Once or twice when the road made a bend (there was now continuous forest on each side of it) he lost sight of the others for a second or two.

Then they plunged into the fog, or else the fog rolled over them. The world became grey. Shasta had not realised how cold and wet the inside of a cloud would be; nor how dark. The grey turned to black with alarming speed.

Someone at the head of the column winded the horn every now and then, and each time the sound came from a little further off. He couldn't see any of the others now, but of course he'd be able to as soon as he got round the next bend. But when he rounded it he still couldn't see them. In fact he could see nothing at all. His horse was walking now. "Get on, Horse, get on," said Shasta. Then came the horn, very faint. Bree had always told him that he must keep his heels well turned out, and Shasta had got the idea that something very terrible would happen if he dug his heels into a horse's sides. This seemed to him an occasion for trying it. "Look here, Horse," he said, "if you don't buck up, do you know what I'll do? I'll dig my heels into you. I really will." The horse, however, took no notice of this threat. So Shasta settled himself firmly in the saddle, gripped with his knees, clenched his teeth, and punched both the horse's sides with his heels as hard as he could.

The only result was that the horse broke into a kind of pretence of a trot for five or six paces and then subsided into a walk again. And now it was quite dark and they seemed to have given up blowing that horn. The only sound was a steady drip-drip from the branches of the trees.

"Well, I suppose even a walk will get us somewhere sometime," said Shasta to himself. "I only hope I shan't run into Rabadash and his people."

He went on for what seemed a long time, always at a walking pace. He began to hate that horse, and he was also beginning to feel very hungry.

Presently he came to a place where the road divided into two. He was just wondering which led to Anvard when he was startled by a noise from behind him. It was the noise of trotting horses. "Rabadash!" thought Shasta. He had no way of guessing which road Rabadash would take. "But if I take

one," said Shasta to himself, "he *may* take the other: and if I stay at the cross-roads I'm sure to be caught." He dismounted and led his horse as quickly as he could along the right-hand road.

The sound of the cavalry grew rapidly nearer and in a minute or two Shasta realised that they were at the cross-roads. He held his breath, waiting to see which way they would take.

There came a low word of command "Halt!" then a moment of horsey noises — nostrils blowing, hoofs pawing, bits being champed, necks being patted. Then a voice spoke.

"Attend, all of you," it said. "We are now within a furlong of the castle. Remember your orders. Once we are in Narnia, as we should be by sunrise, you are to kill as little as possible. On this venture you are to regard every drop of Narnian blood as more precious than a gallon of your own. On *this* venture, I say. The gods will send us a happier hour and then you must leave nothing alive between Cair Paravel and the Western Waste. But we are not yet in Narnia. Here in Archenland it is another thing. In the assault on this castle of King Lune's, nothing matters but speed. Show your mettle. It must be mine within an hour. And if it is, I give it all to you. I reserve no booty for myself. Kill me every barbarian male within its walls, down to the child that was born yesterday, and everything else is yours to divide as you please — the women, the gold, the jewels, the weapons, and the wine. The man that I see hanging back when we come to the gates shall be burned alive. In the name of Tash the irresistible, the inexorable — forward!"

With a great cloppitty-clop the column began to move, and Shasta breathed again. They had taken the other road.

Shasta thought they took a long time going past, for though he had been talking and thinking about "two hundred horse" all day, he had not realised how many they really were. But at last the sound died away and once more he was alone amid the drip-drip from the trees.

He now knew the way to Anvard but of course he could not now go there: that would only mean running into the arms of Rabadash's troopers. "What on earth am I to do?" said Shasta to himself. But he remounted his horse and continued along the road he had chosen, in the faint hope of finding some cottage where he might ask for shelter and a meal. He had thought, of course, of going back to Aravis and Bree and Hwin at the hermitage, but he couldn't because by now he had not the least idea of the direction.

“After all,” said Shasta, “this road is bound to get to somewhere.”

But that all depends on what you mean by somewhere. The road kept on getting to somewhere in the sense that it got to more and more trees, all dark and dripping and to colder and colder air. And strange, icy winds kept blowing the mist past him though they never blew it away. If he had been used to mountain country he would have realised that this meant he was now very high up — perhaps right at the top of the pass. But Shasta knew nothing about mountains.

“I *do* think,” said Shasta, “that I must be the most unfortunate boy that ever lived in the whole world. Everything goes right for everyone except me. Those Narnian lords and ladies got safe away from Tashbaan; I was left behind. Aravis and Bree and Hwin are all as snug as anything with that old Hermit: of course I was the one who was sent on. King Lune and his people must have got safely into the castle and shut the gates long before Rabadash arrived, but I get left out.”

And being very tired and having nothing inside him, he felt so sorry for himself that the tears rolled down his cheeks.

What put a stop to all this was a sudden fright. Shasta discovered that someone or somebody was walking beside him. It was pitch dark and he could see nothing. And the Thing (or Person) was going so quietly that he could hardly hear any footfalls. What he could hear was breathing. His invisible companion seemed to breathe on a very large scale, and Shasta got the impression that it was a very large creature. And he had come to notice this breathing so gradually that he had really no idea how long it had been there. It was a horrible shock.

It darted into his mind that he had heard long ago that there were giants in these Northern countries. He bit his lip in terror. But now that he really had something to cry about, he stopped crying.

The Thing (unless it was a Person) went on beside him so very quietly that Shasta began to hope he had only imagined it. But just as he was becoming quite sure of it, there suddenly came a deep, rich sigh out of the darkness beside him. That couldn’t be imagination! Anyway, he had felt the hot breath of that sigh on his chilly left hand.

If the horse had been any good — or if he had known how to get any good out of the horse — he would have risked everything on a break away and a wild gallop. But he knew he couldn’t make that horse gallop. So he

went on at a walking pace and the unseen companion walked and breathed beside him. At last he could bear it no longer.

"Who are you?" he said, scarcely above a whisper.

"One who has waited long for you to speak," said the Thing. Its voice was not loud, but very large and deep.

"Are you — are you a giant?" asked Shasta.

"You might call me a giant," said the Large Voice. "But I am not like the creatures you call giants."

"I can't see you at all," said Shasta, after staring very hard. Then (for an even more terrible idea had come into his head) he said, almost in a scream, "You're not — not something *dead*, are you? Oh please — please do go away. What harm have I ever done you? Oh, I am the unluckiest person in the whole world?"

Once more he felt the warm breath of the Thing on his hand and face. "There," it said, "that is not the breath of a ghost. Tell me your sorrows."

Shasta was a little reassured by the breath: so he told how he had never known his real father or mother and had been brought up sternly by the fisherman. And then he told the story of his escape and how they were chased by lions and forced to swim for their lives; and of all their dangers in Tashbaan and about his night among the Tombs and how the beasts howled at him out of the desert. And he told about the heat and thirst of their desert journey and how they were almost at their goal when another lion chased them and wounded Aravis. And also, how very long it was since he had had anything to eat.

"I do not call you unfortunate," said the Large Voice.

"Don't you think it was bad luck to meet so many lions?" said Shasta.

"There was only one lion," said the Voice.

"What on earth do you mean? I've just told you there were at least two the first night, and — —"

"There was only one: but he was swift of foot."

"How do you know?"

"I was the lion." And as Shasta gaped with open mouth and said nothing, the Voice continued. "I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the Horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed

the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."

"Then it was you who wounded Aravis?"

"It was I."

"But what for?"

"Child," said the Voice, "I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no-one any story but his own."

"Who are you?" asked Shasta.

"Myself," said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again "Myself," loud and clear and gay: and then the third time "Myself," whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all round you as if the leaves rustled with it.

Shasta was no longer afraid that the Voice belonged to something that would eat him, nor that it was the voice of a ghost. But a new and different sort of trembling came over him. Yet he felt glad too.

The mist was turning from black to grey and from grey to white. This must have begun to happen some time ago, but while he had been talking to the Thing he had not been noticing anything else. Now, the whiteness around him became a shining whiteness; his eyes began to blink. Somewhere ahead he could hear birds singing. He knew the night was over at last. He could see the mane and ears and head of his horse quite easily now. A golden light fell on them from the left. He thought it was the sun.

He turned and saw, pacing beside him, taller than the horse, a Lion. The horse did not seem to be afraid of it or else could not see it. It was from the Lion that the light came. No-one ever saw anything more terrible or beautiful.

Luckily Shasta had lived all his life too far south in Calormen to have heard the tales that were whispered in Tashbaan about a dreadful Narnian demon that appeared in the form of a lion. And of course he knew none of the true stories about Aslan, the great Lion, the son of the Emperor-over-sea, the King above all High Kings in Narnia. But after one glance at the Lion's face he slipped out of the saddle and fell at its feet. He couldn't say anything but then he didn't want to say anything, and he knew he needn't say anything.

The High King above all kings stooped towards him. Its mane, and some strange and solemn perfume that hung about the mane, was all round him. It touched his forehead with its tongue. He lifted his face and their eyes met.

Then instantly the pale brightness of the mist and the fiery brightness of the Lion rolled themselves together into a swirling glory and gathered themselves up and disappeared. He was alone with the horse on a grassy hillside under a blue sky. And there were birds singing.

Chapter XII

SHASTA IN NARNIA

"Was it all a dream?" wondered Shasta. But it couldn't have been a dream for there in the grass before him he saw the deep, large print of the Lion's front right paw. It took one's breath away to think of the weight that could make a footprint like that. But there was something more remarkable than the size about it. As he looked at it, water had already filled the bottom of it. Soon it was full to the brim, and then overflowing, and a little stream was running downhill, past him, over the grass.

Shasta stooped and drank — a very long drink — and then dipped his face in and splashed his head. It was extremely cold, and clear as glass, and refreshed him very much. After that he stood up, shaking the water out of his ears and flinging the wet hair back from his forehead, and began to take stock of his surroundings.

Apparently it was still very early morning. The sun had only just risen, and it had risen out of the forests which he saw low down and far away on his right. The country which he was looking at was absolutely new to him. It was a green valley-land dotted with trees through which he caught the gleam of a river that wound away roughly to the north-west. On the far side of the valley there were high and even rocky hills, but they were lower than the mountains he had seen yesterday. Then he began to guess where he was. He turned and looked behind him and saw that the slope on which he was standing belonged to a range of far higher mountains.

"I see," said Shasta to himself. "Those are the big mountains between Archenland and Narnia. I was on the other side of them yesterday. I must have come through the pass in the night. What luck that I hit it! — at least it wasn't luck at all really, it was *Him*. And now I'm in Narnia."

He turned and unsaddled his horse and took off its bridle— "Though you *are* a perfectly horrid horse," he said. It took no notice of this remark and immediately began eating grass. That horse had a very low opinion of Shasta.

"I wish I could eat grass!" thought Shasta. "It's no good going back to Anvard, it'll all be besieged. I'd better get lower down into the valley and see if I can get anything to eat."

So he went on downhill (the thick dew was cruelly cold to his bare feet) till he came into a wood. There was a kind of track running through it and he had not followed this for many minutes when he heard a thick and rather wheezy voice saying to him,

“Good morning, neighbour.”

Shasta looked round eagerly to find the speaker and presently saw a small, prickly person with a dark face who had just come out from among the trees. At least, it was small for a person but very big indeed for a hedgehog, which was what it was.

“Good morning,” said Shasta. “But I’m not a neighbour. In fact I’m a stranger in these parts.”

“Ah?” said the Hedgehog inquiringly.

“I’ve come over the mountains — from Archenland, you know.”

“Ah, Archenland,” said the Hedgehog. “That’s a terrible long way. Never been there myself.”

“And I think, perhaps,” said Shasta, “someone ought to be told that there’s an army of savage Calormenes attacking Anvard at this very moment.”

“You don’t say so!” answered the Hedgehog. “Well, think of that. And they do say that Calormen is hundreds and thousands of miles away, right at the world’s end, across a great sea of sand.”

“It’s not nearly as far as you think,” said Shasta. “And oughtn’t something to be done about this attack on Anvard. Oughtn’t your High King to be told?”

“Certain sure, something ought to be done about it,” said the Hedgehog. “But you see I’m just on my way to bed for a good day’s sleep. Hullo, neighbour!”

The last words were addressed to an immense biscuit-coloured rabbit whose head had just popped up from somewhere beside the path. The Hedgehog immediately told the Rabbit what it had just learned from Shasta. The Rabbit agreed that this was very remarkable news and that somebody ought to tell someone about it with a view to doing something.

And so it went on. Every few minutes they were joined by other creatures, some from the branches overhead and some from little underground houses at their feet, till the party consisted of five rabbits, a squirrel, two magpies, a goat-foot faun, and a mouse, who all talked at the same time and all agreed with the Hedgehog. For the truth was that in that

golden age when the Witch and the Winter had gone and Peter the High King ruled at Cair Paravel, the smaller woodland people of Narnia were so safe and happy that they were getting a little careless.

Presently, however, two more practical people arrived in the little wood. One was a Red Dwarf whose name appeared to be Duffle. The other was a stag, a beautiful lordly creature with wide liquid eyes, dappled flanks and legs so thin and graceful that they looked as if you could break them with two fingers.

“Lion alive!” roared the Dwarf as soon as he had heard the news. “And if that’s so, why are we all standing still, chattering? Enemies at Anvard! News must be sent to Cair Paravel at once. The army must be called out. Narnia must go to the aid of King Lune.”

“Ah!” said the Hedgehog. “But you won’t find the High King at the Cair. He’s away to the North trouncing those giants. And talking of giants, neighbours, that puts me in mind —

“Who’ll take our message?” interrupted the Dwarf. “Anyone here got more speed than me?”

“I’ve got speed,” said the Stag. “What’s my message? How many Calormenes?”

“Two hundred: under Prince Rabadash. And — —”

But the Stag was already away — all four legs off the ground at once, and in a moment its white stern had disappeared among the remoter trees.

“Wonder where he’s going,” said a Rabbit. “He won’t find the High King at Cair Paravel, you know.”

“He’ll find Queen Lucy,” said Duffle. “And then — hullo! What’s wrong with the Human? It looks pretty green. Why, I do believe it’s quite faint. Perhaps it’s mortal hungry. When did you last have a meal, youngster?”

“Yesterday morning,” said Shasta weakly.

“Come on, then, come on,” said the Dwarf, at once throwing his thick little arms round Shasta’s waist to support him. “Why, neighbours, we ought all to be ashamed of ourselves! You come with me, lad. Breakfast! better than talking.”

With a great deal of bustle, muttering reproaches to itself, the Dwarf half led and half supported Shasta at a great speed further into the wood and a little downhill. It was a longer walk than Shasta wanted at that moment and his legs had begun to feel very shaky before they came out from the trees

onto bare hillside. There they found a little house with a smoking chimney and an open door, and as they came to the doorway Duffle called out,

"Hey, brothers! A visitor for breakfast."

And immediately, mixed with a sizzling sound, there came to Shasta a simply delightful smell. It was one he had never smelled in his life before, but I hope you have. It was, in fact, the smell of bacon and eggs and mushrooms all frying in a pan.

"Mind your head, lad," said Duffle a moment too late, for Shasta had already bashed his forehead against the low lintel of the door. "Now," continued the Dwarf, "sit you down. The table's a bit low for you, but then the stool's low too. That's right. And here's porridge — and here's a jug of cream — and here's a spoon."

By the time Shasta had finished his porridge, the Dwarf's two brothers (whose names were Rogin and Bricklethumb) were putting the dish of bacon and eggs and mushrooms, and the coffee pot and the hot milk, and the toast, on the table.

It was all new and wonderful to Shasta for Calormene food is quite different. He didn't even know what the slices of brown stuff were, for he had never seen toast before. He didn't know what the yellow soft thing they smeared on the toast was, because in Calormen you nearly always get oil instead of butter. And the house itself was quite different from the dark, frowsty, fish-smelling hut of Arsheesh and from the pillared and carpeted halls in the palaces of Tashbaan. The roof was very low, and everything was made of wood and there was a cuckoo-clock and a red-and-white checked table-cloth and a bowl of wild flowers and little white curtains on the thick-paned windows. It was also rather troublesome having to use dwarf cups and plates and knives and forks. This meant that helpings were very small, but then there were a great many helpings, so that Shasta's plate or cup was being filled every moment, and every moment the Dwarfs themselves were saying, "Butter please," or "Another cup of coffee," or "I'd like a few more mushrooms," or "What about frying another egg or so?" And when at last they had all eaten as much as they possibly could the three Dwarfs drew lots for who would do the washing-up, and Rogin was the unlucky one. Then Duffle and Bricklethumb took Shasta outside to a bench which ran against the cottage wall, and they all stretched out their legs and gave a great sigh of contentment and the two Dwarfs lit their pipes. The dew was off the

grass now and the sun was warm; indeed, if there hadn't been a light breeze, it would have been too hot.

"Now, Stranger," said Duffle, "I'll show you the lie of the land. You can see nearly all South Narnia from here, and we're rather proud of the view. Right away on your left, beyond those near hills, you can just see the Western Mountains. And that round hill away on your right is called the Hill of the Stone Table. Just beyond — —"

But at that moment he was interrupted by a snore from Shasta who, what with his night's journey and his excellent breakfast, had gone fast asleep. The kindly Dwarfs, as soon as they noticed this, began making signs to each other not to wake him, and indeed did so much whispering and nodding and getting up and tiptoeing away that they certainly would have waked him if he had been less tired.

He slept pretty well nearly all day but woke up in time for supper. The beds in that house were all too small for him but they made him a fine bed of heather on the floor, and he never stirred nor dreamed all night. Next morning they had just finished breakfast when they heard a shrill, exciting sound from outside.

"Trumpets!" said all the Dwarfs, as they and Shasta all came running out.

The trumpets sounded again: a new noise to Shasta, not huge and solemn like the horns of Tashbaan nor gay and merry like King Lune's hunting horn, but clear and sharp and valiant. The noise was coming from the woods to the East, and soon there was a noise of horse-hoofs mixed with it. A moment later the head of the column came into sight.

First came the Lord Peridan on a bay horse carrying the great banner of Narnia — a red lion on a green ground. Shasta knew him at once. Then came three people riding abreast, two on great chargers and one on a pony. The two on the chargers were King Edmund and a fair-haired lady with a very merry face who wore a helmet and mail shirt and carried a bow across her shoulder and a quiver full of arrows at her side. ("The Queen Lucy," whispered Duffle.) But the one on the pony was Corin. After that came the main body of the army: men on ordinary horses, men on Talking Horses (who didn't mind being ridden on proper occasions, as when Narnia went to war), centaurs, stern, hard-bitten bears, great Talking Dogs, and last of all six giants. For there are good giants in Narnia. But though he knew they

were on the right side Shasta at first could hardly bear to look at them; there are some things that take a lot of getting used to.

Just as the King and Queen reached the cottage and the Dwarfs began making low bows to them, King Edmund called out,

"Now, friends! Time for a halt and a morsel!" and at once there was a great bustle of people dismounting and haversacks being opened and conversation beginning when Corin came running up to Shasta and seized both his hands and cried,

"What! *You* here! So you got through all right? I am glad. Now we shall have some sport. And isn't it luck! We only got into harbour at Cair Paravel yesterday morning and the very first person who met us was Chervy the Stag with all this news of an attack on Anvard. Don't you think —

"Who is your Highness's friend?" said King Edmund who had just got off his horse.

"Don't you see, Sire?" said Corin. "It's my double: the boy you mistook me for at Tashbaan."

"Why, so he is your double," exclaimed Queen Lucy. "As like as two twins. This is a marvellous thing."

"Please, your Majesty," said Shasta to King Edmund, "I was no traitor, really I wasn't. And I couldn't help hearing your plans. But I'd never have dreamed of telling them to your enemies."

"I know now that you were no traitor, boy," said King Edmund, laying his hand on Shasta's head. "But if you would not be taken for one, another time try not to hear what's meant for other ears. But all's well."

After that there was so much bustle and talk and coming and going that Shasta for a few minutes lost sight of Corin and Edmund and Lucy. But Corin was the sort of boy whom one is sure to hear of pretty soon and it wasn't very long before Shasta heard King Edmund saying in a loud voice:

"By the Lion's Mane, prince, this is too much! Will your Highness never be better? You are more of a heart's-scald than our whole army together! I'd as lief have a regiment of hornets in my command as you."

Shasta wormed his way through the crowd and there saw Edmund, looking very angry indeed, Corin looking a little ashamed of himself, and a strange Dwarf sitting on the ground making faces. A couple of fauns had apparently just been helping it out of its armour.

"If I had but my cordial with me," Queen Lucy was saying, "I could soon mend this. But the High King has so strictly charged me not to carry it

commonly to the wars and to keep it only for great extremities!”

What had happened was this. As soon as Corin had spoken to Shasta, Corin’s elbow had been plucked by a Dwarf in the army called Thornbut.

“What is it, Thornbut?” Corin had said.

“Your Royal Highness,” said Thornbut, drawing him aside, “our march to-day will bring us through the pass and right to your royal father’s castle. We may be in battle before night.”

“I know,” said Corin. “Isn’t it splendid!”

“Splendid or not,” said Thornbut, “I have the strictest orders from King Edmund to see to it that your Highness is not in the fight. You will be allowed to see it, and that’s treat enough for your Highness’s little years.”

“Oh what nonsense!” Corin burst out. “Of course I’m going to fight. Why, the Queen Lucy’s going to be with the archers.”

“The Queen’s grace will do as she pleases,” said Thornbut. “But you are in my charge. Either I must have your solemn and princely word that you’ll keep your pony beside mine — not half a neck ahead — till I give your Highness leave to depart: or else — it is his Majesty’s word — we must go with our wrists tied together like two prisoners.”

“I’ll knock you down if you try to bind me,” said Corin.

“I’d like to see your Highness do it,” said the Dwarf.

That was quite enough for a boy like Corin and in a second he and the Dwarf were at it hammer and tongs. It would have been an even match for, though Corin had longer arms and more height, the Dwarf was older and tougher. But it was never fought out (that’s the worst of fights on a rough hillside) for by very bad luck Thornbut trod on a loose stone, came flat down on his nose, and found when he tried to get up that he had sprained his ankle: a real excruciating sprain which would keep him from walking or riding for at least a fortnight.

“See what your Highness has done,” said King Edmund. “Deprived us of a proved warrior on the very edge of battle.”

“I’ll take his place, Sire,” said Corin.

“Pshaw,” said Edmund. “No-one doubts your courage. But a boy in battle is a danger only to his own side.”

At that moment the King was called away to attend to something else, and Corin, after apologising handsomely to the Dwarf, rushed up to Shasta and whispered,

“Quick. There’s a spare pony now, and the Dwarf’s armour. Put it on before anyone notices.”

“What for?” said Shasta.

“Why, so that you and I can fight in the battle of course! Don’t you want to?”

“Oh — ah, yes, of course,” said Shasta. But he hadn’t been thinking of doing so at all, and began to get a most uncomfortable prickly feeling in his spine.

“That’s right,” said Corin. “Over your head. Now the sword-belt. But we must ride near the tail of the column and keep as quiet as mice. Once the battle begins every one will be far too busy to notice us.”

Chapter XIII

THE FIGHT AT ANVARD

By about eleven o’clock the whole company was once more on the march, riding westward with the mountains on their left. Corin and Shasta rode right at the rear with the Giants immediately in front of them. Lucy and Edmund and Peridan were busy with their plans for the battle and though Lucy once said, “But where is his goosecap Highness?” Edmund only replied, “Not in the front, and that’s good news enough. Leave well alone.”

Shasta told Corin most of his adventures and explained that he had learned all his riding from a horse and didn’t really know how to use the reins. Corin instructed him in this, besides telling him all about their secret sailing from Tashbaan.

“And where is the Queen Susan?”

“At Cair Paravel,” said Corin. “She’s not like Lucy, you know, who’s as good as a man, or at any rate as good as a boy. Queen Susan is more like an ordinary grown-up lady. She doesn’t ride to the wars, though she is an excellent archer.”

The hillside path which they were following became narrower all the time and the drop on their right hand became steeper. At last they were going in single file along the edge of a precipice and Shasta shuddered to think that he had done the same last night without knowing it. “But of course,” he thought, “I was quite safe. That is why the Lion kept on my left. He was between me and the edge all the time.”

Then the path went left and south away from the cliff and there were thick woods on both sides of it and they went steeply up and up into the pass. There would have been a splendid view from the top if it were open ground but among all those trees you could see nothing — only, every now and then, some huge pinnacle of rock above the tree-tops, and an eagle or two wheeling high up in the blue air.

“They smell battle,” said Corin, pointing at the birds. “They know we’re preparing a feed for them.”

Shasta didn’t like this at all.

When they had crossed the neck of the pass and come a good deal lower they reached more open ground and from here Shasta could see all

Archenland, blue and hazy, spread out below him and even (he thought) a hint of the desert beyond it. But the sun, which had perhaps two hours or so to go before it set, was in his eyes and he couldn't make things out distinctly.

Here the army halted and spread out in a line, and there was a great deal of rearranging. A whole detachment of very dangerous-looking Talking Beasts whom Shasta had not noticed before and who were mostly of the cat kind (leopards, panthers, and the like) went padding and growling to take up their positions on the left. The giants were ordered to the right, and before going there they all took off something they had been carrying on their backs and sat down for a moment. Then Shasta saw that what they had been carrying and were now putting on were pairs of boots: horrid, heavy, spiked boots which came up to their knees. Then they sloped their huge clubs over their shoulders and marched to their battle position. The archers, with Queen Lucy, fell to the rear and you could first see them bending their bows and then hear the twang-twang as they tested the strings. And wherever you looked you could see people tightening girths, putting on helmets, drawing swords, and throwing cloaks to the ground. There was hardly any talking now. It was very solemn and very dreadful. "I'm in for it now — I really am in for it now," thought Shasta.

Then there came noises far ahead: the sound of many men shouting and a steady thud-thud-thud.

"Battering ram," whispered Corin. "They're battering the gate."

Even Corin looked quite serious now.

"Why doesn't King Edmund get on?" he said. "I can't stand this waiting about. Chilly too."

Shasta nodded: hoping he didn't look as frightened as he felt.

The trumpet at last! On the move now — now trotting — the banner streaming out in the wind. They had topped a low ridge now, and below them the whole scene suddenly opened out; a little, many-towered castle with its gate towards them. No moat, unfortunately, but of course the gate shut and the portcullis down. On the walls they could see, like little white dots, the faces of the defenders. Down below, about fifty of the Calormenes, dismounted, were steadily swinging a great tree trunk against the gate. But at once the scene changed. The main bulk of Rabadash's men had been on foot ready to assault the gate. But now he had seen the Narnians sweeping down from the ridge. There is no doubt those Calormenes are wonderfully

trained. It seemed to Shasta only a second before a whole line of the enemy were on horseback again, wheeling round to meet them, swinging towards them.

And now a gallop. The ground between the two armies grew less every moment. Faster, faster. All swords out now, all shields up to the nose, all prayers said, all teeth clenched. Shasta was dreadfully frightened. But it suddenly came into his head "If you funk this, you'll funk every battle all your life. Now or never."

But when at last the two lines met he had really very little idea of what happened. There was a frightful confusion and an appalling noise. His sword was knocked clean out of his hand pretty soon. And he'd got the reins tangled somehow. Then he found himself slipping. Then a spear came straight at him and as he ducked to avoid it he rolled right off his horse, bashed his left knuckles terribly against someone else's armour, and then ——

But it is no use trying to describe the battle from Shasta's point of view; he understood too little of the fight in general and even of his own part in it. The best way I can tell you what really happened is to take you some miles away to where the Hermit of the Southern March sat gazing into the smooth pool beneath the spreading tree, with Bree and Hwin and Aravis beside him.

For it was in this pool that the Hermit looked when he wanted to know what was going on in the world outside the green walls of his hermitage. There, as in a mirror, he could see, at certain times, what was going on in the streets of cities far further south than Tashbaan, or what ships were putting into Redhaven in the remote Seven Isles, or what robbers or wild beasts stirred in the great Western forests between Lantern Waste and Telmar. And all this day he had hardly left his pool, even to eat or drink, for he knew that great events were on foot in Archenland. Aravis and the Horses gazed into it too. They could see it was a magic pool: instead of reflecting the tree and the sky it revealed cloudy and coloured shapes moving, always moving, in its depths. But they could see nothing clearly. The Hermit could and from time to time he told them what he saw. A little while before Shasta rode into his first battle, the Hermit had begun speaking like this:

"I see one — two — three eagles wheeling in the gap by Stormness Head. One is the oldest of all the eagles. He would not be out unless battle was at hand. I see him wheel to and fro, peering down sometimes at Anvard

and sometimes to the east, behind Stormness. Ah — I see now what Rabadash and his men have been so busy at all day. They have felled and lopped a great tree and they are now coming out of the woods carrying it as a ram. They have learned something from the failure of last night's assault. He would have been wiser if he had set his men to making ladders: but it takes longer and he is impatient. Fool that he is! he ought to have ridden back to Tashbaan as soon as the first attack failed, for his whole plan depended on speed and surprise. Now they are bringing their ram into position. King Lune's men are shooting hard from the walls. Five Calormenes have fallen: but not many will. They have their shields above their heads. Rabadash is giving his orders now. With him are his most trusted lords, fierce Tarkaans from the eastern provinces. I can see their faces. There is Corradin of Castle Tormunt, and Azrooh, and Chlamash, and Ilgamuth of the twisted lip, and a tall Tarkaan with a crimson beard — —"

"By the Mane, my old master Anradin!" said Bree.

"S-s-sh," said Aravis.

"Now the ram has started. If I could hear as well as see, what a noise that would make! Stroke after stroke: and no gate can stand it for ever. But wait! Something up by Stormness has scared the birds. They're coming out in masses. And wait again ... I can't see yet ... ah! Now I can. The whole ridge, up on the east, is black with horsemen. If only the wind would catch that standard and spread it out. They're over the ridge now, whoever they are. Aha! I've seen the banner now. Narnia, Narnia! It's the red lion. They're in full career down the hill now. I can see King Edmund. There's a woman behind among the archers. Oh! — —"

"What is it?" asked Hwin breathlessly.

"All his Cats are dashing out from the left of the line."

"Cats?" said Aravis.

"Great cats, leopards and such," said the Hermit impatiently. "I see, I see. The Cats are coming round in a circle to get at the horses of the dismounted men. A good stroke. The Calormene horses are mad with terror already. Now the Cats are in among them. But Rabadash has reformed his line and has a hundred men in the saddle. They're riding to meet the Narnians. There's only a hundred yards between the two lines now. Only fifty. I can see King Edmund, I can see the Lord Peridan. There are two mere children in the Narnian line. What can the King be about to let them into the battle? Only ten yards — the lines have met. The Giants on the

Narnian right are doing wonders ... but one's down ... shot through the eye, I suppose. The centre's all in a muddle. I can see more on the left. There are the two boys again. Lion alive! one is Prince Corin. The other, like him as two peas. It's your little Shasta. Corin is fighting like a man. He's killed a Calormene. I can see a bit of the centre now. Rabadash and Edmund almost met then, but the press has separated them — —"

"What about Shasta?" said Aravis.

"Oh the fool!" groaned the Hermit. "Poor, brave little fool. He knows nothing about this work. He's making no use at all of his shield. His whole side's exposed. He hasn't the faintest idea what to do with his sword. Oh, he's remembered it now. He's waving it wildly about ... nearly cut his own pony's head off, and he will in a moment if he's not careful. It's been knocked out of his hand now. It's mere murder sending a child into the battle; he can't live five minutes. Duck, you fool — oh, he's down."

"Killed?" asked three voices breathlessly.

"How can I tell?" said the Hermit. "The Cats have done their work. All the riderless horses are dead or escaped now: no retreat for the Calormenes on them. Now the Cats are turning back into the main battle. They're leaping on the rams-men. The ram is down. Oh, good! good! The gates are opening from the inside: there's going to be a sortie. The first three are out. It's King Lune in the middle: the brothers Dar and Darrin on each side of him. Behind them are Tran and Shar and Cole with his brother Colin. There are ten — twenty — nearly thirty of them out by now. The Calormene line is being forced back upon them. King Edmund is dealing marvellous strokes. He's just slashed Corradin's head off. Lots of Calormenes have thrown down their arms and are running for the woods. Those that remain are hard pressed. The Giants are closing in on the right — Cats on the left — King Lune from their rear. The Calormenes are a little knot now, fighting back to back. Your Tarkaan's down, Bree. Lune and Azrooh are fighting hand to hand; the King looks like winning — the King is keeping it up well — the King has won. Azrooh's down. King Edmund's down — no, he's up again: he's at it with Rabadash. They're fighting in the very gate of the castle. Several Calormenes have surrendered. Darrin has killed Ilgamuth. I can't see what's happened to Rabadash. I think he's dead, leaning against the castle wall, but I don't know. Chlamash and King Edmund are still fighting but the battle is over everywhere else. Chlamash has surrendered. The battle is over. The Calormenes are utterly defeated."

When Shasta fell off his horse he gave himself up for lost. But horses, even in a battle, tread on human beings very much less than you would suppose. After a very horrible ten minutes or so Shasta realised suddenly that there were no longer any horses stamping about in the immediate neighbourhood and that the noise (for there were still a good many noises going on) was no longer that of a battle. He sat up and stared about him. Even he, little as he knew of battles, could soon see that the Archenlanders and Narnians had won. The only living Calormenes he could see were prisoners, the castle gates were wide open, and King Lune and King Edmund were shaking hands across the battering ram. From the circle of lords and warriors around them there arose a sound of breathless and excited, but obviously cheerful, conversation. And then, suddenly, it all united and swelled into a great roar of laughter.

Shasta picked himself up, feeling uncommonly stiff, and ran towards the sound to see what the joke was. A very curious sight met his eyes. The unfortunate Rabadash appeared to be suspended from the castle walls. His feet, which were about two feet from the ground, were kicking wildly. His chain-shirt was somehow hitched up so that it was horribly tight under the arms and came half way over his face. In fact he looked just as a man looks if you catch him in the very act of getting into a stiff shirt that is a little too small for him. As far as could be made out afterwards (and you may be sure the story was well talked over for many a day) what had happened was something like this. Early in the battle one of the Giants had made an unsuccessful stamp at Rabadash with his spiked boot: unsuccessful because it didn’t crush Rabadash, which was what the Giant had intended, but not quite useless because one of the spikes tore the chain mail, just as you or I might tear an ordinary shirt. So Rabadash, by the time he encountered Edmund at the gate, had a hole in the back of his hauberk. And when Edmund pressed him back nearer and nearer to the wall, he jumped up on a mounting block and stood there raining down blows on Edmund from above. But then, finding that this position, by raising him above the heads of everyone else, made him a mark for every arrow from the Narnian bows, he decided to jump down again. And he meant to look and sound — no doubt for a moment he *did* look and sound — very grand and very dreadful as he jumped, crying, “The bolt of Tash falls from above.” But he had to jump sideways because the crowd in front of him left him no landing place in that direction. And then, in the neatest way you could wish, the tear in the

back of his hauberk caught on a hook in the wall. (Ages ago this hook had had a ring in it for tying horses to.) And there he found himself, like a piece of washing hung up to dry, with everyone laughing at him.

"Let me down, Edmund," howled Rabadash. "Let me down and fight me like a king and a man; or if you are too great a coward to do that, kill me at once."

"Certainly," began King Edmund, but King Lune interrupted.

"By your Majesty's good leave," said King Lune to Edmund. "Not so." Then, turning to Rabadash he said, "Your royal Highness, if you had given that challenge a week ago, I'll answer for it there was no-one in King Edmund's dominion, from the High King down to the smallest Talking Mouse, who would have refused it. But by attacking our castle of Anvard in time of peace without defiance sent, you have proved yourself no knight, but a traitor, and one rather to be whipped by the hangman than to be suffered to cross swords with any person of honour. Take him down, bind him, and carry him within till our pleasure is further known."

Strong hands wrenched Rabadash's sword from him and he was carried away into the castle, shouting, threatening, cursing, and even crying. For though he could have faced torture he couldn't bear being made ridiculous. In Tashbaan every one had always taken him seriously.

At that moment Corin ran up to Shasta, seized his hand and started dragging him towards King Lune. "Here he is, Father, here he is," cried Corin.

"Aye, and here *thou* art, at last," said the King in a very gruff voice. "And hast been in the battle, clean contrary to your obedience. A boy to break a father's heart! At your age a rod to your breech were fitter than a sword in your fist, ha!" But everyone, including Corin, could see that the King was very proud of him.

"Chide him no more, Sire, if it please you," said Lord Darrin. "His Highness would not be your son if he did not inherit your conditions. It would grieve your Majesty more if he had to be reproved for the opposite fault."

"Well, well," grumbled the King. "We'll pass it over for this time. And now — —"

What came next surprised Shasta as much as anything that had ever happened to him in his life. He found himself suddenly embraced in a bear-like hug by King Lune and kissed on both cheeks. Then the King set him

down again and said, “Stand here together, boys, and let all the court see you. Hold up your heads. Now, gentlemen, look on them both. Has any man any doubts?”

And still Shasta could not understand why everyone stared at him and at Corin nor what all the cheering was about.

Chapter XIV

HOW BREE BECAME A WISER HORSE

We must now return to Aravis and the Horses. The Hermit, watching his pool, was able to tell them that Shasta was not killed or even seriously wounded, for he saw him get up and saw how affectionately he was greeted by King Lune. But as he could only see, not hear, he did not know what anyone was saying and, once the fighting had stopped and the talking had begun, it was not worth while looking in the pool any longer.

Next morning, while the Hermit was indoors, the three of them discussed what they should do next.

"I've had enough of this," said Hwin. "The Hermit has been very good to us and I'm very much obliged to him, I'm sure. But I'm getting as fat as a pet pony, eating all day and getting no exercise. Let's go on to Narnia."

"Oh not to-day, Ma'am," said Bree. "I wouldn't hurry things. Some other day, don't you think?"

"We must see Shasta first and say good-bye to him — and — and apologise," said Aravis.

"Exactly!" said Bree with great enthusiasm. "Just what I was going to say."

"Oh, of course," said Hwin. "I expect he is in Anvard. Naturally we'd look in on him and say good-bye. But that's on our way. And why shouldn't we start at once? After all, I thought it was Narnia we all wanted to get to?"

"I suppose so," said Aravis. She was beginning to wonder what exactly she would do when she got there and was feeling a little lonely.

"Of course, of course," said Bree hastily. "But there's no need to rush things, if you know what I mean."

"No, I don't know what you mean," said Hwin. "Why don't you want to go?"

"M-m-m, broo-hoo," muttered Bree. "Well, don't you see, Ma'am — it's an important occasion — returning to one's own country — entering society — the best society — it is so essential to make a good impression — not perhaps looking quite ourselves, yet, eh?"

Hwin broke out into a horse-laugh. "It's your tail, Bree! I see it all now. You want to wait till your tail's grown again! And we don't even know if

tails are worn long in Narnia. Really, Bree, you're as vain as that Tarkheena in Tashbaan!"

"You *are* silly, Bree," said Aravis.

"By the Lion's Mane, Tarkheena, I'm nothing of the sort," said Bree indignantly. "I have a proper respect for myself and for my fellow horses, that's all."

"Bree," said Aravis, who was not very interested in the cut of his tail, "I've been wanting to ask you something for a long time. Why do you keep on swearing *By the Lion* and *By the Lion's Mane*? I thought you hated lions."

"So I do," answered Bree. "But when I speak of *the* Lion of course I mean Aslan, the great deliverer of Narnia who drove away the Witch and the Winter. All Narnians swear by *him*."

"But is he a lion?"

"No, no, of course not," said Bree in a rather shocked voice.

"All the stories about him in Tashbaan say he is," replied Aravis. "And if he isn't a lion why do you call him a lion?"

"Well you'd hardly understand that at your age," said Bree. "And I was only a little foal when I left so I don't quite fully understand it myself."

(Bree was standing with his back to the green wall while he said this, and the other two were facing him. He was talking in rather a superior tone with his eyes half shut; that was why he didn't see the changed expression in the faces of Hwin and Aravis. They had good reason to have open mouths and staring eyes; because while Bree spoke they saw an enormous lion leap up from outside and balance itself on the top of the green wall; only it was a brighter yellow and it was bigger and more beautiful and more alarming than any lion they had ever seen. And at once it jumped down inside the wall and began approaching Bree from behind. It made no noise at all. And Hwin and Aravis couldn't make any noise themselves, no more than if they were frozen.)

"No doubt," continued Bree, "when they speak of him as a Lion they only mean he's as strong as a lion or (to our enemies, of course) as fierce as a lion. Or something of that kind. Even a little girl like you, Aravis, must see that it would be quite absurd to suppose he is a *real* lion. Indeed it would be disrespectful. If he was a lion he'd have to be a Beast just like the rest of us. Why!" (and here Bree began to laugh) "If he was a lion he'd have four paws, and a tail, and *Whiskers*! ... Aie, ooh, hoo-hoo! Help!"

For just as he said the word *Whiskers* one of Aslan's had actually tickled his ear. Bree shot away like an arrow to the other side of the enclosure and there turned; the wall was too high for him to jump and he could fly no further. Aravis and Hwin both started back. There was about a second of intense silence.

Then Hwin, though shaking all over, gave a strange little neigh, and trotted across to the Lion.

"Please," she said, "you're so beautiful. You may eat me if you like. I'd sooner be eaten by you than fed by anyone else."

"Dearest daughter," said Aslan, planting a lion's kiss on her twitching, velvet nose, "I knew you would not be long in coming to me. Joy shall be yours."

Then he lifted his head and spoke in a louder voice.

"Now, Bree," he said, "you poor, proud, frightened Horse, draw near. Nearer still, my son. Do not dare not to dare. Touch me. Smell me. Here are my paws, here is my tail, these are my whiskers. I am a true Beast."

"Aslan," said Bree in a shaken voice, "I'm afraid I must be rather a fool."

"Happy the Horse who knows that while he is still young. Or the Human either. Draw near, Aravis my daughter. See! My paws are velveted. You will not be torn this time."

"This time, Sir?" said Aravis.

"It was I who wounded you," said Aslan. "I am the only lion you met in all your journeyings. Do you know why I tore you?"

"No, sir."

"The scratches on your back, tear for tear, throb for throb, blood for blood, were equal to the stripes laid on the back of your stepmother's slave because of the drugged sleep you cast upon her. You needed to know what it felt like."

"Yes, sir. Please — —"

"Ask on, my dear," said Aslan.

"Will any more harm come to her by what I did?"

"Child," said the Lion, "I am telling you your story, not hers. No-one is told any story but their own." Then he shook his head and spoke in a lighter voice.

"Be merry, little ones," he said. "We shall meet soon again. But before that you will have another visitor." Then in one bound he reached the top of

the wall and vanished from their sight.

Strange to say, they felt no inclination to talk to one another about him after he had gone. They all moved slowly away to different parts of the quiet grass and there paced to and fro, each alone, thinking.

About half an hour later the two Horses were summoned to the back of the house to eat something nice that the Hermit had got ready for them and Aravis, still walking and thinking, was startled by the harsh sound of a trumpet outside the gate.

“Who is there?” said Aravis.

“His Royal Highness Prince Cor of Archenland,” said a voice from outside.

Aravis undid the door and opened it, drawing back a little way to let the strangers in.

Two soldiers with halberds came first and took their stand at each side of the entry. Then followed a herald, and the trumpeter.

“His Royal Highness Prince Cor of Archenland desires an audience of the Lady Aravis,” said the Herald. Then he and the trumpeter drew aside and bowed and the soldiers saluted and the Prince himself came in. All his attendants withdrew and closed the gate behind them.

The Prince bowed, and a very clumsy bow for a Prince it was. Aravis curtsied in the Calormene style (which is not at all like ours) and did it very well because, of course, she had been taught how. Then she looked up and saw what sort of person this Prince was.

She saw a mere boy. He was bare-headed and his fair hair was encircled with a very thin band of gold, hardly thicker than a wire. His upper tunic was of white cambric, as fine as a handkerchief, so that the bright red tunic beneath it showed through. His left hand, which rested on his enamelled sword hilt, was bandaged.

Aravis looked twice at his face before she gasped and said, “Why! It’s Shasta!”

Shasta all at once turned very red and began speaking very quickly. “Look here, Aravis,” he said, “I do hope you won’t think I’m got up like this (and the trumpeter and all) to try to impress you or make out that I’m different or any rot of that sort. Because I’d far rather have come in my old clothes, but they’re burnt now, and my father said — —”

“Your father?” said Aravis.

“Apparently King Lune is my father,” said Shasta. “I might really have guessed it. Corin being so like me. We were twins, you see. Oh, and my name isn’t Shasta, it’s Cor.”

“Cor is a nicer name than Shasta,” said Aravis.

“Brothers’ names run like that in Archenland,” said Shasta (or Prince Cor as we must now call him). “Like Dar and Darrin, Cole and Colin and so on.”

“Shasta — I mean Cor,” said Aravis. “No, shut up. There’s something I’ve got to say at once. I’m sorry I’ve been such a pig. But I did change before I knew you were a Prince, honestly I did: when you went back, and faced the Lion.”

“It wasn’t really going to kill you at all, that Lion,” said Cor.

“I know,” said Aravis, nodding. Both were still and solemn for a moment as each saw that the other knew about Aslan.

Suddenly Aravis remembered Cor’s bandaged hand.

“I say!” she cried, “I forgot! You’ve been in a battle. Is that a wound?”

“A mere scratch,” said Cor, using for the first time a rather lordly tone. But a moment later he burst out laughing and said, “If you want to know the truth, it isn’t a proper wound at all. I only took the skin off my knuckles, just as any clumsy fool might do without going near a battle.”

“Still you were in the battle,” said Aravis. “It must have been wonderful.”

“It wasn’t at all like what I thought,” said Cor.

“But Sha — Cor, I mean — you haven’t told me anything yet about King Lune and how he found out who you were.”

“Well, let’s sit down,” said Cor. “For it’s rather a long story. And by the way, Father’s an absolute brick. I’d be just as pleased — or very nearly — at finding he’s my father even if he wasn’t a king. Even though Education and all sorts of horrible things are going to happen to me. But you want the story. Well, Corin and I were twins. And about a week after we were both born, apparently, they took us to a wise old Centaur in Narnia to be blessed or something. Now this Centaur was a prophet as a good many Centaurs are. Perhaps you haven’t seen any Centaurs yet? There were some in the battle yesterday. Most remarkable people, but I can’t say I feel quite at home with them yet. I say, Aravis, there are going to be a lot of things to get used to in these Northern countries.”

“Yes, there are,” said Aravis. “But get on with the story.”

“Well, as soon as he saw Corin and me, it seems this Centaur looked at me and said, A day will come when that boy will save Archenland from the deadliest danger in which ever she lay. So of course my Father and Mother were very pleased. But there was someone present who wasn’t. This was a chap called the Lord Bar who had been Father’s Lord Chancellor. And apparently he’d done something wrong — *bezzling* or some word like that — I didn’t understand that part very well — and Father had had to dismiss him. But nothing else was done to him and he was allowed to go on living in Archenland. But he must have been as bad as he could be, for it came out afterwards he had been in the pay of the Tisroc and had sent a lot of secret information to Tashbaan. So as soon as he heard I was going to save Archenland from a great danger he decided I must be put out of the way. Well, he succeeded in kidnapping me (I don’t exactly know how) and rode away down the Winding Arrow to the coast. He’d had everything prepared and there was a ship manned with his own followers lying ready for him and he put out to sea with me on board. But Father got wind of it, though not quite in time, and was after him as quickly as he could. The Lord Bar was already at sea when Father reached the coast, but not out of sight. And Father was embarked in one of his own war-ships within twenty minutes.

“It must have been a wonderful chase. They were six days following Bar’s galleon and brought her to battle on the seventh. It was a great sea-fight (I heard a lot about it yesterday evening) from ten o’clock in the morning till sunset. Our people took the ship in the end. But I wasn’t there. The Lord Bar himself had been killed in the battle. But one of his men said that, early that morning, as soon as he saw he was certain to be overhauled, Bar had given me to one of his knights and sent us both away in the ship’s boat. And that boat was never seen again. But of course that was the same boat that Aslan (he seems to be at the back of all the stories) pushed ashore at the right place for Arsheesh to pick me up. I wish I knew that knight’s name, for he must have kept me alive and starved himself to do it.”

“I suppose Aslan would say that was part of someone else’s story,” said Aravis.

“I was forgetting that,” said Cor.

“And I wonder how the prophecy will work out,” said Aravis, “and what the great danger is that you’re to save Archenland from.”

“Well,” said Cor rather awkwardly, “they seem to think I’ve done it already.”

Aravis clapped her hands. “Why, of course!” she said. “How stupid I am. And how wonderful! Archenland can never be in much greater danger than it was when Rabadash had crossed the Arrow with his two hundred horse and you hadn’t yet got through with your message. Don’t you feel proud?”

“I think I feel a bit scared,” said Cor.

“And you’ll be living at Anvard now,” said Aravis rather wistfully.

“Oh!” said Cor, “I’d nearly forgotten what I came about. Father wants you to come and live with us. He says there’s been no lady in the court (they call it the court, I don’t know why) since Mother died. Do, Aravis. You’ll like Father — and Corin. They’re not like me; they’ve been properly brought up. You needn’t be afraid that — —”

“Oh stop it,” said Aravis, “or we’ll have a real fight. Of course I’ll come.”

“Now let’s go and see the Horses,” said Cor.

There was a great and joyous meeting between Bree and Cor, and Bree, who was still in a rather subdued frame of mind, agreed to set out for Anvard at once: he and Hwin would cross into Narnia on the following day. All four bade an affectionate farewell to the Hermit and promised that they would soon visit him again. By about the middle of the morning they were on their way. The Horses had expected that Aravis and Cor would ride, but Cor explained that except in war, where everyone must do what he can do best, no-one in Narnia or Archenland ever dreamed of mounting a Talking Horse.

This reminded poor Bree again of how little he knew about Narnian customs and what dreadful mistakes he might make. So while Hwin strolled along in a happy dream, Bree got more nervous and more self-conscious with every step he took.

“Buck up, Bree,” said Cor. “It’s far worse for me than for you. You aren’t going to be *educated*. I shall be learning reading and writing and heraldry and dancing and history and music while you’ll be galloping and rolling on the hills of Narnia to your heart’s content.”

“But that’s just the point,” groaned Bree. “*Do* Talking Horses roll? Supposing they don’t? I can’t bear to give it up. What do you think, Hwin?”

“I’m going to roll anyway,” said Hwin. “I don’t suppose any of them will care two lumps of sugar whether you roll or not.”

“Are we near that castle?” said Bree to Cor.

“Round the next bend,” said the Prince.

“Well,” said Bree, “I’m going to have a good one now: it may be the last. Wait for me a minute.”

It was five minutes before he rose again, blowing hard and covered with bits of bracken.

“Now I’m ready,” he said in a voice of profound gloom. “Lead on, Prince Cor. Narnia and the North.”

But he looked more like a horse going to a funeral than a long-lost captive returning to home and freedom.

Chapter XV

RABADASH THE RIDICULOUS

The next turn of the road brought them out from among the trees and there, across green lawns, sheltered from the north wind by the high wooded ridge at its back, they saw the castle of Anvard. It was very old and built of a warm, reddish-brown stone.

Before they had reached the gate King Lune came out to meet them, not looking at all like Aravis's idea of a king and wearing the oldest of old clothes; for he had just come from making a round of the kennels with his Huntsman and had only stopped for a moment to wash his doggy hands. But the bow with which he greeted Aravis as he took her hand would have been stately enough for an Emperor.

"Little lady," he said, "we bid you very heartily welcome. If my dear wife were still alive we could make you better cheer but could not do it with a better will. And I am sorry that you have had misfortunes and been driven from your father's house, which cannot but be a grief to you. My son Cor has told me about your adventures together and all your valour."

"It was he who did all that, Sir," said Aravis. "Why, he rushed at a lion to save me."

"Eh, what's that?" said King Lune, his face brightening. "I haven't heard that part of the story."

Then Aravis told it. And Cor, who had very much wanted the story to be known, though he felt he couldn't tell it himself, didn't enjoy it so much as he had expected, and indeed felt rather foolish. But his father enjoyed it very much indeed and in the course of the next few weeks told it to so many people that Cor wished it had never happened.

Then the King turned to Hwin and Bree and was just as polite to them as to Aravis, and asked them a lot of questions about their families and where they had lived in Narnia before they had been captured. The Horses were rather tongue-tied for they weren't yet used to being talked to as equals by Humans — grown-up Humans, that is. They didn't mind Aravis and Cor.

Presently Queen Lucy came out from the castle and joined them and King Lune said to Aravis, "My dear, here is a loving friend of our house,

and she has been seeing that your apartments are put to rights for you better than I could have done it."

"You'd like to come and see them, wouldn't you?" said Lucy, kissing Aravis. They liked each other at once and soon went away together to talk about Aravis's bedroom and Aravis's boudoir and about getting clothes for her, and all the sort of things girls do talk about on such an occasion.

After lunch, which they had on the terrace (it was cold birds and cold game pie and wine and bread and cheese), King Lune ruffled up his brow and heaved a sigh and said, "Heigh-ho! We have still that sorry creature Rabadash on our hands, my friends, and must needs resolve what to do with him."

Lucy was sitting on the King's right and Aravis on his left. King Edmund sat at one end of the table and the Lord Darrin faced him at the other. Dar and Peridan and Cor and Corin were on the same side as the King.

"Your Majesty would have a perfect right to strike off his head," said Peridan. "Such an assault as he made puts him on a level with assassins."

"It is very true," said Edmund. "But even a traitor may mend. I have known one that did." And he looked very thoughtful.

"To kill this Rabadash would go near to raising war with the Tisroc," said Darrin.

"A fig for the Tisroc," said King Lune. "His strength is in numbers and numbers will never cross the desert. But I have no stomach for killing men (even traitors) in cold blood. To have cut his throat in the battle would have eased my heart mightily: but this is a different thing."

"By my counsel," said Lucy, "your Majesty shall give him another trial. Let him go free on strait promise of fair dealing in the future. It may be that he will keep his word."

"Maybe Apes will grow honest, Sister," said Edmund. "But, by the Lion, if he breaks it again, it may be in such time and place that any of us could swap off his head in clean battle."

"It shall be tried," said the King: and then to one of the attendants, "Send for the prisoner, friend."

Rabadash was brought before them in chains. To look at him anyone would have supposed that he had passed the night in a noisome dungeon without food or water; but in reality he had been shut up in quite a comfortable room and provided with an excellent supper. But as he was

sulking far too furiously to touch the supper and had spent the whole night stamping and roaring and cursing, he naturally did not now look his best.

"Your royal Highness needs not to be told," said King Lune, "that by the law of nations as well as by all reasons, of prudent policy, we have as good right to your head as ever one mortal man had against another. Nevertheless, in consideration of your youth and the ill nurture, devoid of all gentilesse and courtesy, which you have doubtless had in the land of slaves and tyrants, we are disposed to set you free, unharmed, on these conditions: first, that — —"

"Curse you for a barbarian dog!" spluttered Rabadash. "Do you think I will even hear your conditions? Faugh! You talk very largely of nurture and I know not what. It's easy, to a man in chains, ha! Take off these vile bonds, give me a sword, and let any of you who dares then debate with me."

Nearly all the lords sprang to their feet, and Corin shouted:

"Father! Can I *box* him? Please."

"Peace! Your Majesties! My Lords!" said King Lune. "Have we no more gravity among us than to be so chafed by the taunt of a pajock? Sit down, Corin, or shalt leave the table. I ask your Highness again, to hear our conditions."

"I hear no conditions from barbarians and sorcerers," said Rabadash. "Not one of you dare touch a hair of my head. Every insult you have heaped on me shall be paid with oceans of Narnian and Archenlandish blood. Terrible shall the vengeance of the Tisroc be: even now. But kill me, and the burnings and torturings in these northern lands shall become a tale to frighten the world a thousand years hence. Beware! Beware! Beware! The bolt of Tash falls from above!"

"Does it ever get caught on a hook half way?" asked Corin.

"Shame, Corin," said the King. "Never taunt a man save when he is stronger than you: then, as you please."

"Oh you foolish Rabadash," sighed Lucy.

Next moment Cor wondered why everyone at the table had risen and was standing perfectly still. Of course he did the same himself. And then he saw the reason. Aslan was among them though no-one had seen him coming. Rabadash started as the immense shape of the Lion paced softly in between him and his accusers.

"Rabadash," said Aslan. "Take heed. Your doom is very near, but you may still avoid it. Forget your pride (what have you to be proud of?) and

your anger (who has done you wrong?) and accept the mercy of these good kings."

Then Rabadash rolled his eyes and spread out his mouth into a horrible, long mirthless grin like a shark, and wagged his ears up and down (anyone can learn how to do this if they take the trouble). He had always found this very effective in Calormen. The bravest had trembled when he made these faces, and ordinary people had fallen to the floor, and sensitive people had often fainted. But what Rabadash hadn't realised is that it is very easy to frighten people who know you can have them boiled alive the moment you give the word. The grimaces didn't look at all alarming in Archenland; indeed Lucy only thought Rabadash was going to be sick.

"Demon! Demon! Demon!" shrieked the Prince. "I know you. You are the foul fiend of Narnia. You are the enemy of the gods. Learn who *I* am, horrible phantasm. I am descended from Tash, the inexorable, the irresistible. The curse of Tash is upon you. Lightning in the shape of scorpions shall be rained on you. The mountains of Narnia shall be ground into dust. The — —"

"Have a care, Rabadash," said Aslan quietly. "The doom is nearer now: it is at the door: it has lifted the latch."

"Let the skies fall," shrieked Rabadash. "Let the earth gape! Let blood and fire obliterate the world! But be sure I will never desist till I have dragged to my palace by her hair the barbarian queen, the daughter of dogs, the — —"

"The hour has struck," said Aslan: and Rabadash saw, to his supreme horror, that everyone had begun to laugh.

They couldn't help it. Rabadash had been wagging his ears all the time and as soon as Aslan said, "The hour has struck!" the ears began to change. They grew longer and more pointed and soon were covered with grey hair. And while everyone was wondering where they had seen ears like that before, Rabadash's face began to change too. It grew longer, and thicker at the top and larger eyed, and the nose sank back into the face (or else the face swelled out and became all nose) and there was hair all over it. And his arms grew longer and came down in front of him till his hands were resting on the ground: only they weren't hands, now, they were hoofs. And he was standing on all fours, and his clothes disappeared, and everyone laughed louder and louder (because they couldn't help it) for now what had been Rabadash was simply and unmistakably, a donkey. The terrible thing was

that his human speech lasted just a moment longer than his human shape, so that when he realised the change that was coming over him, he screamed out:

"Oh, not a Donkey! Mercy! If it were even a horse — even a horse — e'en — a — hor — eeh — auh, eeh-auh." And so the words died away into a donkey's bray.

"Now hear me, Rabadash," said Aslan. "Justice shall be mixed with mercy. You shall not always be an Ass."

At this of course the Donkey twitched its ears forward — and that also was so funny that everybody laughed all the more. They tried not to, but they tried in vain.

"You have appealed to Tash," said Aslan. "And in the temple of Tash you shall be healed. You must stand before the altar of Tash in Tashbaan at the great Autumn Feast this year and there, in the sight of all Tashbaan, your ass's shape will fall from you and all men will know you for Prince Rabadash. But as long as you live, if ever you go more than ten miles away from the great temple in Tashbaan you shall instantly become again as you now are. And from that second change there will be no return."

There was a short silence and then they all stirred and looked at one another as if they were waking from sleep. Aslan was gone. But there was a brightness in the air and on the grass, and a joy in their hearts, which assured them that he had been no dream: and anyway, there was the donkey in front of them.

King Lune was the kindest-hearted of men and on seeing his enemy in this regrettable condition he forgot all his anger.

"Your royal Highness," he said, "I am most truly sorry that things have come to this extremity. Your Highness will bear witness that it was none of our doing. And of course we shall be delighted to provide your Highness with shipping back to Tashbaan for the — er — treatment which Aslan has prescribed. You shall have every comfort which your Highness's situation allows: the best of the cattle-boats — the freshest carrots and thistles — —"

But a deafening bray from the Donkey and a well-aimed kick at one of the guards made it clear that these kindly offers were ungratefully received.

And here, to get him out of the way, I'd better finish off the story of Rabadash. He (or it) was duly sent back by boat to Tashbaan and brought into the temple of Tash at the great Autumn Festival, and then he became a man again. But of course four or five thousand people had seen the

transformation and the affair could not possibly be hushed up. And after the old Tisroc's death when Rabadash became Tisroc in his place he turned out the most peaceable Tisroc Calormen had ever known. This was because, not daring to go more than ten miles from Tashbaan, he could never go on a war himself; and he didn't want his Tarkaans to win fame in the wars at his expense, for that is the way Tisrocs get overthrown. But though his reasons were selfish, it made things much more comfortable for all the smaller countries round Calormen. His own people never forgot that he had been a donkey. During his reign, and to his face, he was called Rabadash the Peacemaker, but after his death and behind his back he was called Rabadash the Ridiculous, and if you look him up in a good History of Calormen (try the local library) you will find him under that name. And to this day in Calormene schools, if you do anything unusually stupid, you are very likely to be called "a second Rabadash".

Meanwhile at Anvard everyone was very glad that he had been disposed of before the real fun began, which was a grand feast held that evening on the lawn before the castle, with dozens of lanterns to help the moonlight. And the wine flowed and tales were told and jokes were cracked, and then silence was made and the King's poet with two fiddlers stepped out into the middle of the circle. Aravis and Cor prepared themselves to be bored, for the only poetry they knew was the Calormene kind, and you know now what that was like. But at the very first scrape of the fiddles a rocket seemed to go up inside their heads, and the poet sang the great old lay of Fair Olvin and how he fought the Giant Pire and turned him into stone (and that is the origin of Mount Pire — it was a two-headed Giant) and won the Lady Liln for his bride; and when it was over they wished it was going to begin again. And though Bree couldn't sing he told the story of the fight at Zalindreh. And Lucy told again (they had all, except Aravis and Cor, heard it many times but they all wanted it again) the tale of the Wardrobe and how she and King Edmund and Queen Susan and Peter the High King had first come into Narnia.

And presently, as was certain to happen sooner or later, King Lune said it was time for young people to be in bed. "And to-morrow, Cor," he added, "shalt come over all the castle with me and see the estres and mark all its strength and weakness: for it will be thine to guard when I'm gone."

"But Corin will be the King then, Father," said Cor.

“Nay, lad,” said King Lune, “thou art my heir. The crown comes to thee.”

“But I don’t want it,” said Cor. “I’d far rather — —”

“’Tis no question what thou wantest, Cor, nor I either. ’Tis in course of law.”

“But if we’re twins we must be the same age.”

“Nay,” said the King with a laugh. “One must come first. Art Corin’s elder by full twenty minutes. And his better too, let’s hope, though that’s no great mastery.” And he looked at Corin with a twinkle in his eyes.

“But, Father, couldn’t you make whichever you like to be the next King?”

“No. The King’s under the law, for it’s the law makes him a king. Hast no more power to start away from thy crown than any sentry from his post.”

“Oh dear,” said Cor. “I don’t want to at all. And Corin — I am most dreadfully sorry. I never dreamed my turning up was going to chisel you out of your kingdom.”

“Hurrah! Hurrah!” said Corin. “I shan’t have to be King. I shan’t have to be King. I’ll always be a prince. It’s princes have all the fun.”

“And that’s truer than thy brother knows, Cor,” said King Lune. “For this is what it means to be a king: to be first in every desperate attack and last in every desperate retreat, and when there’s hunger in the land (as must be now and then in bad years) to wear finer clothes and laugh louder over a scantier meal than any man in your land.”

When the two boys were going upstairs to bed Cor again asked Corin if nothing could be done about it. And Corin said:

“If you say another word about it, I’ll — I’ll knock you down.”

It would be nice to end the story by saying that after that the two brothers never disagreed about anything again, but I am afraid it would not be true. In reality they quarrelled and fought just about as often as any other two boys would, and all their fights ended (if they didn’t begin) with Cor getting knocked down. For though, when they had both grown up and become swordsmen, Cor was the more dangerous man in battle, neither he nor anyone else in the North Countries could ever equal Corin as a boxer. That was how he got his name of Corin Thunder-Fist; and how he performed his great exploit against the Lapsed Bear of Stormness, which was really a Talking Bear but had gone back to Wild Bear habits. Corin climbed up to its lair on the Narnian side of Stormness one winter day when the snow was on

the hills and boxed it without a timekeeper for thirty-three rounds. And at the end it couldn’t see out of its eyes and became a reformed character.

Aravis also had many quarrels (and, I’m afraid even fights) with Cor, but they always made it up again: so that years later, when they were grown up, they were so used to quarrelling and making it up again that they got married so as to go on doing it more conveniently. And after King Lune’s death they made a good King and Queen of Archenland and Ram the Great, the most famous of all the kings of Archenland, was their son. Bree and Hwin lived happily to a great age in Narnia and both got married but not to one another. And there weren’t many months in which one or both of them didn’t come trotting over the pass to visit their friends at Anvard.

THE MAGICIAN'S NEPHEW (1955)

Published by Bodley Head in 1955, the sixth of seven novels in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is now regarded as volume one in recent editions, which are sequenced according to Narnia history. *The Magician's Nephew* serves as a prequel to the series and the middle third of the novel features the creation of the Narnia world by Aslan the lion, which is linked to the lamp-post featured in the first novel. The frame story is once again set in England and features two children ensnared in experimental travel via "the wood between the worlds".

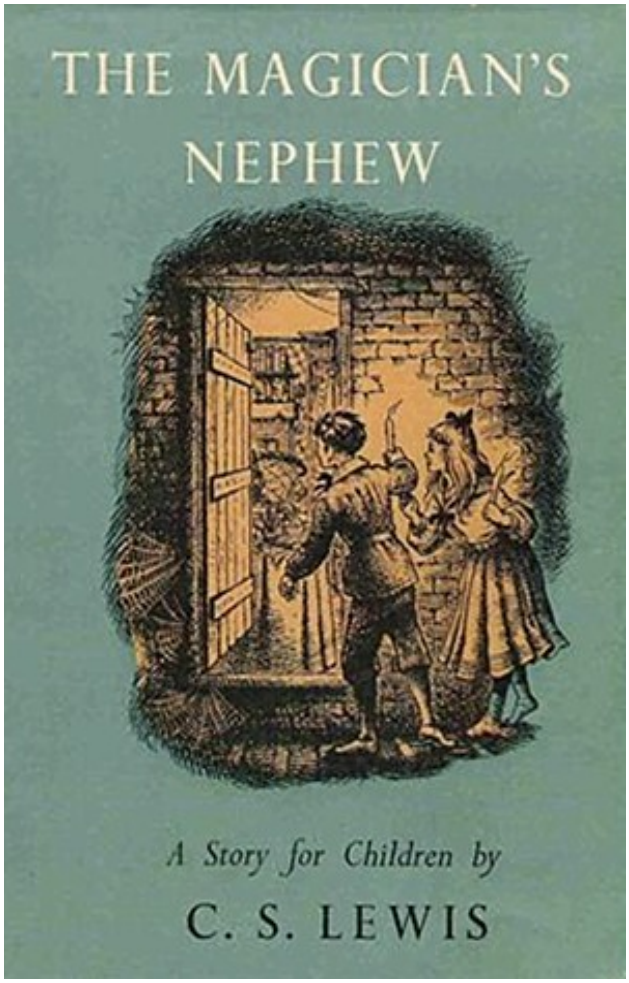
Lewis began work on *The Magician's Nephew* soon after completing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, inspired by a friend's question. When Roger Lancelyn Green asked him how a lamp post came to be standing in the midst of Narnian woodland, Lewis was intrigued enough by the question to attempt to find an answer by writing *The Magician's Nephew*, featuring a younger version of Professor Kirke from the first novel. The story includes several autobiographical elements and it explores a number of themes with general moral and Christian implications, including atonement, original sin, temptation and the order of nature.

The narrative opens in London during the summer of 1900. Two children, Digory Kirke and Polly Plummer, meet while playing in the adjacent gardens of a row of terraced houses. They decide to explore the attic connecting the houses, but take the wrong door and surprise Digory's Uncle Andrew in his study. Uncle Andrew tricks Polly into touching a yellow magic ring, causing her to vanish. Then he explains to Digory that he has been dabbling in magic and that the rings allow travel between one world and another. He convinces Digory into taking another yellow ring to follow wherever Polly has gone, bestowing him with two green rings so that they may both return.

Lewis was a great admirer of Edith Nesbit's children's books as a child and *The Magician's Nephew* refers to these books in the opening of the novel, suggesting their events were true, mentioning the setting of the piece as being when "Mr. Sherlock Holmes was still living in Baker Street and the Bastables were looking for treasure in the Lewisham Road". The Bastables

were children that appeared in a number of Nesbit's stories. In addition to being set in the same period and location as several of Nesbit's stories, *The Magician's Nephew* also has some similarities with Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906). This novel focuses on four children living in London, who discover a magic amulet. Their father is away and their mother is ill, as is the case with Digory. They also manage to transport the queen of ancient Babylon to London and she is the cause of a riot; a similar event takes place in *The Magician's Nephew* when Polly and Digory transport Queen Jadis to London and she also causes a similar disturbance.

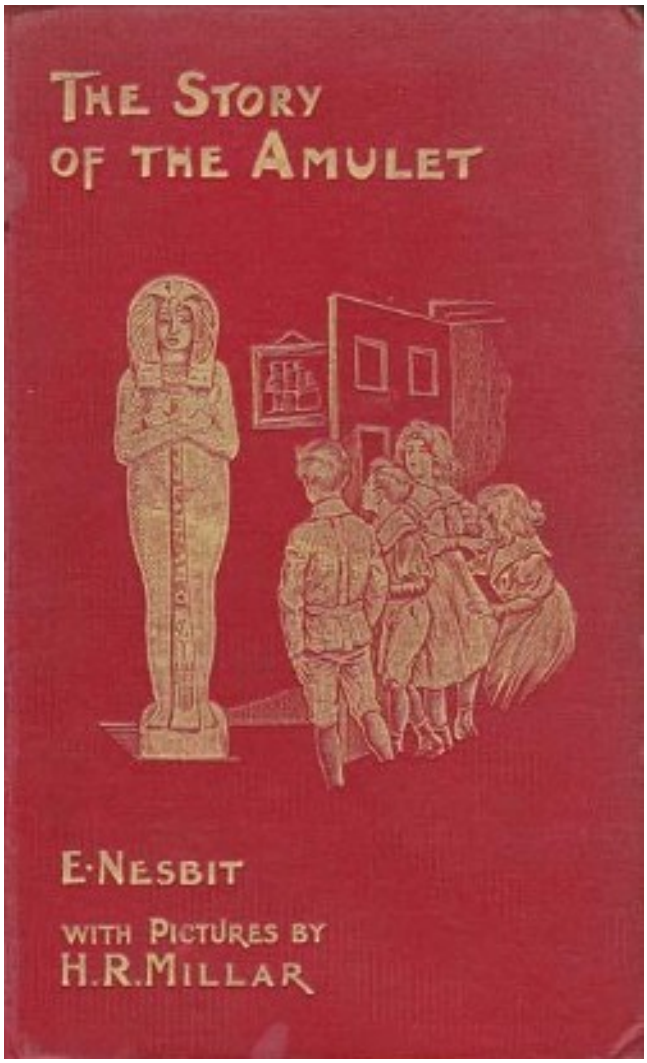
The creation of Narnia strongly reflects the *Book of Genesis*, but may also have been influenced by J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, which contains a creation scene driven by the effect of music. Some of the details of the creation of Narnia, such as the emergence of animals from the ground, and the way they shake earth from their bodies are also similar to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and may also have been inspired by descriptions of the processes of nature in the seventh book of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.



The first edition

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The first edition of 'The Story of the Amulet' (1906) by Edith Nesbit — Nesbit's children's books were a great influence on Lewis' fiction.

CHAPTER I

The Wrong Door

This is a story about something that happened long ago when your grandfather was a child. It is a very important story because it shows how all the comings and goings between our own world and the land of Narnia first began.

In those days Mr. Sherlock Holmes was still living in Baker Street and the Bastables were looking for treasure in the Lewisham Road. In those days, if you were a boy you had to wear a stiff Eton collar every day, and schools were usually nastier than now. But meals were nicer; and as for sweets, I won't tell you how cheap and good they were, because it would only make your mouth water in vain. And in those days there lived in London a girl called Polly Plummer.

She lived in one of a long row of houses which were all joined together. One morning she was out in the back garden when a boy scrambled up from the garden next door and put his face over the wall. Polly was very surprised because up till now there had never been any children in that house, but only Mr. Ketterley and Miss Ketterley, a brother and sister, old bachelor and old maid, living together. So she looked up, full of curiosity. The face of the strange boy was very grubby. It could hardly have been grubbier if he had first rubbed his hands in the earth, and then had a good cry, and then dried his face with his hands. As a matter of fact, this was very nearly what he had been doing.

"Hullo," said Polly.

"Hullo," said the boy. "What's your name?"

"Polly," said Polly. "What's yours?"

"Digory," said the boy.

"I say, what a funny name!" said Polly.

"It isn't half so funny as Polly," said Digory.

"Yes it is," said Polly.

"No, it isn't," said Digory.

"At any rate I *do* wash my face," said Polly. "Which is what you need to do; especially after — —" and then she stopped. She had been going to say "After you've been blubbing," but she thought that wouldn't be polite.

“All right, I have then,” said Digory in a much louder voice, like a boy who was so miserable that he didn’t care who knew he had been crying. “And so would you,” he went on, “if you’d lived all your life in the country and had a pony, and a river at the bottom of the garden, and then been brought to live in a beastly Hole like this.”

“London isn’t a Hole,” said Polly indignantly. But the boy was too wound up to take any notice of her, and he went on —

“And if your father was away in India — and you had to come and live with an Aunt and an Uncle who’s mad (how would you like that?) — and if the reason was that they were looking after your Mother — and if your Mother was ill and was going to — going to — die.” Then his face went the wrong sort of shape as it does if you’re trying to keep back your tears.

“I didn’t know. I’m sorry,” said Polly humbly. And then, because she hardly knew what to say, and also to turn Digory’s mind to cheerful subjects, she asked:

“Is Mr. Ketterley really mad?”

“Well either he’s mad,” said Digory, “or there’s some other mystery. He has a study on the top-floor and Aunt Letty says I must never go up there. Well, that looks fishy to begin with. And then there’s another thing. Whenever he tries to say anything to me at meal times — he never even tries to talk to *her* — she always shuts him up. She says, ‘Don’t worry the boy, Andrew’ or ‘I’m sure Digory doesn’t want to hear about *that*’ or else ‘Now, Digory, wouldn’t you like to go out and play in the garden’.”

“What sort of things does he try to say?”

“I don’t know. He never gets far enough. But there’s more than that. One night — it was last night in fact — as I was going past the foot of the attic-stairs on my way to bed (and I don’t much care for going past them either) I’m sure I heard a yell.”

“Perhaps he keeps a mad wife shut up there.”

“Yes, I’ve thought of that.”

“Or perhaps he’s a coiner.”

“Or he might have been a pirate, like the man at the beginning of *Treasure Island*, and be always hiding from his old shipmates.”

“How exciting!” said Polly, “I never knew your house was so interesting.”

“You may think it interesting,” said Digory. “But you wouldn’t like it if you had to sleep there. How would you like to lie awake listening for Uncle

Andrew's step to come creeping along the passage to your room? And he has such awful eyes."

That was how Polly and Digory got to know one another; and as it was just the beginning of the summer holidays and neither of them was going away to the sea that year, they met nearly every day.

Their adventures began chiefly because it was one of the wettest and coldest summers there had been for years. That drove them to do indoor things: you might say, indoor exploration. It is wonderful how much exploring you can do with a stump of candle in a big house, or in a row of houses. Polly had discovered long ago that if you opened a certain little door in the box-room attic of her house you would find the cistern and a dark place behind it which you could get into by a little careful climbing. The dark place was like a long tunnel with brick wall on one side and sloping roof on the other. In the roof there were little chinks of light between the slates. There was no floor in this tunnel: you had to step from rafter to rafter, and between them there was only plaster. If you stepped on this you would find yourself falling through the ceiling of the room below. Polly had used the bit of the tunnel just beside the cistern as a smugglers' cave. She had brought up bits of old packing cases and the seats of broken kitchen chairs, and things of that sort, and spread them across from rafter to rafter so as to make a bit of floor. Here she kept a cash-box containing various treasures, and a story she was writing, and usually a few apples. She had often drunk a quiet bottle of ginger-beer in there: the old bottles made it look more like a smugglers' cave.

Digory quite liked the Cave (she wouldn't let him see the story) but he was more interested in exploring.

"Look here," he said. "How long does this tunnel go on for? I mean, does it stop where your house ends?"

"No," said Polly. "The walls don't go out to the roof. It goes on. I don't know how far."

"Then we could get the length of the whole row of houses."

"So we could," said Polly. "And oh, I say!"

"What?"

"We could get *into* the other houses."

"Yes, and get taken up for burglars! No thanks."

"Don't be so jolly clever. I was thinking of the house beyond yours."

"What about it?"

“Why, it’s the empty one. Daddy says it’s always been empty ever since we came here.”

“I suppose we ought to have a look at it then,” said Digory. He was a good deal more excited than you’d have thought from the way he spoke. For of course he was thinking, just as you would have been, of all the reasons why the house might have been empty so long. So was Polly. Neither of them said the word “haunted.” And both felt that once the thing had been suggested, it would be feeble not to do it.

“Shall we go and try it now?” said Digory.

“All right,” said Polly.

“Don’t if you’d rather not,” said Digory.

“I’m game if you are,” said she.

“How are we to know when we’re in the next house but one?”

They decided they would have to go out into the box-room and walk across it taking steps as long as the steps from one rafter to the next. That would give them an idea of how many rafters went to a room. Then they would allow about four more for the passage between the two attics in Polly’s house, and then the same number for the maid’s bedroom as for the box-room. That would give them the length of the house. When they had done that distance twice they would be at the end of Digory’s house; any door they came to after that would let them into an attic of the empty house.

“But I don’t expect it’s really empty at all,” said Digory.

“What do you expect?”

“I expect someone lives there in secret, only coming in and out at night, with a dark lantern. We shall probably discover a gang of desperate criminals and get a reward. It’s all rot to say a house would be empty all those years unless there was some mystery.”

“Daddy thought it must be the drains,” said Polly.

“Pooh! Grown-ups are always thinking of uninteresting explanations,” said Digory. Now that they were talking by daylight in the attic instead of by candlelight in the Smugglers’ Cave it seemed much less likely that the empty house would be haunted.

When they had measured the attic they had to get a pencil and do a sum. They both got different answers to it at first, and even when they agreed I am not sure they got it right. They were in a hurry to start on the exploration.

“We mustn’t make a sound,” said Polly as they climbed in again behind the cistern. Because it was such an important occasion they took a candle each (Polly had a good store of these in her cave).

It was very dark and dusty and draughty and they stepped from rafter to rafter without a word except when they whispered to one another, “We’re opposite *your* attic now” or “this must be halfway through *our* house.” And neither of them stumbled and the candles didn’t go out, and at last they came where they could see a little door in the brick wall on their right. There was no bolt or handle on this side of it, of course, for the door had been made for getting in, not for getting out; but there was a catch (as there often is on the inside of a cupboard door) which they felt sure the would be able to turn.

“Shall I?” said Digory.

“I’m game if you are,” said Polly, just as she had said before. Both felt that it was becoming very serious, but neither would draw back. Digory pushed round the catch with some difficulty. The door swung open and the sudden daylight made them blink. Then, with a great shock, they saw that they were looking, not into a deserted attic, but into a furnished room. But it seemed empty enough. It was dead silent. Polly’s curiosity got the better of her. She blew out her candle and stepped out into the strange room, making no more noise than a mouse.

It was shaped, of course, like an attic, but furnished as a sitting-room. Every bit of the walls was lined with shelves and every bit of the shelves was full of books. A fire was burning in the grate (you remember that it was a very cold wet summer that year) and in front of the fireplace with its back towards them was a high-backed arm-chair. Between the chair and Polly, and filling most of the middle of the room, was a big table piled with all sorts of things — printed books, and books of the sort you write in, and ink bottles and pens and sealing-wax and a microscope. But what she noticed first was a bright red wooden tray with a number of rings on it. They were in pairs — a yellow one and a green one together, then a little space, and then another yellow one and another green one. They were no bigger than ordinary rings, and no one could help noticing them because they were so bright. They were the most beautifully shiny little things you can imagine. If Polly had been a very little younger she would have wanted to put one in her mouth.

The room was so quiet that you noticed the ticking of the clock at once. And yet, as she now found, it was not absolutely quiet either. There was a faint — a very, very faint humming sound. If Hoovers had been invented in those days Polly would have thought it was the sound of a Hoover being worked a long way off — several rooms away and several floors below. But it was a nicer sound than that, a more musical tone: only so faint that you could hardly hear it.

"It's all right; there's no one here," said Polly over her shoulder to Digory. She was speaking above a whisper now. And Digory came out, blinking and looking extremely dirty — as indeed Polly was too.

"This is no good," he said. "It's not an empty house at all. We'd better bunk before any one comes."

"What do you think those are?" said Polly, pointing at the coloured rings.

"Oh come *on*," said Digory. "The sooner — —"

He never finished what he was going to say for at that moment something happened. The high-backed chair in front of the fire moved suddenly and there rose up out of it — like a pantomime demon coming up out of a trap-door — the alarming form of Uncle Andrew. They were not in the empty house at all; they were in Digory's house and in the forbidden study! Both children said "O-o-oh" and realised their terrible mistake. They felt that they ought to have known all along that they hadn't gone nearly far enough.

Uncle Andrew was very tall and very thin. He had a long-clean-shaven face with a sharp nose and extremely bright eyes and a great tousled mop of grey hair.

Digory was quite speechless, for Uncle Andrew looked a thousand times more alarming than he had ever looked before. Polly was not so frightened yet; but she soon was. For the very first thing Uncle Andrew did was to walk across to the door of the room, shut it, and turn the key in the lock. Then he turned round, fixed the children with his bright eyes, and smiled, showing all his teeth.

"There!" he said. "Now my fool of a sister can't get at you!"

It was dreadfully unlike anything a grown-up would be expected to do. Polly's heart came into her mouth, and she and Digory started backing towards the little door they had come in by. Uncle Andrew was too quick for them. He got behind them and shut that door too and stood in front of it.

Then he rubbed his hands and made his knuckles crack. He had very long, beautifully white, fingers.

“I am delighted to see you,” he said. “Two children are just what I wanted.”

“Please, Mr. Ketterley,” said Polly. “I’ve got to go home. Will you let us out, please?”

“Not just yet,” said Uncle Andrew. “This is too good an opportunity to miss. I wanted two children. You see, I’m in the middle of a great experiment. I’ve tried it on a guinea-pig and it seemed to work. But then a guinea-pig can’t tell you anything. And you can’t explain to it how to come back.”

“Look here, Uncle Andrew,” said Digory, “it really is dinner time and they’ll be looking for us in a moment. You must let us out.”

“Must?” said Uncle Andrew.

Digory and Polly glanced at one another. They dared not say anything, but the glances meant “Isn’t this dreadful?” and “We must humour him.”

“If you let us go for our dinner now,” said Polly, “we could come back after dinner.”

“Ah, but how do I know that you would?” said Uncle Andrew with a cunning smile. Then he seemed to change his mind.

“Well, well,” he said, “if you really must go, I suppose you must. I can’t expect two youngsters like you to find it much fun talking to an old duffer like me.” He sighed and went on. “You’ve no idea how lonely I sometimes am. But no matter. Go to your dinner. But I must give you a present before you go. It’s not every day that I see a little girl in my dingy old study, especially, if I may say so, such a very attractive young lady as yourself.”

Polly began to think he might not really be mad after all.

“Wouldn’t you like a ring, my dear?” said Uncle Andrew to Polly.

“Do you mean one of those yellow or green ones?” said Polly. “How lovely!”

“Not a green one,” said Uncle Andrew. “I’m afraid I can’t give the green ones away. But I’d be delighted to give you any of the yellow ones: with my love. Come and try one on.”

Polly had now quite got over her fright and felt sure that the old gentleman was not mad; and there certainly something strangely attractive about those bright rings. She moved over to the tray.

“Why! I declare,” she said. “That humming noise gets louder here. It’s almost as if the rings were making it.”

“What a funny fancy, my dear,” said Uncle Andrew with a laugh. It sounded a very natural laugh, but Digory had seen an eager, almost a greedy, look on his face.

“Polly! Don’t be a fool!” he shouted. “Don’t touch them.”

It was too late. Exactly as he spoke, Polly’s hand went out to touch one of the rings. And immediately, without a flash or a noise or a warning of any sort, there was no Polly. Digory and his Uncle were alone in the room.

CHAPTER II

Digory and His Uncle

It was so sudden, and so horribly unlike anything that had ever happened to Digory even in a nightmare, that he let out a scream. Instantly Uncle Andrew's hand was over his mouth. "None of that!" he hissed in Digory's ear. "If you start making a noise your Mother'll hear it. And you know what a fright might do to her."

As Digory said afterwards, the horrible meanness of getting at a chap in *that* way, almost made him sick. But of course he didn't scream again.

"That's better," said Uncle Andrew. "Perhaps you couldn't help it. It is a shock when you first see someone vanish. Why, it gave even me a turn when the guinea-pig did it last night."

"Was that when you yelled?" asked Digory.

"Oh, you heard *that*, did you? I hope you haven't been spying on me?"

"No, I haven't," said Digory indignantly. "But what's happened to Polly?"

"Congratulate me, my dear boy," said Uncle Andrew, rubbing his hands. "My experiment has succeeded. The little girl's gone — vanished — right out of the world."

"What have you done to her?"

"Sent her to — well — to another place."

"What *do* you mean?" asked Digory.

Uncle Andrew sat down and said, "Well, I'll tell you all about it. Have you ever heard of old Mrs. Lefay?"

"Wasn't she a great-aunt or something?" said Digory.

"Not exactly," said Uncle Andrew. "She was my god-mother. That's her, there, on the wall."

Digory looked and saw a faded photograph: it showed the face of an old woman in a bonnet. And he could now remember that he had once seen a photo of the same face in an old drawer, at home, in the country. He had asked his Mother who it was and Mother had not seemed to want to talk about the subject much. It was not at all a nice face, Digory thought, though of course with those early photographs one could never really tell.

“Was there — wasn’t there — something wrong about her, Uncle Andrew?” he said.

“Well,” said Uncle Andrew with a chuckle, “it depends what you call *wrong*. People are so narrow minded. She certainly got very queer in later life. Did very unwise things. That was why they shut her up.”

“In an asylum, do you mean?”

“Oh no, no, no,” said Uncle Andrew in a shocked voice. “Nothing of that sort. Only in prison.”

“I say!” said Digory. “What had she done?”

“Ah, poor woman,” said Uncle Andrew. “She had been very unwise. There were a good many different things. We needn’t go into all that. She was always very kind to me.”

“But look here, what has all this got to do with Polly? I do wish you’d — —”

“All in good time, my boy,” said Uncle Andrew. “They let old Mrs. Lefay out before she died and I was one of the very few people whom she would allow to see her in her last illness. She had got to dislike ordinary, ignorant people, you understand. I do myself. But she and I were interested in the same sort of things. It was only a few days before her death that she told me to go to an old bureau in her house and open a secret drawer and bring her a little box that I would find there. The moment I picked up that box I could tell by the pricking in my fingers that I held some great secret in my hands. She gave it to me and made me promise that as soon as she was dead I would burn it unopened, with certain ceremonies. That promise I did not keep.”

“Well then, it was jolly rotten of you,” said Digory.

“Rotten?” said Uncle Andrew with a puzzled look. “Oh, I see. You mean that little boys ought to keep their promises. Very true: most right and proper, I’m sure, and I’m very glad you have been taught to do it. But of course you must understand that rules of that sort, however excellent they may be for little boys — and servants — and women — and even people in general, can’t possibly be expected to apply to profound students and great thinkers and sages. No, Digory. Men like me who possess hidden wisdom, are freed from common rules just as we are cut off from common pleasures. Ours, my boy, is a high and lonely destiny.”

As he said this he sighed and looked so grave and noble and mysterious that for a second Digory really thought he was saying something rather fine.

But then he remembered the ugly look he had seen on his Uncle's face the moment before Polly had vanished: and all at once he saw through Uncle Andrew's grand words. "All it means," he said to himself, "is that he thinks he can do anything he likes to get anything he wants."

"Of course," said Uncle Andrew, "I didn't dare to open the box for a long time, for I knew it might contain something highly dangerous. For my godmother was a very remarkable woman. The truth is, she was one of the last mortals in this country who had fairy blood in her. (She said there had been two others in her time. One was a duchess and the other was a charwoman.) In fact, Digory, you are now talking to the last man (possibly) who really had a fairy godmother. There! That'll be something for you to remember when you are an old man yourself."

"I bet she was a bad fairy," thought Digory; and added out loud, "but what about Polly?"

"How you do harp on that!" said Uncle Andrew. "As if that was what mattered. My first task was of course to study the box itself. It was very ancient. And I knew enough even then to know that it wasn't Greek, or Old Egyptian, or Babylonian, or Hittite, or Chinese. It was older than any of those nations. Ah — that was a great day when I at last found out the truth. The box was Atlantean; it came from the lost island of Atlantis. That meant it was centuries older than any of the stone-age things they dig up in Europe. And it wasn't a rough, crude thing like them either. For in the very dawn of time Atlantis was already a great city with palaces and temples and learned men."

He paused for a moment as if he expected Digory to say something. But Digory was disliking his Uncle more every minute, so he said nothing.

"Meanwhile," continued Uncle Andrew, "I was learning a good deal in other ways (it wouldn't be proper to explain them to a child) about Magic in general. That meant that I came to have a fair idea what sort of things might be in the box. By various tests I narrowed down the possibilities. I had to get to know some — well, some devilish queer people, and go through some very disagreeable experiences. That was what turned my head grey. One doesn't become a magician for nothing. My health broke down in the end. But I got better. And at last I actually *knew*."

Although there was not really the least chance of anyone overhearing them, he leaned forward and almost whispered as he said,

“The Atlantean box contained something that had been brought from another world when our world was only just beginning.”

“What?” asked Digory, who was now interested in spite of himself.

“Only dust,” said Uncle Andrew. “Fine, dry dust. Nothing much to look at. Not much to show for a lifetime of toil, you might say. Ah, but when I looked at that dust (I took jolly good care not to touch it) and thought that every grain had once been in another world — I don’t mean another planet, you know; they’re part of our world and you could get to them if you went far enough — but a really other world — another Nature — another universe — somewhere you would never reach even if you travelled through the space of this universe for ever and ever — a world that could be reached only by Magic — well!” Here Uncle Andrew rubbed his hands till his knuckles crackled like fireworks.

“I knew,” he went on, “that if only you could get it into the right form, that dust would draw you back to the place it had come from. But the difficulty was to get it into the right form. My earlier experiments were all failures. I tried them on guinea-pigs. Some of them only died. Some exploded like little bombs — —”

“It was a jolly cruel thing to do,” said Digory who had once had a guinea-pig of his own.

“How you do keep on getting off the point!” said Uncle Andrew. “That’s what the creatures were there for. I’d bought them myself. Let me see — where was I? Ah yes. At last I succeeded in making the Rings: the yellow Rings. But now a new difficulty arose. I was pretty sure, now, that a yellow Ring would send any creature that touched it into the Other Place. But what would be the good of that if I couldn’t get them back to tell me what they had found there?”

“And what about *them*?” said Digory. “A nice mess they’d be in if they couldn’t get back!”

“You will keep on looking at everything from the wrong point of view,” said Uncle Andrew with a look of impatience. “Can’t you understand that the thing is a great experiment? The whole point of sending anyone into the Other Place is that I want to find out what it’s like.”

“Well why didn’t you go yourself then?”

Digory had hardly ever seen anyone look so surprised and offended as his Uncle did at this simple question. “Me? Me?” he exclaimed. “The boy must be mad! A man at my time of life, and in my state of health, to risk the

shock and the dangers of being flung suddenly into a different universe? I never heard anything so preposterous in my life! Do you realise what you're saying? Think what Another World means — you might meet anything — anything."

"And I suppose you've sent Polly into it then," said Digory. His cheeks were flaming with anger now. "And all I can say," he added, "even if you are my Uncle — is that you've behaved like a coward, sending a girl to a place you're afraid to go to yourself."

"Silence, Sir!" said Uncle Andrew, bringing his hand down on the table. "I will not be talked to like that by a little, dirty, schoolboy. You don't understand. I am the great scholar, the magician, the adept, who is *doing* the experiment. Of course I need subjects to do it *on*. Bless my soul, you'll be telling me next that I ought to have asked the guinea-pigs' permission before I used *them*! No great wisdom can be reached without sacrifice. But the idea of my going myself is ridiculous. It's like asking a general to fight as a common soldier. Supposing I got killed, what would become of my life's work?"

"Oh, do stop jawing," said Digory. "Are you going to bring Polly back?"

"I was going to tell you, when you so rudely interrupted me," said Uncle Andrew, "that I did at last find out a way of doing the return journey. The Green Rings draw you back."

"But Polly hasn't got a Green Ring."

"No," said Uncle Andrew with a cruel smile.

"Then she can't get back," shouted Digory. "And it's exactly the same as if you'd murdered her."

"She can get back," said Uncle Andrew, "if someone else will go after her, wearing a Yellow Ring himself and taking two Green Rings, one to bring himself back and one to bring her back."

And now of course Digory saw the trap in which he was caught: and he stared at Uncle Andrew, saying nothing, with his mouth wide open. His cheeks had gone very pale.

"I hope," said Uncle Andrew presently in a very high and mighty voice, just as if he were a perfect Uncle who had given one a handsome tip and some good advice, "I hope, Digory, you are not given to showing the white feather. I should be very sorry to think that anyone of our family had not enough honour and chivalry to go to the aid of — er — a lady in distress."

“Oh shut up!” said Digory. “If you had any honour and all that, you’d be going yourself. But I know you won’t. All right. I see I’ve got to go. But you *are* a beast. I suppose you planned the whole thing, so that she’d go without knowing it and then I’d have to go after her.”

“Of course,” said Uncle Andrew with his hateful smile.

“Very well. I’ll go. But there’s one thing I jolly well mean to say first. I didn’t believe in Magic till to-day. I see now it’s real. Well if it is, I suppose all the old fairy tales are more or less true. And you’re simply a wicked, cruel magician like the ones in the stories. Well, I’ve never read a story in which people of that sort weren’t paid out in the end, and I bet you will be. And serve you right.”

Of all the things Digory had said this was the first that really went home. Uncle Andrew started and there came over his face a look of such horror that, beast though he was, you could almost feel sorry for him. But a second later he smoothed it all away and said with a rather forced laugh, “Well, well, I suppose that is a natural thing for a child to think — brought up among women, as you have been. Old wives’ tales, eh? I don’t think you need worry about my danger, Digory. Wouldn’t it be better to worry about the danger of your little friend? She’s been gone some time. If there are any dangers Over There — well, it would be a pity to arrive a moment too late.”

“A lot *you* care,” said Digory fiercely. “But I’m sick of this jaw. What have I got to do?”

“You really must learn to control that temper of yours, my boy,” said Uncle Andrew coolly. “Otherwise you’ll grow up to be just like your Aunt Letty. Now. Attend to me.”

He got up, put on a pair of gloves, and walked over to the tray that contained the Rings.

“They only work,” he said, “if they’re actually touching your skin. Wearing gloves, I can pick them up — like this — and nothing happens. If you carried one in your pocket nothing would happen: but of course you’d have to be careful not to put your hand in your pocket and touch it by accident. The moment you touch a Yellow Ring, you vanish out of this world. When you are in the Other Place I expect — of course this hasn’t been tested yet, but I *expect* — that the moment you touch a Green Ring you vanish out of that world and — I expect — re-appear in this. Now. I take these two Greens and drop them into your right-hand pocket. Remember very carefully which pocket the Greens are in. G for Green and

R for right. G.R. you see: which are the first two letters of Green. One for you and one for the little girl. And now you pick up a Yellow one for yourself. I should put it on — on your finger — if I were you. There'll be less chance of dropping it."

Digory had almost picked up the Yellow Ring when he suddenly checked himself.

"Look here," he said. "What about Mother? Supposing she asks where I am?"

"The sooner you go, the sooner you'll be back," said Uncle Andrew cheerfully.

"But you don't really know whether I can get back."

Uncle Andrew shrugged his shoulders, walked across to the door, unlocked it, threw it open, and said:

"Oh very well then. Just as you please. Go down and have your dinner. Leave the little girl to be eaten by wild animals or drowned or starved in Other World or lost there for good, if that's what you prefer. It's all one to me. Perhaps before tea time you'd better drop in on Mrs. Plummer and explain that she'll never see her daughter again; because you were afraid to put on a ring."

"By gum," said Digory, "don't I just wish I was big enough to punch your head!"

Then he buttoned up his coat, took a deep breath, and picked up the Ring. And he thought then, as he always thought afterwards too, that he could not decently have done anything else.

CHAPTER III

The Wood Between the Worlds

Uncle Andrew and his study vanished instantly. Then, for a moment, everything became muddled. The next thing Digory knew was that there was a soft green light coming down on him from above, and darkness below. He didn't seem to be standing on anything, or sitting, or lying. Nothing appeared to be touching him. "I believe I'm in water," said Digory. "Or *under* water." This frightened him for a second, but almost at once he could feel that he was rushing upwards. Then his head suddenly came out into the air and he found himself scrambling ashore, out on to smooth grassy ground at the edge of a pool.

As he rose to his feet he noticed that he was neither dripping nor panting for breath as anyone would expect after being under water. His clothes were perfectly dry. He was standing by the edge of a small pool — not more than ten feet from side to side — in a wood. The trees grew close together and were so leafy that he could get no glimpse of the sky. All the light was green light that came through the leaves: but there must have been a very strong sun overhead, for this green daylight was bright and warm. It was the quietest wood you could possibly imagine. There were no birds, no insects, no animals, and no wind. You could almost feel the trees growing. The pool he had just got out of was not the only pool. There were dozens of others — a pool every few yards as far as his eyes could reach. You could almost feel the trees drinking the water up with their roots. This wood was very much alive. When he tried to describe it afterwards Digory always said, "It was a *rich* place: as rich as plum-cake."

The strangest thing was that, almost before he had looked about him, Digory had half forgotten how he had come there. At any rate, he was certainly not thinking about Polly, or Uncle Andrew, or even his Mother. He was not in the least frightened, or excited, or curious. If anyone had asked him: "Where did you come from?" he would probably have said, "I've always been here." That was what it felt like — as if one had always been in that place and never been bored although nothing had ever happened. As he said long afterwards, "It's not the sort of place where things happen. The trees go on growing, that's all."

After Digory had looked at the wood for a long time he noticed that there was a girl lying on her back at the foot of a tree a few yards away. Her eyes were nearly shut but not quite, as if she were just between sleeping and waking. So he looked at her for a long time and said nothing. And at last she opened her eyes and looked at him for a long time and she also said nothing. Then she spoke, in a dreamy, contented sort of voice.

“I think I’ve seen you before,” she said.

“I rather think so too,” said Digory. “Have you been here long?”

“Oh, always,” said the girl. “At least — I don’t know — a very long time.”

“So have I,” said Digory.

“No you haven’t,” said she. “I’ve just seen you come up out of that pool.”

“Yes, I suppose I did,” said Digory with a puzzled air. “I’d forgotten.”

Then for quite a long time neither said any more.

“Look here,” said the girl presently, “I wonder did we ever really meet before? I had a sort of idea — a sort of picture in my head — of a boy and a girl, like us — living somewhere quite different — and doing all sorts of things. Perhaps it was only a dream.”

“I’ve had that same dream, I think,” said Digory. “About a boy and a girl, living next door — and something about crawling among rafters. I remember the girl had a dirty face.”

“Aren’t you getting it mixed? In my dream it was the boy who had the dirty face.”

“I can’t remember the boy’s face,” said Digory: and then added, “Hullo! What’s that?”

“Why! it’s a guinea-pig,” said the girl. And it was — a fat guinea-pig, nosing about in the grass. But round the middle of the guinea-pig there ran a tape, and, tied on to it by the tape, was a bright yellow ring.

“Look! look,” cried Digory. “The Ring! And look! You’ve got one on your finger. And so have I.”

The girl now sat up, really interested at last. They stared very hard at one another, trying to remember. And then, at exactly the same moment, she shouted out “Mr. Ketterley” and he shouted out “Uncle Andrew,” and they knew who they were and began to remember the whole story. After a few minutes of hard talking they had got it straight. Digory explained how beastly Uncle Andrew had been.

“What do we do now?” said Polly. “Take the guinea-pig and go home?”

“There’s no hurry,” said Digory with a huge yawn.

“I think there is,” said Polly. “This place is too quiet! It’s so — so dreamy. You’re almost asleep. If we once give in to it we shall just lie down and drowse for ever and ever.”

“It’s very nice here,” said Digory.

“Yes, it is,” said Polly. “But we’ve got to get back.” She stood up and began to go cautiously towards the guinea-pig. But then she changed her mind.

“We might as well leave the guinea-pig,” she said. “It’s perfectly happy here, and your uncle will only do something horrid to it if we take it home.”

“I bet he would,” answered Digory. “Look at the way he’s treated *us*. By the way, how *do* we get home?”

“Go back into the pool, I expect.”

They came and stood together at the edge looking down into the smooth water. It was full of the reflection of the green, leafy branches; they made it look very deep.

“We haven’t any bathing things,” said Polly.

“We shan’t need them, silly,” said Digory. “We’re going in with our clothes on. Don’t you remember it didn’t wet us on the way up?”

“Can you swim?”

“A bit. Can you?”

“Well — not much.”

“I don’t think we shall need to swim,” said Digory. “We want to go *down*, don’t we?”

Neither of them much liked the idea of jumping into that pool, but neither said so to the other. They took hands and said “One — Two — Three — Go” and jumped. There was a great splash and of course they closed their eyes. But when they opened them again they found they were still standing, hand in hand, in that green wood, and hardly up to their ankles in water. The pool was apparently only a couple of inches deep. They splashed back onto the dry ground.

“What on earth’s gone wrong?” said Polly in a frightened voice; but not quite so frightened as you might expect, because it is hard to feel really frightened in that wood. The place is too peaceful.

“Oh! I know,” said Digory. “Of course it won’t work. We’re still wearing our yellow Rings. They’re for the outward journey, you know. The green

ones take you home. We must change rings. Have you got pockets? Good. Put your yellow ring in your left. I've got two greens. Here's one for you."

They put on their green Rings and came back to the pool. But before they tried another jump Digory gave a long "O — o — oh!"

"What's the matter?" said Polly.

"I've just had a really wonderful idea," said Digory. "What are all the other pools?"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, if we can get back to our own world by jumping into *this* pool, mightn't we get somewhere else by jumping into one of the others? Supposing there was a world at the bottom of every pool!"

"But I thought we were already in your Uncle Andrew's other-world or other-place or whatever he called it. Didn't you say — —"

"Oh bother Uncle Andrew," interrupted Digory. "I don't believe he knows anything about it. He never had the pluck to come here himself. He only talked of one other-world. But suppose there were dozens?"

"You mean, this wood might be only one of them?"

"No, I don't believe this wood is a world at all. I think it's just a sort of in-between place."

Polly looked puzzled. "Don't you see?" said Digory. "No, do listen. Think of our tunnel under the slates at home. It isn't a room in any of the houses. In a way, it isn't really part of any of the houses. But once you're in the tunnel you can go along it and come out into any of the houses in the row. Mightn't this wood be the same? — a place that isn't in any of the worlds, but once you've found that place you can get into them all."

"Well, even if you can — —" began Polly, but Digory went on as if he hadn't heard her.

"And of course that explains everything," he said. "That's why it is so quiet and sleepy here. Nothing ever happens here. Like at home. It's in the houses that people talk, and do things, and have meals. Nothing goes on in the in-between places, behind the walls and above the ceilings and under the floor, or in our own tunnel. But when you come out of our tunnel you may find yourself in any house. I think we can get out of this place into jolly well Anywhere! We don't need to jump back into the same pool we came up by. Or not just yet."

"The Wood between the Worlds," said Polly dreamily. "It sounds rather nice."

“Come on,” said Digory. “Which pool shall we try?”

“Look here,” said Polly, “I’m not going to try any new pool till we’ve made sure that we *can* get back by the old one. We’re not even sure if it’ll work yet.”

“Yes,” said Digory. “And get caught by Uncle Andrew and have our Rings taken away before we’ve had any fun. No thanks.”

“Couldn’t we just go part of the way down into our own pool,” said Polly. “Just to see if it works. Then if it does, we’ll change Rings and come up again before we’re really back in Mr. Ketterley’s study.”

“Can we go *part* of the way down?”

“Well, it took a little time coming up. I suppose it’ll take a little time going back.”

Digory made rather a fuss about agreeing to this, but he had to in the end because Polly absolutely refused to do any exploring in new worlds until she had made sure about getting back to the old one. She was quite as brave as he about some dangers (wasps, for instance) but she was not so interested in finding out things nobody had ever heard of before; for Digory was the sort of person who wants to know everything, and when he grew up he became the famous Professor Kirke who comes into other books.

After a good deal of arguing they agreed to put on their green Rings (“Green for safety,” said Digory, “so you can’t help remembering which is which”) and hold hands and jump. But as soon as they seemed to be getting back to Uncle Andrew’s study, or even to their own world, Polly was to shout “Change” and they would slip off their greens and put on their yellows. Digory wanted to be the one who shouted “Change” but Polly wouldn’t agree.

They put on the green Rings, took hands, and once more shouted “One — Two — Three — Go.” This time it worked. It is very hard to tell you what it felt like, for everything happened so quickly. At first there were bright lights moving about in a black sky: Digory always thinks these were stars and even swears that he saw Jupiter quite close — close enough to see its moons. But almost at once there were rows and rows of roofs and chimney pots about them, and they could see St. Paul’s and knew they were looking at London. But you could see through the walls of all the houses. Then they could see Uncle Andrew, very vague and shadowy, but getting clearer and more solid-looking all the time, just as if he were coming into focus. But before he became quite real Polly shouted “Change,” and they

did change, and our world faded away like a dream, and the green light above grew stronger and stronger, till their heads came out of the pool and they scrambled ashore. And there was the wood all about them, as green and bright and still as ever. The whole thing had taken less than a minute.

"There!" said Digory. "That's all right. Now for the adventure. Any pool will do. Come on. Let's try that one."

"Stop!" said Polly. "Aren't we going to mark this pool?"

They stared at each other and turned quite white as they realised the dreadful thing that Digory had just been going to do. For there were any number of pools in the wood, and the pools were all alike and the trees were all alike, so that if they had once left behind the pool that led to our own world without making some sort of land-mark, the chances would have been a hundred to one against their ever finding it again.

Digory's hand was shaking as he opened his penknife and cut out a long strip of turf on the bank of the pool. The soil (which smelled nice) was of a rich reddish brown and showed up well against the green. "It's a good thing *one* of us has some sense," said Polly.

"Well don't keep on gassing about it," said Digory. "Come along, I want to see what's in one of the other pools." And Polly gave him a pretty sharp answer and he said something even nastier in reply. The quarrel lasted for several minutes but it would be dull to write it all down. Let us skip on to the moment at which they stood with beating hearts and rather scared faces on the edge of the unknown pool with their yellow Rings on and held hands and once more said "One — Two — Three — Go!"

Splash! Once again it hadn't worked. This pool, too, appeared to be only a puddle. Instead of reaching a new world they only got their feet wet and splashed their legs for the second time that morning (if it was a morning: it seems to be always the same time in the Wood between the Worlds).

"Blast and botheration!" exclaimed Digory. "What's gone wrong now? We've put our yellow Rings on all right. He said yellow for the outward journey."

Now the truth was that Uncle Andrew, who knew nothing about the Wood between the Worlds, had quite a wrong idea about the Rings. The yellow ones weren't "outward" rings and the green ones weren't "homeward" rings: at least, not in the way he thought. The stuff of which both were made had all come from the wood. The stuff in the yellow Rings had the power of drawing you into the wood; it was stuff that wanted to get

back to its own place, the in-between place. But the stuff in the green Rings is stuff that is trying to get out of its own place: so that a green Ring would take you out of the wood into a world. Uncle Andrew, you see, was working with things he did not really understand; most magicians are. Of course Digory did not realise the truth quite clearly either, or not till later. But when they had talked it over, they decided to try their green Rings on the new pool, just to see what happened.

"I'm game if you are," said Polly. But she really said this because, in her heart of hearts, she now felt sure that neither kind of Ring was going to work at all in the new pool, and so there was nothing worse to be afraid of than another splash. I am not quite sure that Digory had not the same feeling. At any rate, when they had both put on their greens and come back to the edge of the water, and taken hands again, they were certainly a good deal more cheerful and less solemn than they had been the first time.

"One — Two — Three — Go!" said Digory. And they jumped.

CHAPTER IV

The Bell and The Hammer

There was no doubt about the Magic this time. Down and down they rushed, first through darkness and then through a mass of vague and whirling shapes which might have been almost anything. It grew lighter. Then suddenly they felt that they were standing on something solid. A moment later everything came into focus and they were able to look about them.

"What a queer place!" said Digory.

"I don't like it," said Polly with something like a shudder.

What they noticed first was the light. It wasn't like sunlight, and it wasn't like electric light, or lamps, or candles, or any other light they had ever seen. It was a dull, rather red light, not at all cheerful. It was steady and did not flicker. They were standing on a flat paved surface and buildings rose all around them. There was no roof overhead; they were in a sort of courtyard. The sky was extraordinarily dark — a blue that was almost black. When you had seen that sky you wondered that there should be any light at all.

"It's very funny weather here," said Digory. "I wonder if we've arrived just in time for a thunderstorm; or an eclipse."

"I don't like it," said Polly.

Both of them, without quite knowing why, were talking in whispers. And though there was no reason why they should still go on holding hands after their jump, they didn't let go.

The walls rose very high all round that courtyard. They had many great windows in them, windows without glass, through which you saw nothing but black darkness. Lower down there were great pillared arches, yawning blackly like the mouths of railway tunnels. It was rather cold.

The stone of which everything was built seemed to be red, but that might only be because of the curious light. It was obviously very old. Many of the flat stones that paved the courtyard had cracks across them. None of them fitted closely together and the sharp corners were all worn off. One of the arched doorways was half filled up with rubble. The two children kept on turning round and round to look at the different sides of the courtyard. One

reason was that they were afraid of somebody — or something — looking out of those windows at them when their backs were turned.

"Do you think anyone lives here?" said Digory at last, still in a whisper.

"No," said Polly. "It's all in ruins. We haven't heard a sound since we came."

"Let's stand still and listen for a bit," suggested Digory.

They stood still and listened, but all they could hear was the thump-thump of their own hearts. This place was at least as quiet as the quiet Wood between the Worlds. But it was a different kind of quietness. The silence of the Wood had been rich and warm (you could almost hear the trees growing) and full of life: this was a dead, cold, empty silence. You couldn't imagine anything growing in it.

"Let's go home," said Polly.

"But we haven't seen anything yet," said Digory. "Now we're here, we simply must have a look round."

"I'm sure there's nothing at all interesting here."

"There's not much point in finding a magic Ring that lets you into other worlds if you're afraid to look at them when you've got there."

"Who's talking about being afraid?" said Polly, letting go of Digory's hand.

"I only thought you didn't seem very keen on exploring this place."

"I'll go anywhere you go."

"We can get away the moment we want to," said Digory. "Let's take off our green Rings and put them in our right hand pockets. All we've got to do is to remember that our yellows are in our left hand pockets. You can keep your hand as near your pocket as you like, but don't put it in or you'll touch your yellow and vanish."

They did this and went quietly up to one of the big arched doorways which led into the inside of the building. And when they stood on the threshold and could look in, they saw it was not so dark inside as they had thought at first. It led into a vast, shadowy hall which appeared to be empty; but on the far side there was a row of pillars with arches between them and through those arches there streamed in some more of the same tired-looking light. They crossed the hall, walking very carefully for fear of holes in the floor or of anything lying about that they might trip over. It seemed a long walk. When they had reached the other side they came out through the arches and found themselves in another and larger courtyard.

“That doesn’t look very safe,” said Polly, pointing at a place where the wall bulged outward and looked as if it were ready to fall over into the courtyard. In one place a pillar was missing between two arches and the bit that came down to where the top of the pillar ought to have been hung there with nothing to support it. Clearly, the place had been deserted for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years.

“If it’s lasted till now, I suppose it’ll last a bit longer,” said Digory. “But we must be very quiet. You know a noise sometimes brings things down — like an avalanche in the Alps.”

They went on out of that courtyard into another doorway, and up a great flight of steps and through vast rooms that opened out of one another till you were dizzy with the mere size of the place. Every now and then they thought they were going to get out into the open and see what sort of country lay around the enormous palace. But each time they only got into another courtyard. They must have been magnificent places when people were still living there. In one there had once been a fountain. A great stone monster with wide-spread wings stood with its mouth open and you could still see a bit of piping at the back of its mouth, out of which the water used to pour. Under it was a wide stone basin to hold the water; but it was as dry as a bone. In other places there were the dry sticks of some sort of climbing plant which had wound itself round the pillars and helped to pull some of them down. But it had died long ago. And there were no ants or spiders or any of the other living things you expect to see in a ruin; and where the dry earth showed between the broken flagstones there was no grass or moss.

It was all so dreary and all so much the same that even Digory was thinking they had better put on their yellow Rings and get back to the warm, green, living forest of the In-between place, when they came to two huge doors of some metal that might possibly be gold. One stood a little ajar. So of course they went to look in. Both started back and drew a long breath: for here at last was something worth seeing.

For a second they thought the room was full of people — hundreds of people, all seated, and all perfectly still. Polly and Digory, as you may guess, stood perfectly still themselves for a good long time, looking in. But presently they decided that what they were looking at could not be real people. There was not a movement nor the sound of a breath among them all. They were like the most wonderful waxworks you ever saw.

This time Polly took the lead. There was something in this room which interested her more than it interested Digory: all the figures were wearing magnificent clothes. If you were interested in clothes at all, you could hardly help going in to see them closer. And the blaze of their colours made this room look, not exactly cheerful, but at any rate rich and majestic after all the dust and emptiness of the others. It had more windows, too, and was a good deal lighter.

I can hardly describe the clothes. The figures were all robed and had crowns on their heads. Their robes were of crimson and silvery grey and deep purple and vivid green: and there were patterns, and pictures of flowers and strange beasts, in needlework all over them. Precious stones of astonishing size and brightness stared from their crowns and hung in chains round their necks and peeped out from all the places where anything was fastened.

"Why haven't these clothes all rotted away long ago?" asked Polly.

"Magic," whispered Digory. "Can't you feel it? I bet this whole room is just stiff with enchantments. I could feel it in the moment we came in."

"Any one of these dresses would cost hundreds of pounds," said Polly.

But Digory was more interested in the faces, and indeed these were well worth looking at. The people sat in their stone chairs on each side of the room and the floor was left free down the middle. You could walk down and look at the faces in turn.

"They were *nice* people, I think," said Digory.

Polly nodded. All the faces they could see were certainly nice. Both the men and women looked kind and wise, and they seemed to come of a handsome race. But after the children had gone a few steps down the room they came to faces that looked a little different. These were very solemn faces. You felt you would have to mind your P's and Q's, if you ever met living people who looked like that. When they had gone a little further, they found themselves among faces they didn't like: this was about the middle of the room. The faces here looked very strong and proud and happy, but they looked cruel. A little further on they looked crueller. Further on again, they were still cruel but they no longer looked happy. They were even despairing faces: as if the people they belonged to had done dreadful things and also suffered dreadful things. The last figure of all was the most interesting — a woman even more richly dressed than the others, very tall (but every figure in that room was taller than the people of our world), with a look of such

fierceness and pride that it took your breath away. Yet she was beautiful too. Years afterwards when he was an old man, Digory said he had never in all his life known a woman so beautiful. It is only fair to add that Polly always said she couldn't see anything specially beautiful about her.

This woman, as I said, was the last: but there were plenty of empty chairs beyond her, as if the room had been intended for a much larger collection of images.

"I do wish we knew the story that's behind all this," said Digory. "Let's go back and look at that table sort of thing in the middle of the room."

The thing in the middle of the room was not exactly a table. It was a square pillar about four feet high and on it there rose a little golden arch from which there hung a little golden bell; and beside this there lay a little golden hammer to hit the bell with.

"I wonder ... I wonder ... I wonder..." said Digory.

"There seems to be something written here," said Polly, stooping down and looking at the side of the pillar.

"By gum, so there is," said Digory. "But of course we shan't be able to read it."

"Shan't we? I'm not so sure," said Polly.

They both looked at it hard and, as you might have expected, the letters cut in the stone were strange. But now a great wonder happened: for, as they looked, though the shape of the strange letters never altered, they found that they could understand them. If only Digory had remembered what he himself had said a few minutes ago, that this was an enchanted room, he might have guessed that the enchantment was beginning to work. But he was too wild with curiosity to think about that. He was longing more and more to know what was written on the pillar. And very soon they both knew. What it said was something like this — at least this is the sense of it though the poetry, when you read it there, was better:

Make your choice, adventurous Stranger;
Strike the bell and bide the danger,
Or wonder, till it drives you mad,
What would have followed if you had.

"No fear!" said Polly. "We don't want any danger."

“Oh but don’t you see it’s no good!” said Digory. “We can’t get out of it now. We shall always be wondering what would have happened if we had struck the bell. I’m not going home to be driven mad by always thinking of that. No fear!”

“Don’t be so silly,” said Polly. “As if any one would! What does it matter what would have happened?”

“I expect anyone who’s come as far as this is bound to go on wondering till it sends him dotty. That’s the Magic of it, you see. I can feel it beginning to work on me already.”

“Well I don’t,” said Polly crossly. “And I don’t believe you do either. You’re just putting it on.”

“That’s all *you* know,” said Digory. “It’s because you’re a girl. Girls never want to know anything but gossip and rot about people getting engaged.”

“You looked exactly like your Uncle when you said that,” said Polly.

“Why can’t you keep to the point?” said Digory. “What we’re talking about is — —”

“How exactly like a man!” said Polly in a very grown-up voice; but she added hastily, in her real voice, “And don’t say I’m just like a woman, or you’ll be a beastly copy-cat.”

“I should never dream of calling a kid like you a woman,” said Digory loftily.

“Oh, I’m a kid, am I?” said Polly, who was now in a real rage. “Well you needn’t be bothered by having a kid with you any longer then. I’m off. I’ve had enough of this place. And I’ve had enough of you too — you beastly, stuck-up, obstinate pig!”

“None of that!” said Digory in a voice even nastier than he meant it to be; for he saw Polly’s hand moving to her pocket to get hold of her yellow Ring. I can’t excuse what he did next except by saying that he was very sorry for it afterwards (and so were a good many other people). Before Polly’s hand reached her pocket, he grabbed her wrist, leaning across her with his back against her chest. Then, keeping her other arm out of the way with his other elbow, he leaned forward, picked up the hammer, and struck the golden bell a light, smart tap. Then he let her go and they fell apart staring at each other and breathing hard. Polly was just beginning to cry, not with fear, and not even because he had hurt her wrist quite fairly badly but

with furious anger. Within two seconds, however, they had something to think about that drove their own quarrels quite out of their minds.

As soon as the bell was struck it gave out a note, a sweet note such as you might have expected, and not very loud. But instead of dying away again, it went on; and as it went on it grew louder. Before a minute had passed it was twice as loud as it had been to begin with. It was soon so loud that if the children had tried to speak (but they weren't thinking of speaking now — they were just standing with their mouths open) they would not have heard one another. Very soon it was so loud that they could not have heard one another even by shouting. And still it grew: all on one note, a continuous sweet sound, though the sweetness had something horrible about it, till all the air in that great room was throbbing with it and they could feel the stone floor trembling under their feet. Then at last it began to be mixed with another sound, a vague, disastrous noise which sounded first like the roar of a distant train, and then like the crash of a falling tree. They heard something like great weights falling. Finally, with a sudden rush and thunder, and a shake that nearly flung them off their feet, about a quarter of the roof at one end of the room fell in, great blocks of masonry fell all round them, and the walls rocked. The noise of the bell stopped. The clouds of dust cleared away. Everything became quiet again.

It was never found out whether the fall of the roof was due to Magic or whether that unbearably loud sound from the bell just happened to strike the note which was more than those crumbling walls could stand.

"There! I hope you're satisfied now," panted Polly.

"Well, it's all over, anyway," said Digory.

And both thought it was; but they had never been more mistaken in their lives.

CHAPTER V

The Deplorable Word

The children were facing one another across the pillar where the bell hung, still trembling, though it no longer gave out any note. Suddenly they heard a soft noise from the end of the room which was still undamaged. They turned quick as lightning to see what it was. One of the robed figures, the furthest-off one of all, the woman whom Digory thought so beautiful, was rising from its chair. When she stood up they realised that she was even taller than they had thought. And you could see at once, not only from her crown and robes, but from the flash of her eyes and the curve of her lips, that she was a great queen. She looked round the room and saw the damage and saw the children, but you could not guess from her face what she thought of either or whether she was surprised. She came forward with long, swift strides.

"Who has awaked me? Who has broken the spell?" she asked.

"I think it must have been me," said Digory.

"You!" said the Queen, laying her hand on his shoulder — a white, beautiful hand, but Digory could feel that it was strong as steel pincers. "You? But you are only a child, a common child. Anyone can see at a glance that you have no drop of royal or noble blood in your veins. How did such as you dare to enter this house?"

"We've come from another world; by Magic," said Polly, who thought it was high time the Queen took some notice of her as well as of Digory.

"Is this true?" said the Queen, still looking at Digory and not giving Polly even a glance.

"Yes, it is," said he.

The Queen put her other hand under his chin and forced it up so that she could see his face better. Digory tried to stare back but he soon had to let his eyes drop. There was something about hers that overpowered him. After she had studied him for well over a minute, she let go of his chin and said:

"You are no magician. The mark of it is not on you. You must be only the servant of a magician. It is on another's Magic that you have travelled here."

"It was my Uncle Andrew," said Digory.

At the moment, not in the room itself but from somewhere very close, there came, first a rumbling, then a creaking, and then a roar of falling masonry, and the floor shook.

"There is great peril here," said the Queen. "The whole palace is breaking up. If we are not out of it in a few minutes we shall be buried under the ruin." She spoke as calmly as if she had been merely mentioning the time of day. "Come," she added, and held out a hand to each of the children. Polly, who was disliking the Queen and feeling sulky, would not have let her hand be taken if she could have helped it. But though the Queen spoke so calmly, her movements were as quick as thought. Before Polly knew what was happening her left hand had been caught in a hand so much longer and stronger than her own that she could do nothing about it.

"This is a terrible woman," thought Polly. "She's strong enough to break my arm with one twist. And now that she's got my left hand I can't get at my yellow Ring. If I tried to stretch across and get my right hand into my left pocket I mightn't be able to reach it, before she asked me what I was doing. Whatever happens we mustn't let her know about the Rings. I do hope Digory has the sense to keep his mouth shut. I wish I could get a word with him alone."

The Queen led them out of the Hall of Images into a long corridor and then through a whole maze of halls and stairs and courtyards. Again and again they heard parts of the great palace collapsing, sometimes quite close to them. Once a huge arch came thundering down only a moment after they had passed through it. The Queen was walking quickly — the children had to trot to keep up with her — but she showed no sign of fear. Digory thought, "She's wonderfully brave. And strong. She's what I call a Queen! I do hope she's going to tell us the story of this place."

She did tell them certain things as they went along: "That is the door to the dungeons," she would say, or "That passage leads to the principal torture chambers," or "This was the old banqueting hall where my great-grandfather bade seven hundred nobles to a feast and killed them all before they had drunk their fill. They had had rebellious thoughts."

They came at last into a hall larger and loftier than any they had yet seen. From its size and from the great doors at the far end, Digory thought that now at last they must be coming to the main entrance. In this he was quite right. The doors were dead black, either ebony or some black metal which is not found in our world. They were fastened with great bars, most of them

too high to reach and all too heavy to lift. He wondered how they would get out.

The Queen let go of his hand and raised her arm. She drew herself up to her full height and stood rigid. Then she said something which they couldn't understand (but it sounded horrid) and made an action as if she were throwing something towards the doors. And those high and heavy doors trembled for a second as if they were made of silk and then crumbled away till there was nothing left of them but a heap of dust on the threshold.

"Whew!" whistled Digory.

"Has your master magician, your uncle, power like mine?" asked the Queen, firmly seizing Digory's hand again. "But I shall know later. In the meantime, remember what you have seen. This is what happens to things, and to people, who stand in my way."

Much more light than they had yet seen in that country was pouring in through the now empty doorway, and when the Queen led them out through it they were not surprised to find themselves in the open air. The wind that blew in their faces was cold, yet somehow stale. They were looking from a high terrace and there was a great landscape spread out below them.

Low down and near the horizon hung a great, red sun, far bigger than our sun. Digory felt at once that it was also older than ours: a sun near the end of its life, weary of looking down upon that world. To the left of the sun, and higher up, there was a single star, big and bright. Those were the only two things to be seen in the dark sky; they made a dismal group. And on the earth, in every direction, as far as the eye could reach, there spread a vast city in which there was no living thing to be seen. And all the temples, towers, palaces, pyramids, and bridges cast long, disastrous-looking shadows in the light of that withered sun. Once a great river had flowed through the city, but the water had long since vanished, and it was now only a wide ditch of grey dust.

"Look well on that which no eyes will ever see again," said the Queen. "Such was Charn, that great city, the city of the King of Kings, the wonder of the world, perhaps of all worlds. Does your uncle rule any city as great as this, boy?"

"No," said Digory. He was going to explain that Uncle Andrew didn't rule any cities, but the Queen went on:

"It is silent now. But I have stood here when the whole air was full of the noises of Charn; the trampling of feet, the creaking of wheels, the cracking

of the whips and the groaning of slaves, the thunder of chariots, and the sacrificial drums beating in the temples. I have stood here (but that was near the end) when the roar of battle went up from every street and the river of Charn ran red." She paused and added, "All in one moment one woman blotted it out forever."

"Who?" said Digory in a faint voice; but he had already guessed the answer.

"I," said the Queen. "I, Jadis, the last Queen, but the Queen of the World."

The two children stood silent, shivering in the cold wind.

"It was my sister's fault," said the Queen. "She drove me to it. May the curse of all the Powers rest upon her forever! At any moment I was ready to make peace — yes, and to spare her life too, if only she would yield me the throne. But she would not. Her pride has destroyed the whole world. Even after the war had begun, there was a solemn promise that neither side would use Magic. But when she broke her promise, what could I do? Fool! As if she did not know that I had more Magic than she. She even knew that I had the secret of the Deplorable Word. Did she think — she was always weakling — that I would not use it?"

"What was it?" said Digory.

"That was the secret of secrets," said Queen Jadis. "It had long been known to the great kings of our race that there was a word which, if spoken with the proper ceremonies, would destroy all living things except the one who spoke it. But the ancient kings were weak and soft-hearted and bound themselves and all who should come after them with great oaths never even to seek after the knowledge of that word. But I learned it in a secret place and paid a terrible price to learn it. I did not use it until she forced me to it. I fought and fought to over-come her by every other means. I poured out the blood of my armies like water — —"

"Beast!" muttered Polly.

"The last great battle," said the Queen, "raged for three days here in Charn itself. For three days I looked down upon it from this very spot. I did not use my power till the last of my soldiers had fallen, and the accursed woman, my sister, at the head of her rebels was half way up those great stairs that lead up from the city to the terrace. Then I waited till we were so close that we could see one another's faces. She flashed her horrible, wicked eyes upon me and said, 'Victory.' 'Yes,' said I, 'Victory, but not

yours.’ Then I spoke the Deplorable Word. A moment later I was the only living thing beneath the sun.”

“But the people?” gasped Digory.

“What people, boy?” asked the Queen.

“All the ordinary people,” said Polly, “who’d never done you any harm. And the women, and the children, and the animals.”

“Don’t you understand?” said the Queen (still speaking to Digory). “I was the Queen. They were all *my* people. What else were they there for but to do my will.”

“It was rather hard luck on them, all the same,” said he.

“I had forgotten that you are only a common boy. How should you understand reasons of State? You must learn, child, that what would be wrong for you or for any of the common people is not wrong in a great Queen such as I. The weight of the world is on our shoulders. We must be freed from all rules. Ours is a high and lonely destiny.”

Digory suddenly remembered that Uncle Andrew had used exactly the same words. But they sounded much grander when Queen Jadis said them; perhaps because Uncle Andrew was not seven feet tall and dazzlingly beautiful.

“And what did you do then?” said Digory.

“I had already cast strong spells on the hall where the images of my ancestors sit. And the force of those spells was that I should sleep among them, like an image myself, and need neither food nor fire, though it were a thousand years, till one came and struck the bell and awoke me.”

“Was it the Deplorable Word that made the sun like that?” asked Digory.

“Like what?” said Jadis.

“So big, so red, and so cold.”

“It has always been so,” said Jadis. “At least, for hundreds of thousands of years. Have you a different sort of sun in your world?”

“Yes, it’s smaller and yellower. And it gives a good deal more heat.”

The Queen gave a long drawn “A — a — ah!” And Digory saw on her face that same hungry and greedy look which he had lately seen on Uncle Andrew’s. “So,” she said, “yours is a younger world.”

She paused for a moment to look once more at the deserted city — and if she was sorry for all the evil she had done, she certainly didn’t show it — and then said:

“Now, let us be going. It is cold here at the end of all the ages.”

“Going where?” asked both the children.

“Where?” repeated Jadis in surprise. “To your world, of course.”

Polly and Digory looked at each other, aghast. Polly had disliked the Queen from the first; and even Digory, now that he had heard the story, felt that he had seen quite as much of her as he wanted. Certainly, she was not at all the sort of person one would like to take home. And if they did like, they didn’t know how they could. What they wanted was to get away themselves: but Polly couldn’t get at her Ring and of course Digory couldn’t go without her. Digory got very red in the face and stammered.

“Oh — oh — our world. I d — didn’t know you wanted to go there.”

“What else were you sent for if not to fetch me?” asked Jadis.

“I’m sure you wouldn’t like our world at all,” said Digory. “It’s not her sort of place, is it Polly? It’s very dull; not worth seeing, really.”

“It will soon be worth seeing when I rule it,” answered the Queen.

“Oh, but you can’t,” said Digory. “It’s not like that. They wouldn’t let you, you know.”

The Queen gave a contemptuous smile. “Many great kings,” she said, “thought they could stand against the House of Charn. But they all fell, and their very names are forgotten. Foolish boy! Do you think that I, with my beauty and my Magic, will not have your whole world at my feet before a year has passed? Prepare your incantations and take me there at once.”

“This is perfectly frightful,” said Digory to Polly.

“Perhaps you fear for this Uncle of yours,” said Jadis. “But if he honours me duly, he shall keep his life and his throne. I am not coming to fight against *him*. He must be a very great Magician, if he has found how to send you here. Is he King of your whole world or only of part?”

“He isn’t King of anywhere,” said Digory.

“You are lying,” said the Queen. “Does not Magic always go with the royal blood? Who ever heard of common people being Magicians? I can see the truth whether you speak it or not. Your Uncle is the great King and the great Enchanter of your world. And by his art he has seen the shadow of my face, in some magic mirror or some enchanted pool; and for the love of my beauty he has made a potent spell which shook your world to its foundations and sent you across the vast gulf between world and world to ask my favour and to bring me to him. Answer me: is that not how it was?”

“Well, not *exactly*,” said Digory.

“Not exactly,” shouted Polly. “Why, it’s absolute bosh from beginning to end.”

“Minion!” cried the Queen, turning in rage upon Polly and seizing her hair, at the very top of her head where it hurts most. But in so doing she let go of both the children’s hands. “Now,” shouted Digory; and “Quick!” shouted Polly. They plunged their left hands into their pockets. They did not even need to put the Rings on. The moment they touched them, the whole of that dreary world vanished from their eyes. They were rushing upward and a warm green light was growing nearer overhead.

CHAPTER VI

The Beginning of Uncle Andrew's Troubles

"Let go! Let go!" screamed Polly.

"I'm not touching you!" said Digory.

Then their heads came out of the pool and, once more, the sunny quietness of the Wood between the Worlds was all about them, and it seemed richer and warmer and more peaceful than ever after the staleness and ruin of the place they had just left. I think that, if they had been given the chance, they would again have forgotten who they were and where they came from and would have lain down and enjoyed themselves, half asleep, listening to the growing of the trees. But this time there was something that kept them as wide-awake as possible: for as soon as they had got out on to the grass, they found that they were not alone. The Queen, or the Witch (whichever you like to call her) had come up with them, holding on fast by Polly's hair. That was why Polly had been shouting out "Let go!"

This proved, by the way, another thing about the Rings which Uncle Andrew hadn't told Digory because he didn't know it himself. In order to jump from world to world by using one of those Rings you don't need to be wearing or touching it yourself; it is enough if you are touching someone who is touching it. In that way they work like a magnet; and everyone knows that if you pick up a pin with a magnet, any other pin which is touching the first pin will come too.

Now that you saw her in the wood, Queen Jadis looked different. She was much paler than she had been; so pale that hardly any of her beauty was left. And she was stooped and seemed to be finding it hard to breathe, as if the air of that place stifled her. Neither of the children felt in the least afraid of her now.

"Let go! Let go of my hair," said Polly. "What do you mean by it?"

"Here! Let go of her hair. At once," said Digory.

They both turned and struggled with her. They were stronger than she and in a few seconds they had forced her to let go. She reeled back, panting, and there was a look of terror in her eyes.

"Quick, Digory!" said Polly. "Change Rings and into the home pool."

“Help! Help! Mercy!” cried the Witch in a faint voice, staggering after them. “Take me with you. You cannot mean to leave me in this horrible place. It is killing me.”

“It’s a reason of State,” said Polly spitefully. “Like when you killed all those people in your own world. Do be quick, Digory.” They had put on their green Rings, but Digory said:

“Oh bother! What are we to do?” He couldn’t help feeling a little sorry for the Queen.

“Oh don’t be such an ass,” said Polly. “Ten to one she’s only shamming. Do come *on*.” And then both children plunged into the home pool. “It’s a good thing we made that mark,” thought Polly. But as they jumped Digory felt that a large cold finger and thumb had caught him by the ear. And as they sank down and the confused shapes of our own world began to appear, the grip of that finger and thumb grew stronger. The Witch was apparently recovering her strength. Digory struggled and kicked, but it was not of the least use. In a moment they found themselves in Uncle Andrew’s study; and there was Uncle Andrew himself, staring at the wonderful creature that Digory had brought back from beyond the world.

And well he might stare. Digory and Polly stared too. There was no doubt that the Witch had got over her faintness; and now that one saw her in our own world, with ordinary things around her, she fairly took one’s breath away. In Charn she had been alarming enough: in London, she was terrifying. For one thing, they had not realised till now how very big she was. “Hardly human” was what Digory thought when he looked at her; and he may have been right, for some say there is giantish blood in the royal family of Charn. But even her height was nothing compared with her beauty, her fierceness, and her wildness. She looked ten times more alive than most of the people one meets in London. Uncle Andrew was bowing and rubbing his hands and looking, to tell the truth, extremely frightened. He seemed a little shrimp of a creature beside the Witch. And yet, as Polly said afterwards, there was a sort of likeness between her face and his, something in the expression. It was the look that all wicked Magicians have, the “Mark” which Jadis had said she could not find in Digory’s face. One good thing about seeing the two together was that you would never again be afraid of Uncle Andrew, any more than you’d be afraid of a worm after you had met a rattlesnake or afraid of a cow after you had met a mad bull.

“Pooh!” thought Digory to himself. “*Him* a Magician! Not much. Now *she’s* the real thing.”

Uncle Andrew kept on rubbing his hands and bowing. He was trying to say something very polite, but his mouth had gone all dry so that he could not speak. His “experiment” with the Rings, as he called it, was turning out more successful than he liked: for though he had dabbled in Magic for years he had always left all the dangers (as far as one can) to other people. Nothing at all like this had ever happened to him before.

Then Jadis spoke; not very loud, but there was something in her voice that made the whole room quiver.

“Where is the Magician who has called me into this world?”

“Ah — ah — Madam,” gasped Uncle Andrew. “I am most honoured —— highly gratified —— a most unexpected pleasure —— if only I had the opportunity of making any preparations —— I —— I — —”

“Where is the Magician, Fool?” said Jadis.

“I —— I am, Madam. I hope you will excuse any — er — liberty these naughty children may have taken. I assure you, there was no intention — —”

“You!” said the Queen in a still more terrible voice. Then, in one stride, she crossed the room, seized a great handful of Uncle Andrew’s grey hair and pulled his head back so that his face looked up into hers. Then she studied his face just as she had studied Digory’s face in the palace of Charn. He blinked and licked his lips nervously all the time. At last she let him go; so suddenly that he reeled back against the wall.

“I see,” she said scornfully, “you are a Magician — of a sort. Stand up, dog, and don’t sprawl there as if you were speaking to your equals. How do you come to know Magic? *You* are not of royal blood, I’ll swear.”

“Well — ah — not perhaps in the strict sense,” stammered Uncle Andrew. “Not exactly royal, Ma’am. The Ketterleys are, however, a very old family. An old Dorsetshire family, Ma’am.”

“Peace,” said the Witch. “I see what you are. You are a little, peddling Magician who works by rules and books. There is no real Magic in your blood and heart. Your kind was made an end of in my world a thousand years ago. But here I shall allow you to be my servant.”

“I should be most happy — delighted to be of any service — a p — pleasure, I assure you.”

“Peace! You talk far too much. Listen to your first task. I see we are in a large city. Procure for me at once a chariot or a flying carpet or a well-trained dragon, or whatever is usual for royal and noble persons in your land. Then bring me to places where I can get clothes and jewels and slaves fit for my rank. To-morrow I will begin the conquest of the world.”

“I — I — I’ll go and order a cab at once,” gasped Uncle Andrew.

“Stop,” said the Witch, just as he reached the door. “Do not dream of treachery. My eyes can see through walls and into the minds of men. They will be on you wherever you go. At the first sign of disobedience I will lay such spells on you that anything you sit down on will feel like red hot iron and whenever you lie in a bed there will be invisible blocks of ice at your feet. Now go.”

The old man went out, looking like a dog with its tail between its legs.

The children were now afraid that Jadis would have something to say to them about what had happened in the wood. As it turned out, however, she never mentioned it either then or afterwards. I think (and Digory thinks too) that her mind was of a sort which cannot remember that quiet place at all, and however often you took her there and however long you left her there, she would still know nothing about it. Now that she was left alone with the children, she took no notice of either of them. And that was like her too. In Charn she had taken no notice of Polly (till the very end) because Digory was the one she wanted to make use of. Now that she had Uncle Andrew, she took no notice of Digory. I expect most witches are like that. They are not interested in things or people unless they can use them; they are terribly practical. So there was silence in the room for a minute or two. But you could tell by the way Jadis tapped her foot on the floor that she was growing impatient.

Presently she said, as if to herself, “What is the old fool doing? I should have brought a whip.” She stalked out of the room in pursuit of Uncle Andrew without one glance at the children.

“Whew!” said Polly, letting out a long breath of relief. “And now I must get home. It’s frightfully late. I shall catch it.”

“Well do, do come back as soon as you can,” said Digory. “This is simply ghastly, having her here. We must make some sort of plan.”

“That’s up to your Uncle now,” said Polly. “It was he who started all this messing about with Magic.”

“All the same, you will come back, won’t you? Hang it all, you can’t leave me alone in a scrape like this.”

“I shall go home by the tunnel,” said Polly rather coldly. “That’ll be the quickest way. And if you want me to come back, hadn’t you better say you’re sorry?”

“Sorry?” exclaimed Digory. “Well, now, if that isn’t just like a girl! What have *I* done?”

“Oh nothing of course,” said Polly sarcastically. “Only nearly screwed my wrist off in that room with all the waxworks, like a cowardly bully. Only struck the bell with the hammer, like a silly idiot. Only turned back in the wood so that she had time to catch hold of you before we jumped into our own pool. That’s all.”

“Oh,” said Digory, very surprised. “Well, all right, I’ll say I’m sorry. And I really am sorry about what happened in the waxworks room. There: I’ve said I’m sorry. And now, do be decent and come back. I shall be in a frightful hole if you don’t.”

“I don’t see what’s going to happen to you. It’s Mr. Ketterley who’s going to sit on red hot chairs and have ice in his bed, isn’t it?”

“It isn’t that sort of thing,” said Digory. “What I’m bothered about is Mother. Suppose that creature went into her room. She might frighten her to death.”

“Oh, I see,” said Polly in rather a different voice. “All right. We’ll call it Pax. I’ll come back — if I can. But I must go now.” And she crawled through the little door into the tunnel; and that dark place among the rafters which had seemed so exciting and adventurous a few hours ago, seemed quite tame and homely now.

We must now go back to Uncle Andrew. His poor old heart went pit-a-pat as he staggered down the attic stairs and he kept on dabbing at his forehead with a handkerchief. When he reached his bedroom, which was on the floor below, he locked himself in. And the very first thing he did was to grope in his wardrobe for a bottle and a wine-glass which he always kept hidden there where Aunt Letty could not find them. He poured himself out a glass-ful of some nasty, grown-up drink and drank it off at one gulp. Then he drew a deep breath.

“Upon my word,” he said to himself. “I’m dreadfully shaken. Most upsetting! And at my time of life!”

He poured out a second glass and drank it too; then he began to change his clothes. You have never seen such clothes, but I can just remember them. He put on a very high, shiny, stiff collar of the sort that made you hold your chin up all the time. He put on a white waistcoat with a pattern on it and arranged his gold watch chain across the front. He put on his best frock-coat, the one he kept for weddings and funerals. He got out his best tall hat and polished it up. There was a vase of flowers (put there by Aunt Letty) on his dressing table; he took one and put it in his button-hole. He took a clean handkerchief (a lovely one such as you couldn't buy today) out of the little left-hand drawer and put a few drops of scent on it. He took his eye-glass, with the thick black ribbon, and screwed it into his eye: then he looked at himself in the mirror.

Children have one kind of silliness, as you know, and grown-ups have another kind. At this moment Uncle Andrew was beginning to be silly in a very grown-up way. Now that the Witch was no longer in the same room with him he was quickly forgetting how she had frightened him and thinking more and more of her wonderful beauty. He kept on saying to himself, "A dem fine woman, sir, a dem fine woman. A superb creature." He had also somehow managed to forget that it was the children who had got hold of this "superb creature": he felt as if he himself by his Magic had called her out of unknown worlds.

"Andrew, my boy," he said to himself as he looked in the glass, "you're a devilish well preserved fellow for your age. A distinguished-looking man, sir."

You see, the foolish old man was actually beginning to imagine the Witch would fall in love with him. The two drinks probably had something to do with it, and so had his best clothes. But he was, in any case, as vain as a peacock; that was why he had become a Magician.

He unlocked the door, went downstairs, sent the housemaid out to fetch a hansom (everyone had lots of servants in those days) and looked into the drawing room. There, as he expected, he found Aunt Letty. She was busily mending a mattress. It lay on the floor near the window and she was kneeling on it.

"Ah, Letitia my dear," said Uncle Andrew, "I — ah — have to go out. Just lend me five pounds or so, there's a good gel." ("Gel" was the way he pronounced girl.)

“No, Andrew dear,” said Aunt Letty in her firm, quiet voice, without looking up from her work. “I’ve told you times without number that I *will not* lend you money.”

“Now pray don’t be troublesome, my dear gel,” said Uncle Andrew. “It’s most important. You will put me in a deucedly awkward position if you don’t.”

“Andrew,” said Aunt Letty, looking him straight in the face, “I wonder you are not ashamed to ask me for money.”

There was a long, dull story of a grown-up kind behind these words. All you need to know about it is that Uncle Andrew, what between “managing dear Letty’s business matters for her,” and never doing any work, and running up large bills for brandy and cigars (which Aunt Letty had paid again and again) had made her a good deal poorer than she had been thirty years ago.

“My dear gel,” said Uncle Andrew, “you don’t understand. I shall have some quite unexpected expenses to-day. I have to do a little entertaining. Come now, don’t be tiresome.”

“And who, pray, are *you* going to entertain, Andrew?” asked Aunt Letty.

“A — a most distinguished visitor has just arrived.”

“Distinguished fiddlestick!” said Aunt Letty. “There hasn’t been a ring at the bell for the last hour.”

At that moment the door was suddenly flung open. Aunt Letty looked round and saw with amazement that an enormous woman, splendidly dressed, with bare arms and flashing eyes, stood in the doorway. It was the Witch.

CHAPTER VII

What Happened at the Front Door

“Now, slave, how long am I to wait for my chariot?” thundered the Witch. Uncle Andrew cowered away from her. Now that she was really present, all the silly thoughts he had had while looking at himself in the glass were oozing out of him. But Aunt Letty at once got up from her knees and came over to the centre of the room.

“And who is this young person, Andrew, may I ask?” said Aunt Letty in icy tones.

“Distinguished foreigner —— v — very important p — person,” he stammered.

“Rubbish!” said Aunt Letty, and then, turning to the Witch, “get out of my house this moment, you shameless hussy, or I’ll send for the police.” She thought the Witch must be someone out of a circus and she did not approve of bare arms.

“What woman is this?” said Jadis. “Down on your knees, minion, before I blast you.”

“No strong language in this house *if* you please, young woman,” said Aunt Letty.

Instantly, as it seemed to Uncle Andrew, the Queen towered up to an even greater height. Fire flashed from her eyes: she flung out her arm with the same gesture and the same horrible-sounding words that had lately turned the palace-gates of Charn to dust. But nothing happened except that Aunt Letty, thinking that those horrible words were meant to be English, said:

“I thought as much. The woman is drunk. Drunk! She can’t even speak clearly.”

It must have been a terrible moment for the Witch when she suddenly realised that her power of turning people into dust, which had been quite real in her own world, was not going to work in ours. But she did not lose her nerve even for a second. Without wasting a thought on her disappointment, she lunged forward, caught Aunt Letty round the neck and the knees, raised her high above her head as if she had been no heavier than a doll, and threw her across the room. While Aunt Letty was still hurtling

through the air, the housemaid (who was having a beautifully exciting morning) put her head in at the door and said, “If you please, sir, the ‘ansom’s come.”

“Lead on, Slave,” said the Witch to Uncle Andrew. He began muttering something about “regrettable violence — must really protest,” but at a single glance from Jadis he became speechless. She drove him out of the room and out of the house; and Digory came running down the stairs just in time to see the front door close behind them.

“Jiminy!” he said. “She’s loose in London. And with Uncle Andrew. I wonder what on earth is going to happen now.”

“Oh, Master Digory,” said the housemaid (who was really having a wonderful day), “I think Miss Ketterley’s hurt herself somehow.” So they both rushed into the drawing room to find out what had happened.

If Aunt Letty had fallen on bare boards or even on the carpet, I suppose all her bones would have been broken: but by great good luck she had fallen on the mattress. Aunt Letty was a very tough old lady: aunts often were in those days. After she had had some *sal volatile* and sat still for a few minutes, she said there was nothing the matter with her except a few bruises. Very soon she was taking charge of the situation.

“Sarah,” she said to the housemaid (who had never had such a day before), “go around to the police station at once and tell them there is a dangerous lunatic at large. I will take Mrs. Kirke’s lunch up myself.” Mrs. Kirke was, of course, Digory’s mother.

When Mother’s lunch had been seen to, Digory and Aunt Letty had their own. After that he did some hard thinking.

The problem was how to get the Witch back to her own world, or at any rate out of ours, as soon as possible. Whatever happened, she must not be allowed to go rampaging about the house. Mother must not see her. And, if possible, she must not be allowed to go rampaging about London either. Digory had not been in the drawing room when she tried to “blast” Aunt Letty, but he had seen her “blast” the gates at Charn: so he knew her terrible powers and did not know that she had lost any of them by coming into our world. And he knew she meant to conquer our world. At the present moment, as far as he could see, she might be blasting Buckingham Palace or the Houses of Parliament: and it was almost certain that quite a number of policemen had by now been reduced to little heaps of dust. And there didn’t seem to be anything he could do about that. “But the Rings seem to

work like magnets," thought Digory. "If I can only touch her and then slip on my yellow, we shall both go into the Wood between the Worlds. I wonder will she go all faint again there? Was that something the place does to her, or was it only the shock of being pulled out of her own world? But I suppose I'll have to risk that. And how am I to find the beast? I don't suppose Aunt Letty would let me go out, not unless I said where I was going. And I haven't got more than twopence. I'd need any amount of money for buses and trams if I went looking all over London. Anyway, I haven't the faintest idea where to look. I wonder if Uncle Andrew is still with her."

It seemed in the end that the only thing he could do was to wait and hope that Uncle Andrew and the Witch would come back. If they did, he must rush out and get hold of the Witch and put on his yellow Ring before she had a chance to get into the house. This meant that he must watch the front door like a cat watching a mouse's hole; he dared not leave his post for a moment. So he went into the dining room and "glued his face" as they say, to the window. It was a bow-window from which you could see the steps up to the front door and see up and down the street, so that no-one could reach the front door without your knowing. "I wonder what Polly's doing?" thought Digory.

He wondered about this a good deal as the first slow half-hour ticked on. But you need not wonder, for I am going to tell you. She had got home late for her dinner, with her shoes and stockings very wet. And when they asked her where she had been and what on earth she had been doing, she said she had been out with Digory Kirke. Under further questioning she said she had got her feet wet in a pool of water, and that the pool was in a wood. Asked where the wood was, she said she didn't know. Asked if it was in one of the parks, she said truthfully enough that she supposed it might be a sort of park. From all of this Polly's mother got the idea that Polly had gone off, without telling anyone, to some part of London she didn't know, and gone into a strange park and amused herself jumping into puddles. As a result she was told that she had been very naughty indeed and that she wouldn't be allowed to play with "that Kirke boy" any more if anything of the sort ever happened again. Then she was given dinner with all the nice parts left out and sent to bed for two solid hours. It was a thing that happened to one quite often in those days.

So while Digory was staring out of the dining room window, Polly was lying in bed, and both were thinking how terribly slowly the time could go. I think, myself, I would rather have been in Polly's position. She had only to wait for the end of her two hours: but every few minutes Digory would hear a cab or a baker's van or a butcher's boy coming round the corner and think "Here she comes," and then find it wasn't. And in between these false alarms, for what seemed hours and hours, the clock ticked on and one big fly — high up and far out of reach — buzzed against the window. It one of those houses that get very quiet and dull in the afternoon and always seem to smell of mutton.

During his long watching and waiting one small thing happened which I shall have to mention because something important came of it later on. A lady called with some grapes for Digory's Mother; and as the dining room door was open, Digory couldn't help overhearing Aunt Letty and the lady as they talked in the hall.

"What lovely grapes!" came Aunt Letty's voice. "I'm sure if anything could do her good these would. But poor, dear little Mabel! I'm afraid it would need fruit from the land of youth to help her now. Nothing in this world will do much." Then they both lowered their voices and said a lot more that he could not hear.

If he had heard that bit about the land of youth a few days ago he would have thought Aunt Letty was just talking without meaning anything in particular, the way grown-ups do, and it wouldn't have interested him. He almost thought so now. But suddenly it flashed upon his mind that he now knew (even if Aunt Letty didn't) that there really were other worlds and that he himself had been in one of them. At that rate there might be a real Land of Youth somewhere. There might be almost anything. There might be fruit in some other world that would really cure his mother! And oh, oh —— Well, you know how it feels if you begin hoping for something that you want desperately badly; you almost fight against the hope because it is too good to be true; you've been disappointed so often before. That was how Digory felt. But it was no good trying to throttle this hope. It might — really, really, it just might be true. So many odd things had happened already. And he had the magic Rings. There must be worlds you could get to through every pool in the wood. He could hunt through them all. And then —— *Mother well again.* Everything right again. He forgot all about

watching for the Witch. His hand was already going into the pocket where he kept the yellow Ring, when all at once he heard a sound of galloping.

"Hullo! What's that?" thought Digory. "Fire-engine? I wonder what house is on fire. Great Scott, it's coming here. Why, it's Her."

I needn't tell you who he meant by *Her*.

First came the hansom. There was no one in the driver's seat. On the roof — not sitting, but standing on the roof — swaying with superb balance as it came at full speed round the corner with one wheel in the air — was Jadis the Queen of Queens and the Terror of Charn. Her teeth were bared, her eyes shone like fire, and her long hair streamed out behind her like a comet's tail. She was flogging the horse without mercy. Its nostrils were wide and red and its sides were spotted with foam. It galloped madly up to the front door, missing the lamp-post by an inch, and then reared up on its hind legs. The hansom crashed into the lamp-post and shattered into several pieces. The Witch, with a magnificent jump, had sprung clear just in time and landed on the horse's back. She settled herself astride and leaned forward, whispering things in its ear. They must have been things meant not to quiet it but to madden it. It was on its hind legs again in a moment, and its neigh was like a scream; it was all hoofs and teeth and eyes and tossing mane. Only a splendid rider could have stayed on its back.

Before Digory had recovered his breath a good many other things began to happen. A second hansom dashed up close behind the first: out of it there jumped a fat man in a frock-coat and a policeman. Then came a third hansom with two more policemen in it. After it, came about twenty people (mostly errand boys) on bicycles, all ringing their bells and letting out cheers and catcalls. Last of all came a crowd of people on foot: all very hot with running, but obviously enjoying themselves. Windows shot up in all the houses of that street and a housemaid or a butler appeared at every front door. They wanted to see the fun.

Meanwhile an old gentleman had begun to struggle shakily out of the ruins of the hansom. Several people rushed forward to help him; but as one pulled him one way and another another, perhaps he would have got out quite as quickly on his own. Digory guessed that the old gentleman must be Uncle Andrew but you couldn't see his face; his tall hat had been bashed down over it.

Digory rushed out and joined the crowd.

“That’s the woman, that’s the woman,” cried the fat man, pointing at Jadis. “Do your duty, Constable. Hundreds and thousands of pounds worth she’s taken out of my shop. Look at that rope of pearls round her neck. That’s mine. And she’s given me a black eye too, what’s more.”

“That she ‘as guv’nor,” said one to the crowd. “And as lovely a black eye as I’d wish to see. Beautiful bit of work that must ‘ave been. Gor! ain’t she strong then!”

“You ought to put a nice raw beefsteak on it, Mister, that’s what it wants,” said a butcher’s boy.

“Now then,” said the most important of the policemen, “what’s all this ‘ere?”

“I tell you she — —” began the fat man, when someone else called out:

“Don’t let the old cove in the cab get away. ‘E put ‘er up to it.”

The old gentleman, who was certainly Uncle Andrew, had just succeeded in standing up and was rubbing his bruises. “Now then,” said the policeman, turning to him, “What’s all this?”

“Womfle — pomfy — shomf,” came Uncle Andrew’s voice from inside the hat.

“None of that now,” said the policeman sternly. “You’ll find this is no laughing matter. Take that ‘at off, see?”

This was more easily said than done. But after Uncle Andrew had struggled in vain with the hat for some time, two other policemen seized it by the brim and forced it off.

“Thank you, thank you,” said Uncle Andrew in a faint voice. “Thank you. Dear me, I’m terribly shaken. If someone could give me a small glass of brandy — —”

“Now you attend to me, if you please,” said the policeman, taking out a very large note-book and a very small pencil. “Are you in charge of that there young woman?”

“Look out!” called several voices, and the policeman jumped a step backwards just in time. The horse had aimed to kick at him which would probably have killed him. Then the Witch wheeled the horse round so that she faced the crowd and its hind-legs were on the footpath. She had a long, bright knife in her hand and had been busily cutting the horse free from the wreck of the hansom.

All this time Digory had been trying to get into a position from which he could touch the Witch. This wasn’t at all easy because, on the side nearest

to him, there were too many people. And in order to get round to the other side he had to pass between the horse's hoofs and the railings of the "area" that surrounded the house; for the Ketterley's house had a basement. If you know anything about horses, and especially if you had seen what a state that horse was in at the moment, you will realise that this was a ticklish thing to do. Digory knew lots about horses, but he set his teeth and got ready to make a dash for it as soon as he saw a favourable moment.

A red-faced man in a bowler hat had now shouldered his way to the front of the crowd.

"Hi! P'leeceman," he said, "that's my 'orse what she's sitting on, same as it's my cab what she's made matchwood of."

"One at a time, please, one at a time," said the policeman.

"But there ain't no time," said the Cabby. "I know that 'orse better'n you do. 'Taint an ordinary 'orse. 'Is father was a hofficer's charger in the cavalry, 'e was. And if the young woman goes on hexciting 'im, there'll be murder done. 'Ere, let me get at him."

The policeman was only too glad to have a good reason for standing further away from the horse. The Cabby took a step nearer, looked up at Jadis, and said in a not unkindly voice:

"Now, Missie, let me get at 'is 'ead, and just you get off. You're a Lidy, and you don't want all these roughs going for you, do you? You want to go 'ome and 'ave a nice cup of tea and a lay down quiet like; then you'll feel ever so much better." At the same time he stretched out his hand towards the horse's head with the words, "Steady, Strawberry, old boy. Steady now."

Then for the first time the Witch spoke.

"Dog!" came her cold, clear voice, ringing loud above all the other noises. "Dog, unhand our royal charger. We are the Empress Jadis."

CHAPTER VIII

The Fight at the Lamp-Post

"Ho! Hempress, are you? We'll see about that," said a voice. Then another voice said, "Three cheers for the Hempress of Colney 'Atch" and quite a number joined in. A flush of colour came into the Witch's face and she bowed ever so slightly. But the cheers died away into roars of laughter and she saw that they had only been making fun of her. A change came over her expression and she changed the knife to her left hand. Then, without warning, she did a thing that was dreadful to see. Lightly, easily, as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world, she stretched up her right arm and wrenched off one of the cross-bars of the lamp-post. If she had lost some magical powers in our world, she had not lost her strength; she could break an iron bar as if it were a stick of barley-sugar. She tossed her new weapon up in the air, caught it again, brandished it, and urged the horse forward.

"Now's my chance," thought Digory. He darted between the horse and the railings and began going forward. If only the brute would stay still for a moment he might catch the Witch's heel. As he rushed, he heard a sickening crash and a thud. The Witch had brought the bar down on the chief policeman's helmet: the man fell like a ninepin.

"Quick, Digory. This *must* be stopped," said a voice beside him. It was Polly, who had rushed down the moment she was allowed out of bed.

"You are a brick," said Digory. "Hold on to me tight. You'll have to manage the Ring. Yellow, remember. And don't put it on till I shout."

There was a second crash and another policeman crumpled up. There came an angry roar from the crowd: "Pull her down. Get a few paving-stones. Call out the Military." But most of them were getting as far away as they could. The Cabby, however, obviously the bravest as well as the kindest person present, was keeping close to the horse, dodging this way and that to avoid the bar, but still trying to catch Strawberry's head.

The crowd booed and bellowed again. A stone whistled over Digory's head. Then came the voice of the Witch, clear like a great bell, and sounding as if, for once, she were almost happy.

“Scum! You shall pay dearly for this when I have conquered your world. Not one stone of your city will be left. I will make it as Charn, as Felinda, as Sorlois, as Bramandin.”

Digory at last caught her ankle. She kicked back with her heel and hit him in the mouth. In his pain he lost hold. His lip was cut and his mouth full of blood. From somewhere very close by came the voice of Uncle Andrew in a sort of trembling scream. “Madam — my dear young lady — for heaven’s sake —— compose yourself.” Digory made a second grab at her heel, and was again shaken off. More men were knocked down by the iron bar. He made a third grab: caught the heel: held on like grim death, shouting to Polly “Go!” then ——

Oh, thank goodness. The angry, frightened faces had vanished. The angry, frightened voices were silenced. All except Uncle Andrew’s. Close beside Digory in the darkness, it was wailing on: “Oh, oh, is this delirium? Is it the end? I can’t bear it. It’s not fair. I never meant to be a Magician. It’s all a misunderstanding. It’s all my godmother’s fault; I must protest against this. In my state of health too. A very old Dorsetshire family.”

“Bother!” thought Digory. “We didn’t want to bring him along. My hat, what a picnic. Are you there, Polly?”

“Yes, I’m here. Don’t keep on shoving.”

“I’m not,” began Digory, but before he could say anything more, their heads came out into the warm, green sunshine of the wood. And as they stepped out of the pool Polly cried out:

“Oh look! We’ve brought the old horse with us too. *And* Mr. Ketterley. *And* the Cabby. This is a pretty kettle of fish!”

As soon as the Witch saw that she was once more in the wood she turned pale and bent down till her face touched the mane of the horse. You could see she felt deadly sick. Uncle Andrew was shivering. But Strawberry, the horse, shook his head, gave a cheerful whinny, and seemed to feel better. He became quiet for the first time since Digory had seen him. His ears, which had been laid flat back on his skull, came into their proper position, and the fire went out of his eyes.

“That’s right, old boy,” said the Cabby, clapping Strawberry’s neck. “That’s better. Take it easy.”

Strawberry did the most natural thing in the world. Being very thirsty (and no wonder) he walked slowly across to the nearest pool and stepped into it to have a drink. Digory was still holding the Witch’s heel and Polly

was holding Digory's hand. One of the Cabby's hands was on Strawberry; and Uncle Andrew, still very shaky, had just grabbed on the Cabby's other hand.

"Quick," said Polly, with a look at Digory. "Greens!"

So the horse never got his drink. Instead, the whole party found themselves sinking into darkness. Strawberry neighed; Uncle Andrew whimpered. Digory said, "That was a bit of luck."

There was a short pause. Then Polly said, "Oughtn't we to be nearly there now?"

"We do seem to be somewhere," said Digory. "At least I'm standing on something solid."

"Why, so am I, now that I come to think of it," said Polly. "But why's it so dark? I say, do you think we got into the wrong pool?"

"Perhaps this is Charn," said Digory. "Only we've got back in the middle of the night."

"This is not Charn," came the Witch's voice. "This is an empty world. This is Nothing."

And really it was uncommonly like Nothing. There were no stars. It was so dark that they couldn't see one another at all and it made no difference whether you kept your eyes shut or opened. Under their feet there was a cool, flat something which might have been earth, and was certainly not grass or wood. The air was cold and dry and there was no wind.

"My doom has come upon me," said the Witch in a voice of horrible calmness.

"Oh don't say that," babbled Uncle Andrew. "My dear young lady, pray don't say such things. It can't be as bad as that. Ah — Cabman — my good man — you don't happen to have a flask about you? A drop of spirits is just what I need."

"Now then, now then," came the Cabby's voice, a good, firm, hardy voice, "keep cool everyone, that's what I say. No bones broken, anyone? Good. Well there's something to be thankful for straight away, and more than anyone could expect after falling all that way. Now, if we've fallen down some diggings — as it might be for a new station on the Underground — someone will come and get us out presently, see! And if we're dead — which I don't deny it might be — well, you got to remember that worse things 'appen at sea and a chap's got to die sometime. And there ain't

nothing to be afraid of if a chap's led a decent life. And if you ask me, I think the best thing we could do to pass the time would be to sing a 'ymn."

And he did. He struck up at once a harvest thanksgiving hymn, all about crops being "safely gathered in." It was not very suitable to a place which felt as if nothing had ever grown there since the beginning of time, but it was the one he could remember best. He had a fine voice and the children joined in; it was very cheering. Uncle Andrew and the Witch did not join in.

Towards the end of the hymn Digory felt someone plucking at his elbow and from a general smell of brandy and cigars and good clothes he decided that it must be Uncle Andrew. Uncle Andrew was cautiously pulling him away from the others. When they had gone a little distance, the old man put his mouth so close to Digory's ear that it tickled, and whispered:

"Now, my boy. Slip on your Ring. Let's be off."

But the Witch had very good ears. "Fool!" came her voice. "Have you forgotten that I can hear men's thoughts? Let go the boy. If you attempt treachery I will take such vengeance upon you as never was heard of in all worlds from the beginning."

"And," added Digory, "if you think I'm such a mean pig as to go off and leave Polly — and the Cabby — and the horse — in a place like this, you're jolly well mistaken."

"You are a very naughty and impertinent little boy," said Uncle Andrew.

"Hush!" said the Cabby. They all listened.

In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Sometimes it seemed to come from all directions at once. Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. Its lower notes were deep enough to be the voice of the earth herself. There were no words. There was hardly even a tune. But it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it. The horse seemed to like it too: he gave the sort of whinny a horse would give if, after years of being a cab-horse, it found itself back in the old field where it had played as a foal, and saw someone whom it remembered and loved coming across the field to bring it a lump of sugar.

"Gawd!" said the Cabby. "Ain't it lovely?"

Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could

possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling, silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out — single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves who were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.

"Glory be!" said the Cabby. "I'd ha' been a better man all my life if I'd known there were things like this."

The Voice on the earth was now louder and more triumphant; but the voices in the sky, after singing loudly with it for a time, began to get fainter. And now something else was happening.

Far away, and down near the horizon, the sky began to turn grey. A light wind, very fresh, began to stir. The sky, in that one place, grew slowly and steadily paler. You could see shapes of hills standing up dark against it. All the time the Voice went on singing.

There was soon light enough for them to see one another's faces. The Cabby and the two children had open mouths and shining eyes; they were drinking in the sound, and they looked as if it reminded them of something. Uncle Andrew's mouth was open too, but not open with joy. He looked more as if his chin had simply dropped away from the rest of his face. His shoulders were stooped and his knees shook. He was not liking the Voice. If he could have got away from it by creeping into a rat's hole, he would have done so. But the Witch looked as if, in a way, she understood the music better than any of them. Her mouth was shut, her lips were pressed together, and her fists were clenched. Ever since the song began she had felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger. She hated it. She would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop the singing. The horse stood with its ears well forward, and twitching. Every now and then it snorted and stamped the ground. It no longer looked like a tired old cab-horse; you could now well believe that its father had been in battles.

The eastern sky changed from white to pink and from pink to gold. The Voice rose and rose, till all the air was shaking with it. And just as it swelled to the mightiest and most glorious sound it had yet produced, the sun arose.

Digory had never seen such a sun. The sun above the ruins of Charn had looked older than ours: this looked younger. You could imagine that it laughed for joy as it came up. And as its beams shot across the land the travellers could see for the first time what sort of place they were in. It was a valley through which a broad, swift river wound its way, flowing eastward towards the sun. Southward there were mountains, northward there were lower hills. But it was a valley of mere earth, rock and water; there was not a tree, not a bush, not a blade of grass to be seen. The earth was of many colours: they were fresh, hot and vivid. They made you feel excited; until you saw the Singer himself, and then you forgot everything else.

It was a Lion. Huge, shaggy, and bright it stood facing the risen sun. Its mouth was wide open in song and it was about three hundred yards away.

"This is a terrible world," said the Witch. "We must fly at once. Prepare the Magic."

"I quite agree with you, Madam," said Uncle Andrew. "A most disagreeable place. Completely uncivilised. If only I were a younger man and had a gun — —"

"Garn!" said the Cabby. "You don't think you could shoot 'im, do you?"

"And who *would*?" said Polly.

"Prepare the Magic, old fool," said Jadis.

"Certainly, Madam," said Uncle Andrew cunningly. "I must have both the children touching me. Put on your homeward Ring at once, Digory." He wanted to get away without the Witch.

"Oh, it's *rings*, is it?" cried Jadis, leaping off the horse. She would have had her hands in Digory's pocket before you could say knife, but Digory grabbed Polly and shouted out:

"Take care. If either of you come half an inch nearer, we two will vanish and you'll be left here for good. Yes: I have a Ring in my pocket that will take Polly and me home. And look! My hand is just ready. So keep your distance. I'm sorry about you (he looked at the Cabby) and about the horse, but I can't help that. As for you two (he looked at Uncle Andrew and the Queen), you're both magicians, so you ought to enjoy living together."

"'Old your noise, everyone," said the Cabby. "I want to listen to the moosic."

For the Song had now changed.

CHAPTER IX

The Founding of Narnia

The Lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave. In a few minutes it was creeping up the lower slopes of the distant mountains, making that young world every moment softer. The light wind could now be heard ruffling the grass. Soon there were other things besides grass. The higher slopes grew dark with heather. Patches of rougher and more bristling green appeared in the valley. Digory did not know what they were until one began coming up quite close to him. It was a little, spiky thing that grew out dozens of arms and covered these arms with green and grew larger at the rate of about an inch every two seconds. There were dozens of these things all round him now. When they were nearly as tall as himself he saw what they were. "Trees!" he exclaimed.

The nuisance of it, as Polly said afterwards, was that you weren't left in peace to watch it all. Just as Digory said "Trees!" he had to jump because Uncle Andrew had sidled up to him again and was just going to pick his pocket. It wouldn't have done Uncle Andrew much good if he had succeeded, for he was aiming at the right-hand pocket because he still thought the green Rings were "homeward" Rings. But of course Digory didn't want to lose either.

"Stop!" cried the Witch. "Stand back. No, further back. If anyone goes within ten paces of either of the children, I will knock out his brains." She was poising in her hand the iron bar that she had torn off the lamp-post, ready to throw it. Somehow no one doubted that she would be a very good shot.

"So!" she said. "You would steal back to your own world with the boy and leave me here."

Uncle Andrew's temper at last got the better of his fears. "Yes, Ma'am, I would," he said. "Most undoubtedly I would. I should be perfectly in my rights. I have been most shamefully, most abominably treated. I have done

my best to show you such civilities as were in my power. And what has been my reward? You have robbed — I must repeat the word — *robbed* a highly respectable jeweller. You have insisted on my entertaining you to an exceedingly expensive, not to say, ostentatious lunch, though I was obliged to pawn my watch and chain in order to do so (and let me tell you, Ma'am, that none of our family have been in the habit of frequenting pawnshops, except my cousin Edward, and he was in the Yeomanry). During that indigestible meal — I'm feeling the worse for it at this very moment — your behaviour and conversation attracted the unfavourable attention of everyone present. I feel I have been publicly disgraced. I shall never be able to show my face in the Trocadero again. You have assaulted the police. You have stolen — —"

"Oh stow it, Guv'nor, do stow it," said the Cabby. "Watchin' and listenin' 's the thing at present; not talking."

There was certainly plenty to watch and to listen to. The tree which Digory had noticed first was now a full-grown beech whose branches swayed gently above his head. They stood on cool, green grass, sprinkled with daisies and buttercups. A little way off, along the river bank, willows were growing. On the other side tangles of flowering currant, lilac, wild rose, and rhododendron closed them in. The horse was tearing up delicious mouthfuls of new grass.

All this time the Lion's song, and his stately prowl, to and fro, backwards and forwards, was going on. What was rather alarming was that at each turn he came a little nearer. Polly was finding the song more and more interesting because she thought she was beginning to see the connection between the music and the things that were happening. When a line of dark firs sprang up on a ridge about a hundred yards away she felt that they were connected with a series of deep, prolonged notes which the Lion had sung a second before. And when he burst into a rapid series of lighter notes she was not surprised to see primroses suddenly appearing in every direction. Thus, with an unspeakable thrill, she felt quite certain that all the things were coming (as she said) "out of the Lion's head." When you listened to his song you heard the things he was making up: when you looked round you, you saw them. This was so exciting that she had no time to be afraid. But Digory and the Cabby could not help feeling a bit nervous as each turn of the Lion's walk brought him nearer. As for Uncle Andrew,

his teeth were chattering, but his knees were shaking so that he could not run away.

Suddenly the Witch stepped boldly out towards the Lion. It was coming on, always singing, with a slow, heavy pace. It was only twelve yards away. She raised her arm and flung the iron bar straight at its head.

Nobody, least of all Jadis, could have missed at that range. The bar struck the Lion fair between the eyes. It glanced off and fell with a thud in the grass. The Lion came on. Its walk was neither slower nor faster than before; you could not tell whether it even knew it had been hit. Though its soft pads made no noise, you could feel the earth shake beneath their weight.

The Witch shrieked and ran: in a few moments she was out of sight among the trees. Uncle Andrew turned to do likewise, tripped over a root, and fell flat on his face in a little brook that ran down to join the river. The children could not move. They were not even quite sure that they wanted to. The Lion paid no attention to them. Its huge red mouth was open, but open in song not in a snarl. It passed by them so close that they could have touched its mane. They were terribly afraid it would turn and look at them, yet in some queer way they wished it would. But for all the notice it took of them they might just as well have been invisible and unsmellable. When it had passed them and gone a few paces further it turned, passed them again, and continued its march eastward.

Uncle Andrew, coughing and spluttering, picked himself up.

“Now, Digory,” he said, “we’ve got rid of that Woman, and the brute of a lion is gone. Give me your hand and put on your Ring at once.”

“Keep off,” said Digory, backing away from him. “Keep clear of him, Polly. Come over here beside me. Now I warn you, Uncle Andrew, don’t come one step nearer, we’ll just vanish.”

“Do what you’re told this minute, sir,” said Uncle Andrew. “You’re an extremely disobedient, ill-behaved little boy.”

“No fear,” said Digory. “We want to stay and see what happens. I thought you wanted to know about other worlds. Don’t you like it now you’re here?”

“Like it!” exclaimed Uncle Andrew. “Just look at the state I’m in. And it was my best coat and waistcoat, too.” He certainly was a dreadful sight by now: for of course, the more dressed up you were to begin with, the worse you look after you’ve crawled out of a smashed hansom-cab and fallen into

a muddy brook. “I’m not saying,” he added, “that this is not a most interesting place. If I were a younger man, now —— perhaps I could get some lively young fellow to come here first. One of those big-game hunters. Something might be made of this country. The climate is delightful. I never felt such air. I believe it would have done me good if — if circumstances had been more favourable. If only we’d had a gun.”

“Guns be blowed,” said the Cabby. “I think I’ll go and see if I can give Strawberry a rub down. That horse ‘as more sense than some ‘umans as I could mention.” He walked back to Strawberry and began making the hissing noises that grooms make.

“Do you still think *that* Lion could be killed by a gun?” asked Digory. “He didn’t mind the iron bar much.”

“With all her faults,” said Uncle Andrew, “that’s a plucky gel, my boy. It was a spirited thing to do.” He rubbed his hands and cracked his knuckles, as if he were once more forgetting how the Witch frightened him whenever she was really there.

“It was a wicked thing to do,” said Polly. “What harm had He done her?”

“Hullo! What’s that?” said Digory. He had darted forward to examine something only a few yards away. “I say, Polly,” he called back. “Do come and look.”

Uncle Andrew came with her; not because he wanted to see but because he wanted to keep close to the children — there might be a chance of stealing their Rings. But when he saw what Digory was looking at, even he began to take an interest. It was a perfect little model of a lamp-post, about three feet high but lengthening, and thickening in proportion, as they watched it; in fact growing just as the trees had grown.

“It’s alive too — I mean, it’s lit,” said Digory. And so it was; though, of course, the brightness of the sun made the little flame in the lantern hard to see unless your shadow fell on it.

“Remarkable, most remarkable,” muttered Uncle Andrew. “Even I never dreamt of Magic like this. We’re in a world where everything, even a lamp-post, comes to life and grows. Now I wonder what sort of seed a lamp-post grows from?”

“Don’t you see?” said Digory. “This is where the bar fell — the bar she tore off the lamp-post at home. It sank into the ground and now it’s coming up as a young lamp-post.” (But not so very young now; it was as tall as Digory while he said this.)

“That’s it! Stupendous, stupendous,” said Uncle Andrew, rubbing his hands harder than ever. “Ho, ho! They laughed at my Magic. That fool of a sister of mine thinks I’m a lunatic. I wonder what they’ll say now? I have discovered a world where everything is bursting with life and growth. Columbus, now, they talk about Columbus. But what was America to this? The commercial possibilities of this country are unbounded. Bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury ’em, and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please. They’ll cost nothing, and I can sell ’em at full prices in England. I shall be a millionaire. And then the climate! I feel twenty years younger already. I can run it as a health resort. A good sanatorium here might be worth twenty thousand a year. Of course I shall have to let a few people into the secret. The first thing is to get that brute shot.”

“You’re just like the Witch,” said Polly. “All you think of is killing things.”

“And then as regards oneself,” Uncle Andrew continued, in a happy dream. “There’s no knowing how long I might live if I settled here. And that’s a big consideration when a fellow has turned sixty. I shouldn’t be surprised if I never grew a day older in this country! Stupendous! The land of youth!”

“Oh!” cried Digory. “The land of youth! Do you think it really is?” For of course he remembered what Aunt Letty had said to the lady who brought the grapes, and that sweet hope rushed back upon him. “Uncle Andrew,” he said, “do you think there’s anything here that would cure Mother?”

“What are you talking about?” said Uncle Andrew. “This isn’t a chemist’s shop. But as I was saying — —”

“You don’t care twopence about her,” said Digory savagely. “I thought you might; after all, she’s your sister as well as my Mother. Well, no matter. I’m jolly well going to ask the Lion himself if he can help me.” And he turned and walked briskly away. Polly waited for a moment and then went after him.

“Here! Stop! Come back! The boy’s gone mad,” said Uncle Andrew. He followed the children at a cautious distance behind; for he didn’t want to get too far away from the green Rings or too near the Lion.

In a few minutes Digory came to the edge of the wood and there he stopped. The Lion was singing still. But now the song had once more changed. It was more like what we should call a tune, but it was also far

wilder. It made you want to run and jump and climb. It made you want to shout. It made you want to rush at other people and either hug them or fight them. It made Digory hot and red in the face. It had some effect even on Uncle Andrew, for Digory could hear him saying, “A spirited gel, sir. It’s a pity about her temper, but a dem fine woman all the same, a dem fine woman.” But what the song did to the two humans was nothing compared with what it was doing to the country.

Can you imagine a stretch of grassy land bubbling like water in a pot? For that is really the best description of what was happening. In all directions it was swelling into humps. They were of very different sizes, some no bigger than mole-hills, some as big as wheelbarrows, two the size of cottages. And the humps moved and swelled till they burst, and the crumbled earth poured out of them, and from each hump there came out an animal. The moles came out just as you might see a mole come out in England. The dogs came out, barking the moment their heads were free, and struggling as you’ve seen them do when they are getting through a narrow hole in a hedge. The stags were the queerest to watch, for of course the antlers came up a long time before the rest of them, so at first Digory thought they were trees. The frogs, who all came up near the river, went straight into it with a plop-plop and a loud croaking. The panthers, leopards and things of that sort, sat down at once to wash the loose earth off their hind quarters and then stood up against the trees to sharpen their front claws. Showers of birds came out of the trees. Butterflies fluttered. Bees got to work on the flowers as if they hadn’t a second to lose. But the greatest moment of all was when the biggest hump broke like a small earthquake and out came the sloping back, the large, wise head, and the four baggy-trousered legs of an Elephant. And now you could hardly hear the song of the Lion; there was so much cawing, cooing, crowing, braying, neighing, baying, barking, lowing, bleating, and trumpeting.

But though Digory could no longer hear the Lion, he could see it. It was so big and so bright that he could not take his eyes off it. The other animals did not appear to be afraid of it. Indeed, at that very moment, Digory heard the sound of hoofs from behind; a second later the old cab-horse trotted past him and joined the other beasts. (The air had apparently suited him as well as it had suited Uncle Andrew. He no longer looked like the poor, old slave he had been in London; he was picking up his feet and holding his head erect.) And now, for the first time, the Lion was quite silent. He was going

to and fro among the animals. And every now and then he would go up to two of them (always two at a time) and touch their noses with his. He would touch two beavers among all the beavers, two leopards among all the leopards, one stag and one deer among all the deer, and leave the rest. Some sorts of animal he passed over altogether. But the pairs which he had touched instantly left their own kinds and followed him. At last he stood still and all the creatures whom he had touched came and stood in a wide circle around him. The others whom he had not touched began to wander away. Their noises faded gradually into the distance. The chosen beasts who remained were now utterly silent, all with their eyes fixed intently upon the Lion. The cat-like ones gave an occasional twitch of the tail but otherwise all were still. For the first time that day there was complete silence, except for the noise of running water. Digory's heart beat wildly; he knew something very solemn was going to be done. He had not forgotten about his Mother; but he knew jolly well that, even for her, he couldn't interrupt a thing like this.

The Lion, whose eyes never blinked, stared at the animals as hard as if he was going to burn them up with his mere stare. And gradually a change came over them. The smaller ones — the rabbits, moles and such-like — grew a good deal larger. The very big ones — you noticed it most with the elephants — grew a little smaller. Many animals sat up on their hind legs. Most put their heads on one side as if they were trying very hard to understand. The Lion opened his mouth, but no sound came from it; he was breathing out, a long, warm breath; it seemed to sway all the beasts as the wind sways a line of trees. Far overhead from beyond the veil of blue sky which hid them the stars sang again: a pure, cold, difficult music. Then there came a swift flash like fire (but it burnt nobody) either from the sky or from the Lion itself, and every drop of blood tingled in the children's bodies, and the deepest, wildest voice they had ever heard was saying:

"Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters."

CHAPTER X

The First Joke and Other Matters

It was of course the Lion's voice. The children had long felt sure that he could speak: yet it was a lovely and terrible shock when he did.

Out of the trees wild people stepped forth, gods and goddesses of the wood; with them came Fauns and Satyrs and Dwarfs. Out of the river rose the river god with his Naiad daughters. And all these and all the beasts and birds in their different voices, low or high or thick or clear, replied:

"Hail, Aslan. We hear and obey. We are awake. We love. We think. We speak. We know."

"But, please, we don't know very much yet," said a nosey and snorty kind of voice. And that really did make the children jump, for it was the cab-horse who had spoken.

"Good old Strawberry," said Polly. "I *am* glad he was one of the ones picked out to be a Talking beast." And the Cabby, who was now standing beside the children, said, "Strike me pink. I always did say as that 'oss 'ad a lot of sense, though."

"Creatures, I give you yourselves," said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. "I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself. The Dumb Beasts whom I have not chosen are yours also. Treat them gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be Talking Beasts. For out of them you were taken and into them you can return. Do not so."

"No, Aslan, we won't, we won't," said everyone. But one perky jackdaw added in a loud voice, "No fear!" and everyone else had finished just before he said it so that his words came out quite clear in a dead silence; and perhaps you have found out how awful that can be — say, at a party. The Jackdaw became so embarrassed that it hid its head under its wing as if it was going to sleep. And all the other animals began making various queer noises which are their way of laughing and which, of course, no one has ever heard in our world. They tried at first to repress it, but Aslan said:

"Laugh and fear not, creatures. Now that you are no longer dumb and witless, you need not always be grave. For jokes as well as justice come in

with speech."

So they all let themselves go. And there was such merriment that the Jackdaw himself plucked up courage again and perched on the cab-horse's head, between its ears, clapping its wings, and said:

"Aslan! Aslan! Have I made the first joke? Will everybody always be told how I made the first joke?"

"No, little friend," said the Lion. "You have not *made* the first joke; you have only *been* the first joke." Then everyone laughed more than ever; but the Jackdaw didn't mind and laughed just as loud till the horse shook its head and the Jackdaw lost its balance and fell off, but remembered its wings (they were still new to it) before it reached the ground.

"And now," said Aslan, "Narnia is established. We must next take thought for keeping it safe. I will call some of you to my council. Come hither to me, you the chief Dwarf, and you the River-god, and you Oak and the He-Owl, and both the Ravens and the Bull-Elephant. We must talk together. For though the world is not five hours old an evil has already entered it."

The creatures he had named came forward and he turned away eastward with them. The others all began talking, saying things like "*What* did he say had entered the world? — A Neevil — What's a Neevil? — No, he didn't say a Neevil, he said a weevil — Well, what's that?"

"Look here," said Digory to Polly, "I've got to go after him — Aslan, I mean, the Lion. I must speak to him."

"Do you think we can?" said Polly. "I wouldn't dare."

"I've got to," said Digory. "It's about Mother. If anyone could give me something that would do her good, it would be him."

"I'll come along with you," said the Cabby. "I liked the looks of *'im*. And I don't reckon these other beasts will go for us. And I want a word with old Strawberry."

So all three of them stepped out boldly — or as boldly as they could — towards the assembly of animals. The creatures were so busy talking to one another and making friends that they didn't notice the three humans until they were very close; nor did they hear Uncle Andrew, who was standing trembling in his buttoned boots a good way off and shouting (but by no means at the top of his voice).

"Digory! Come back! Come back at once when you're told. I forbid you to go a step further."

When at last they were right in among the animals, the animals all stopped talking and stared at them.

"Well?" said the He-Beaver at least, "What, in the name of Aslan are these?"

"Please," began Digory in rather a breathless voice, when a Rabbit said, "They're a kind of large lettuce, that's my belief."

"No, we're not, honestly we're not," said Polly hastily. "We're not at all nice to eat."

"There!" said the Mole. "They can talk. Who ever heard of a talking lettuce?"

"Perhaps they're the Second Joke," suggested the Jackdaw.

A Panther, which had been washing its face, stopped for a moment to say, "Well, if they are, they're nothing like so good as the first one. At least, *I* don't see anything very funny about them." It yawned and went on with its wash.

"Oh, please," said Digory. "I'm in such a hurry. I want to see the Lion."

All this time the Cabby had been trying to catch Strawberry's eye. Now he did. "Now, Strawberry, old boy," he said. "You know me. You ain't going to stand there and say as you don't know me."

"What's the Thing talking about, Horse?" said several voices.

"Well," said Strawberry very slowly, "I don't exactly know. I think most of us don't know much about anything yet. But I've a sort of idea I've seen a thing like this before. I've a feeling I lived somewhere else — or was something else — before Aslan woke us all up a few minutes ago. It's all very muddled. Like a dream. But there were things like these three in the dream."

"What?" said the Cabby. "Not know me? Me what used to bring you a hot mash of an evening when you was out of sorts? Me what rubbed you down proper? Me what never forgot to put your cloth on you if you was standing in the cold? I wouldn't 'ave thought it of you, Strawberry."

"It *does* begin to come back," said the Horse thoughtfully. "Yes. Let me think now, let me think. Yes, you used to tie a horrid black thing behind me and then hit me to make me run, and however far I ran this black thing would always be coming rattle-rattle behind me."

"We 'ad our living to earn, see," said the Cabby. "Yours the same as mine. And if there 'adn't been no work and no whip ther'd 'ave been no

stable, no hay, no mash, and no oats. For you did get a taste of oats when I could afford ’em, which no one can deny.”

“Oats?” said the Horse, pricking up his ears. “Yes, I remember something about that. Yes. I remember more and more. You were always sitting up somewhere behind, and I was always running in front, pulling you and the black thing. I know I did all the work.”

“Summer, I grant you,” said the Cabby. “‘Ot work for you and a cool seat for me. But what about winter, old boy, when you was keeping yourself warm and I was sitting up there with my feet like ice and my nose fair pinched off me with the wind, and my ‘ands that numb I couldn’t ‘ardly ‘old the reins?”

“It was a hard, cruel country,” said Strawberry. “There was no grass. All hard stones.”

“Too true, mate, too true!” said the Cabby. “A ‘ard world it was. I always did say those paving-stones weren’t fair on any ‘oss. That’s Lunn’on, that is. I didn’t like it no more than what you did. You were a country ‘oss, and I was a country man. Used to sing in the choir, I did, down at ‘ome. But there wasn’t a living for me there.”

“Oh please, please,” said Digory. “Could we get on? The Lion’s getting further and further away. And I do want to speak to him so dreadfully badly.”

“Look ‘ere, Strawberry,” said the Cabby. “This young gen’leman ‘as something on his mind that he wants to talk to the Lion about; ‘im you call Aslan. Suppose you was to let ‘im ride on your back (which ‘e’d take it very kindly) and trot ‘im over to where the Lion is. And me and the little girl will be following along.”

“Ride?” said Strawberry. “Oh, I remember now. That means sitting on my back. I remember there used to be a little one of you two-leggers used to do that long ago. He used to have little hard, square lumps of some white stuff that he gave me. They tasted — oh, wonderful, sweeter than grass.”

“Ah, that’d be sugar,” said the Cabby.

“Please, Strawberry,” begged Digory, “do, do let me get up and take me to Aslan.”

“Well, I don’t mind,” said the Horse. “Not for once in a way. Up you get.”

“Good old Strawberry,” said the Cabby. “‘Ere, young ‘un, I’ll give you a lift.” Digory was soon on Strawberry’s back, and quite comfortable, for he

had ridden bare-back before on his own pony.

“Now, do gee up, Strawberry,” he said.

“You don’t happen to have a bit of that white stuff about you, I suppose?” said the Horse.

“No. I’m afraid I haven’t,” said Digory.

“Well, it can’t be helped,” said Strawberry, and off they went.

At that moment a large Bulldog, who had been sniffing and staring very hard, said:

“Look. Isn’t there another of these queer creatures — over there, beside the river, under the trees?”

Then all the animals looked and saw Uncle Andrew, standing very still among the rhododendrons and hoping he wouldn’t be noticed.

“Come on!” said several voices. “Let’s go and find out.” So, while Strawberry was briskly trotting away with Digory in one direction (and Polly and the Cabby were following on foot) most of the creatures rushed towards Uncle Andrew with roars, barks, grunts, and various noises of cheerful interest.

We must now go back a bit and explain what the whole scene had looked like from Uncle Andrew’s point of view. It has not made at all the same impression on him as on the Cabby and the children. For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are.

Ever since the animals had first appeared, Uncle Andrew had been shrinking further and further back into the thicket. He watched them very hard of course; but he wasn’t really interested in seeing what they were doing, only in seeing whether they were going to make a rush at him. Like the Witch, he was dreadfully practical. He simply didn’t notice that Aslan was choosing one pair out of every kind of beasts. All he saw, or thought he saw, was a lot of dangerous wild animals walking vaguely about. And he kept on wondering why the other animals didn’t run away from the big Lion.

When the great moment came and the Beasts spoke, he missed the whole point; for a rather interesting reason. When the Lion had first begun singing, long ago when it was still quite dark, he had realised that the noise was a song. And he had disliked the song very much. It made him think and feel things he did not want to think and feel. Then, when the sun rose and he saw that the singer was a lion (“*only* a lion,” as he said to himself) he tried

his hardest to make himself believe that it wasn't singing and never had been singing — only roaring as any lion might in a zoo in our own world. "Of course it can't really have been singing," he thought, "I must have imagined it. I've been letting my nerves get out of order. Who ever heard of a lion singing?" And the longer and more beautifully the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did. He soon did hear nothing but roaring in Aslan's song. Soon he couldn't have heard anything else even if he had wanted to. And when at last the Lion spoke and said, "Narnia awake," he didn't hear any words: he heard only a snarl. And when the Beasts spoke in answer, he heard only barkings, growlings, bayings and howlings. And when they laughed — well, you can imagine. That was worse for Uncle Andrew than anything that had happened yet. Such a horrid, bloodthirsty din of hungry and angry brutes he had never heard in his life. Then, to his utter rage and horror, he saw the other three humans actually walking out into the open to meet the animals.

"The fools!" he said to himself. "Now those brutes will eat the Rings along with the children and I'll never be able to get home again. What a selfish little boy that Digory is! And the others are just as bad. If they want to throw away their own lives, that's their business. But what about *me*? They don't seem to think of that. No one thinks of *me*."

Finally, when a whole crowd of animals came rushing towards him, he turned and ran for his life. And now anyone could see that the air of that young world was really doing the old gentleman good. In London he had been far too old to run: now, he ran at a speed which would have made him certain to win the hundred yards' race at any Prep. school in England. His coat-tails flying out behind him were a fine sight. But of course it was no use. Many of the animals behind him were swift ones; it was the first run they had ever taken in their lives and they were all longing to use their new muscles. "After him! After him!" they shouted. "Perhaps he's that Neevil! Tally-ho! Tantivy! Cut him off! Round him up! Keep it up! Hurrah!"

In a very few minutes some of them got ahead of him. They lined up in a row and barred his way. Others hemmed him in from behind. Wherever he looked he saw terrors. Antlers of great elks and the huge face of an elephant towered over him. Heavy, serious-minded bears and boars grunted behind him. Cool-looking leopards and panthers with sarcastic faces (as he

thought) stared at him and waved their tails. What struck him most of all was the number of open mouths. The animals had really opened their mouths to pant; he thought they had opened their mouths to eat him.

Uncle Andrew stood trembling and swaying this way and that. He had never liked animals at the best of times, being usually rather afraid of them; and of course years of doing cruel experiments on animals had made him hate and fear them far more.

“Now, sir,” said the Bulldog in his business-like way, “are you animal, vegetable or mineral?” That was what it really said; but all Uncle Andrew heard was “Gr — r — r — arrh — ow!”

CHAPTER XI

Digory and His Uncle Are Both in Trouble

You may think the animals were very stupid not to see at once that Uncle Andrew was the same kind of creature as the two children and the Cabby. But you must remember that the animals knew nothing about clothes. They thought that Polly's frock and Digory's Norfolk suit and the Cabby's bowler hat were as much parts of them as their own fur and feathers. They wouldn't have known even that those three were all of the same kind if they hadn't spoken to them and if Strawberry had not seemed to think so. And Uncle Andrew was a great deal taller than the children and a good deal thinner than the Cabby. He was all in black except for his white waistcoat (not very white by now), and the great grey mop of his hair (now very wild indeed) didn't look to them like anything they had seen in the three other humans. So it was only natural that they should be puzzled. Worst of all, he didn't seem to be able to talk.

He had tried to. When the Bulldog spoke to him (or, as he thought, first snarled and then growled at him) he held out his shaking hand and gasped "Good Doggie, then, poor old fellow." But the beasts could not understand him any more than he could understand them. They didn't hear any words: only a vague sizzling noise. Perhaps it was just as well they didn't, for no dog that I ever knew, least of all a Talking Dog of Narnia, likes being called a Good Doggie then; any more than you would like being called My Little Man.

Then Uncle Andrew dropped down in a dead faint.

"There!" said a Warthog, "it's only a tree. I always thought so." (Remember, they had never yet seen a faint or even a fall.)

The Bulldog, who had been sniffing Uncle Andrew all over, raised its head and said, "It's an animal. Certainly an animal. And probably the same kind as those other ones."

"I don't see that," said one of the Bears. "An animal wouldn't just roll over like that. We're animals and we don't roll over. We stand up. Like this." He rose to his hind legs, took a step backward, tripped over a low branch and fell flat on his back.

“The Third Joke, the Third Joke, the Third Joke!” said the Jackdaw in great excitement.

“I still think it’s a sort of tree,” said the Warthog.

“If it’s a tree,” said the Other Bear, “there might be a bees’ nest in it.”

“I’m sure it’s not a tree,” said the Badger. “I had a sort of idea it was trying to speak before it toppled over.”

“That was only the wind in its branches,” said the Warthog.

“You surely don’t mean,” said the Jackdaw to the Badger, “that you think it’s a *talking* animal! It didn’t say any words.”

“And yet, you know,” said the Elephant (the She-Elephant, of course; her husband, as you remember, had been called away by Aslan). “And yet, you know, it might be an animal of some kind. Mightn’t the whitish lump at this end be a sort of face? And couldn’t those holes be eyes and a mouth? No nose, of course. But then — ahem — one mustn’t be narrow-minded. Very few of us have what could exactly be called a Nose.” She squinted down the length of her own trunk with pardonable pride.

“I object to that remark very strongly,” said the Bulldog.

“The Elephant is quite right,” said the Tapir.

“I tell you what!” said the Donkey brightly, “perhaps it’s an animal that can’t talk but thinks it can.”

“Can it be made to stand up?” said the Elephant thoughtfully. She took the limp form of Uncle Andrew gently in her trunk and set him up on end: upside down, unfortunately, so that two half-sovereigns, three half-crowns and a sixpence fell out of his pocket. But it was no use. Uncle Andrew merely collapsed again.

“There!” said several voices. “It isn’t an animal at all. It’s not alive.”

“I tell you, it is an animal,” said the Bulldog. “Smell it for yourself.”

“Smelling isn’t everything,” said the Elephant.

“Why,” said the Bulldog, “if a fellow can’t trust his nose, what is he to trust?”

“Well, his brains perhaps,” she replied mildly.

“I object to that remark very strongly,” said the Bulldog.

“Well, we must do something about it,” said the Elephant. “Because it may be the Neevil, and it must be shown to Aslan. What do most of us think? Is it an animal or something of the tree kind.”

“Tree! Tree!” said a dozen voices.

“Very well,” said the Elephant. “Then, if it’s a tree it wants to be planted. We must dig a hole.”

The two Moles settled that part of the business pretty quickly. There was some dispute as to which way up Uncle Andrew ought to be put into the hole, and he had a very narrow escape from being put in head foremost. Several animals said his legs must be his branches and therefore the grey, fluffy thing (they meant his head) must be his root. But then others said that the forked end of him was the muddier and that it spread out more, as roots ought to do. So finally he was planted right way up. When they had patted down the earth it came up above his knees.

“It looks dreadfully withered,” said the Donkey.

“Of course it wants some watering,” said the Elephant. “I think I *might* say (meaning no offence to anyone present) that, perhaps, for *that* sort of work, my kind of nose — —”

“I object to that remark very strongly,” said the Bulldog. But the Elephant walked quietly to the river, filled her trunk with water, and came back to attend to Uncle Andrew. The sagacious animal went on doing this till gallons of water had been squirted over him, and water was running out of the skirts of his frock coat as if he had been for a bath with all his clothes on. In the end it revived him. He awoke from his faint. What a wakening it was! But we must leave him to think over his wicked deeds (if he was likely to do anything so sensible) and turn to more important things.

Strawberry trotted on with Digory on his back till the noise of the other animals died away, and now the little group of Aslan and his chosen councillors was quite close. Digory knew that he couldn’t possibly break in on so solemn a meeting, but there was no need to do so. At a word from Aslan, the He-Elephant, the Ravens, and all the rest of them drew aside. Digory slipped off the horse and found himself face to face with Aslan. And Aslan was bigger and more beautiful and more brightly golden and more terrible than he had thought. He dared not look into the great eyes.

“Please — Mr. Lion — Aslan — Sir?” said Digory, “could you — may I — please, will you give me some magic fruit of this country to make Mother well?”

He had been desperately hoping that the Lion would say “Yes”; he had been horribly afraid it might say “No.” But he was taken aback when it did neither.

“This is the Boy,” said Aslan, looking, not at Digory, but at his councillors. “This is the Boy who did it.”

“Oh dear,” thought Digory, “what have I done now?”

“Son of Adam,” said the Lion. “There is an evil witch abroad in my new land of Narnia. Tell these good Beasts how she came here.”

A dozen different things that he might say flashed through Digory’s mind, but he had the sense to say nothing except the exact truth.

“I brought her, Aslan,” he answered in a low voice.

“For what purpose?”

“I wanted to get her out of my own world back into her own. I thought I was taking her back to her own place.”

“How came she to be in your world, Son of Adam?”

“By — by Magic.”

The Lion said nothing and Digory knew that he had not told enough.

“It was my Uncle, Aslan,” he said. “He sent us out of our own world by Magic Rings, at least I had to go because he sent Polly first, and then we met the Witch in a place called Charn and she just held on to us when — —”

“You *met* the Witch?” said Aslan in a low voice which had the threat of a growl in it.

“She woke up,” said Digory wretchedly. And then, turning very white, “I mean, I woke her. Because I wanted to know what would happen if I struck a bell. Polly didn’t want to. It wasn’t her fault. I — I fought her. I know I shouldn’t have. I think I was a bit enchanted by the writing under the bell.”

“Do you?” asked Aslan; still speaking very low and deep.

“No,” said Digory. “I see now I wasn’t. I was only pretending.”

There was a long pause. And Digory was thinking all the time, “I’ve spoiled everything. There’s no chance of getting anything for Mother now.”

When the Lion spoke again, it was not to Digory.

“You see, friends,” he said, “that before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this son of Adam.” The Beasts, even Strawberry, all turned their eyes on Digory till he felt that he wished the ground would swallow him up. “But do not be cast down,” said Aslan, still speaking to the Beasts. “Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst falls upon myself. In the meantime, let us take such order that for many hundred years yet this shall be a merry land in a merry world. And as

Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it. Draw near, you other two."

The last words were spoken to Polly and the Cabby who had now arrived. Polly, all eyes and mouth, was staring at Aslan and holding the Cabby's hand rather tightly. The Cabby gave one glance at the Lion, and took off his bowler hat: no one had yet seen him without it. When it was off, he looked younger and nicer, and more like a countryman and less like a London cabman.

"Son," said Aslan to the Cabby. "I have known you long. Do you know me?"

"Well, no, sir," said the Cabby. "Leastways, not in an ordinary manner of speaking. Yet I feel somehow, if I may make so free, as 'ow we've met before."

"It is well," said the Lion. "You know better than you think you know, and you shall live to know me better yet. How does this land please you?"

"It's a fair treat, sir," said the Cabby.

"Would you like to live here always?"

"Well, you see sir, I'm a married man," said the Cabby. "If my wife was here neither of us would ever want to go back to London, I reckon. We're both country folks really."

Aslan threw up his shaggy head, opened his mouth, and uttered a long, single note; not very loud, but full of power. Polly's heart jumped in her body when she heard it. She felt sure that it was a call, and that anyone who heard that call would want to obey it and (what's more) would be able to obey it, however many worlds and ages lay between. And so, though she was filled with wonder, she was not really astonished or shocked when all of a sudden a young woman, with a kind, honest face stepped out of nowhere and stood beside her. Polly knew at once that it was the Cabby's wife, fetched out of our world not by any tiresome magic Rings, but quickly, simply, and sweetly as a bird flies to its nest. The young woman had apparently been in the middle of a washing day, for she wore an apron, her sleeves were rolled up to the elbow, and there were soapsuds on her hands. If she had had time to put on her good clothes (her best hat had imitation cherries on it) she would have looked dreadful; as it was she looked rather nice.

Of course she thought she was dreaming. That was why she didn't rush across to her husband and ask him what on earth had happened to them

both. But when she looked at the Lion she didn't feel quite so sure it was a dream, yet for some reason she did not appear to be very frightened. Then she dropped a little half curtsey, as some country girls still knew how to do in those days. After that, she went and put her hand in the Cabby's and stood there looking round her a little shyly.

"My children," said Aslan, fixing his eyes on both of them, "you are to be the first King and Queen of Narnia."

The Cabby opened his mouth in astonishment, and his wife turned very red.

"You shall rule and name all these creatures, and do justice among them, and protect them from their enemies when enemies arise. And enemies will arise, for there is an evil Witch in this world."

The Cabby swallowed hard two or three times and cleared his throat.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, "and thanking you very much I'm sure (which my Missus does the same) but I ain't no sort of a chap for a job like that. I never 'ad much eddycation, you see."

"Well," said Aslan, "can you use a spade and a plough and raise food out of the earth?"

"Yes, sir, I could do a bit of that sort of work: being brought up to it, like."

"Can you rule these creatures kindly and fairly, remembering that they are not slaves like the dumb beasts of the world you were born in but Talking Beasts and free subjects?"

"I see that, sir," replied the Cabby. "I'd try to do the square thing by them all."

"And would you bring up your children and grandchildren to do the same?"

"It'd be up to me to try, sir. I'd do my best: wouldn't we, Nellie?"

"And you wouldn't have favourites either among your own children or among the other creatures or let any hold another under or use it hardly?"

"I never could abide such goings on, sir, and that's the truth. I'd give 'em what for if I caught 'em at it," said the Cabby. (All through this conversation his voice was growing slower and richer. More like the country voice he must have had as a boy and less like the sharp, quick voice of a cockney.)

"And if enemies came against the land (for enemies will arise) and there was war, would you be the first in the charge and the last in the retreat?"

“Well, sir,” said the Cabby very slowly, “a chap don’t exactly know till he’s been tried. I dare say I might turn out ever such a soft ‘un. ‘Never did no fighting except with my fists. I’d try — that is, I ‘ope I’d try — to do my bit.”

“Then,” said Aslan, “you will have done all that a King should do. Your coronation will be held presently. And you and your children and grandchildren shall be blessed, and some will be Kings of Narnia, and others will be Kings of Archenland which lies yonder over the Southern Mountains. And you, little Daughter (here he turned to Polly) are welcome. Have you forgiven the Boy for the violence he did you in the hall of images in the desolate palace of accursed Charn?”

“Yes, Aslan, we’ve made it up,” said Polly.

“That is well,” said Aslan. “And now for the Boy himself.”

CHAPTER XII

Strawberry's Adventure

Digory kept his mouth very tight shut. He had been growing more and more uncomfortable. He hoped that whatever happened, he wouldn't blub or do anything ridiculous.

"Son of Adam," said Aslan. "Are you ready to undo the wrong that you have done to my sweet country of Narnia on the very day of its birth?"

"Well, I don't see what I can do," said Digory. "You see, the Queen ran away and — —"

"I asked, are you ready," said the Lion.

"Yes," said Digory. He had had for a second some wild idea of saying "I'll try to help you if you'll promise to help about my Mother," but he realised in time that the Lion was not at all the sort of person one could try to make bargains with. But when he had said "Yes," he thought of his Mother, and he thought of the great hopes he had had, and how they were all dying away, and a lump came in his throat and tears in his eyes, and he blurted out:

"But please, please — won't you — can't you give me something that will cure Mother?" Up till then he had been looking at the Lion's great front feet and the huge claws on them; now, in his despair, he looked up at its face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself.

"My son, my son," said Aslan. "I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another. But I have to think of hundreds of years in the life of Narnia. The Witch whom you have brought into this world will come back to Narnia again. But it need not be yet. It is my wish to plant in Narnia a tree that she will not dare to approach, and that tree will protect Narnia from her for many years. So this land shall have a long, bright morning before any clouds come over the sun. You must get me the seed from which that tree is to grow."

“Yes, sir,” said Digory. He didn’t know how it was to be done but he felt quite sure now that he would be able to do it. The Lion drew a deep breath, stooped its head even lower and gave him a Lion’s kiss. And at once Digory felt that new strength and courage had gone into him.

“Dear son,” said Aslan, “I will tell you what you must do. Turn and look to the West and tell me what do you see?”

“I see terribly big mountains, Aslan,” said Digory. “I see this river coming down cliffs in a waterfall. And beyond the cliff there are high green hills with forests. And beyond those there are higher ranges that look almost black. And then, far, far away, there are big snowy mountains all heaped up together — like pictures of the Alps. And behind those there’s nothing but the sky.”

“You see well,” said the Lion. “Now the land of Narnia ends where the waterfall comes down, and once you have reached the top of the cliff you will be out of Narnia and into the Western Wild. You must journey through those mountains till you find a green valley with a blue lake in it, walled round by mountains of ice. At the end of the lake there is a steep, green hill. On the top of that hill there is a garden. In the centre of that garden is a tree. Pluck an apple from that tree and bring it back to me.”

“Yes, sir,” said Digory again. He hadn’t the least idea of how he was to climb the cliff and find his way among all the mountains, but he didn’t like to say that for fear it would sound like making excuses. But he did say, “I hope, Aslan, you’re not in a hurry. I shan’t be able to get there and back very quickly.”

“Little son of Adam, you shall have help,” said Aslan. He then turned to the Horse who had been standing quietly beside them all this time, swishing his tail to keep the flies off, and listening with his head on one side as if the conversation were a little difficult to understand.

“My dear,” said Aslan to the Horse, “would you like to be a winged horse?”

You should have seen how the Horse shook its mane and how its nostrils widened, and the little tap it gave the ground with one back hoof. Clearly it would very much like to be a winged horse. But it only said:

“If you wish, Aslan — if you really mean — I don’t know why it should be me — I’m not a very clever horse.”

“Be winged. Be the father of all flying horses,” roared Aslan in a voice that shook the ground. “Your name is Fledge.”

The horse shied, just as it might have shied in the old, miserable days when it pulled a hansom. Then it reared. It strained its neck back as if there were a fly biting its shoulders and it wanted to scratch them. And then, just as the beasts had burst out of the earth, there burst out from the shoulders of Fledge wings that spread and grew, larger than eagles', larger than swans', larger than angels' wings in church windows. The feathers shone chestnut colour and copper colour. He gave a great sweep with them and leaped into the air. Twenty feet above Aslan and Digory he snorted, neighed, and curvetted. Then, after circling once round them, he dropped to the earth, all four hoofs together, looking awkward and surprised, but extremely pleased.

"Is it good, Fledge?" said Aslan.

"It is very good, Aslan," said Fledge.

"Will you carry this little son of Adam on your back to the mountain-valley I spoke of?"

"What? Now? At once?" said Strawberry — or Fledge, as we must now call him— "Hurrah! Come on little one. I've had things like you on my back before. Long, long ago. When there were green fields; and sugar."

"What are the two daughters of Eve whispering about?" said Aslan, turning very suddenly on Polly and the Cabby's wife, who had in fact been making friends.

"If you please, sir," said Queen Helen (for that is what Nellie the cabman's wife now was), "I think the little girl would love to go too, if it weren't no trouble."

"What does Fledge say about that?" asked the Lion.

"Oh, I don't mind two, not when they're little ones," said Fledge. "But I hope the Elephant doesn't want to come as well."

The Elephant had no such wish, and the new King of Narnia helped both the children up: that is, he gave Digory a rough heave and set Polly as gently and daintily on the horse's back as if she were made of china and might break. "There they are, Strawberry — Fledge, I should say. This is a rum go."

"Do not fly too high," said Aslan. "Do not try to go over the tops of the great ice-mountains. Look out for the valleys, the green places and fly through them. There will always be a way through. And now, begone with my blessing."

"Oh Fledge!" said Digory, leaning forward to pat the Horse's glossy neck. "This is fun. Hold on to me tight, Polly."

Next moment the country dropped away beneath them, and whirled round as Fledge, like a huge pigeon, circled once or twice before setting off on his long westward flight. Looking down, Polly could hardly see the King and the Queen, and even Aslan himself was only a bright yellow spot on the green grass. Soon the wind was in their faces and Fledge's wings settled down to a steady beat.

All Narnia, many-coloured with lawns and rocks and heather and different sorts of trees, lay spread out below them, the river winding through it like a ribbon of quick-silver. They could already see over the tops of the low hills which lay northward on their right; beyond those hills a great moorland sloped gently up and up to the horizon. On their left the mountains were much higher, but every now and then there was a gap where you could see, between steep pine woods, a glimpse of the southern lands that lay beyond them, looking blue and far away.

"That'll be where Archenland is," said Polly.

"Yes, but look ahead!" said Digory.

For now a great barrier of cliffs rose before them and they were almost dazzled by the sunlight dancing on the great waterfall by which the river roars and sparkles down into Narnia itself from the high western lands in which it rises. They were flying so high already that the thunder of those falls could only just be heard as a small, thin sound, but they were not yet high enough to fly over the top of the cliffs.

"We'll have to do a bit of zig-zagging here," said Fledge. "Hold on tight."

He began flying to and fro, getting higher at each turn. The air grew colder, and they heard the call of eagles far below them.

"I say, look back! Look behind," said Polly.

There they could see the whole valley of Narnia stretched out to where, just before the eastern horizon, there was a gleam of the sea. And now they were so high that they could see tiny-looking jagged mountains appearing beyond the northern moors, and plains of what looked like sand far in the south.

"I wish we had someone to tell us what all those places are," said Digory.

"I don't suppose they're anywhere yet," said Polly. "I mean, there's no one there, and nothing happening. The world only began to-day."

“No, but people *will* get there,” said Digory. “And then they’ll have histories, you know.”

“Well, it’s a jolly good thing they haven’t now,” said Polly. “Because nobody can be made to learn it. Battles and dates and all that rot.”

Now they were over the top of the cliffs and in a few minutes the valley-land of Narnia had sunk out of sight behind them. They were flying over a wild country of steep hills and dark forests, still following the course of the river. The really big mountains loomed ahead. But the sun was now in the travellers’ eyes and they couldn’t see things very clearly in that direction. For the sun sank lower and lower till the western sky was all like one great furnace full of melted gold; and it set at last behind a jagged peak which stood up against the brightness as sharp and flat as if it were cut out of cardboard.

“It’s none too warm up here,” said Polly.

“And my wings are beginning to ache,” said Fledge. “There’s no sign of the valley with a lake in it, like what Aslan said. What about coming down and looking out for a decent place to spend the night in? We shan’t reach that place to-night.”

“Yes, and surely it’s about time for supper?” said Digory.

So Fledge came lower and lower. As they came down nearer to the earth and among the hills, the air grew warmer; and after travelling so many hours with nothing to listen to but the beat of Fledge’s wings, it was nice to hear the homely and earthy noises again — the chatter of the river on its stony bed and the creaking of trees in the light wind. A warm, good smell of sun-baked earth and grass and flowers came up to them. At last Fledge alighted. Digory rolled off and helped Polly to dismount. Both were glad to stretch their stiff legs.

The valley in which they had come down was in the heart of the mountains; snowy heights, one of them looking rose-red in the reflection of the sunset, towered above them.

“I *am* hungry,” said Digory.

“Well, tuck in,” said Fledge, taking a big mouthful of grass. Then he raised his head, still chewing and with bits of grass sticking out on each side of his mouth like whiskers, said, “Come on, you two. Don’t be shy. There’s plenty for us all.”

“But we can’t eat grass,” said Digory.

“H’m, h’m,” said Fledge, speaking with his mouth full. “Well — h’m — don’t know quite what you’ll do then. Very good grass too.”

Polly and Digory stared at one another in dismay.

“Well, I *do* think someone might have arranged about our meals,” said Digory.

“I’m sure Aslan would have, if you’d asked him,” said Fledge.

“Wouldn’t he know without being asked?” said Polly.

“I’ve no doubt he would,” said the Horse (still with his mouth full). “But I’ve a sort of idea he likes to be asked.”

“But what on earth are we to do?” asked Digory.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” said Fledge. “Unless you try the grass. You might like it better than you think.”

“Oh, don’t be silly,” said Polly, stamping her foot. “Of course humans can’t eat grass, any more than you could eat a mutton chop.”

“For goodness’ sake don’t talk about chops and things,” said Digory. “It only makes it worse.”

Digory said that Polly had better take herself home by Ring and get something to eat there: he couldn’t himself because he had promised to go straight on his message for Aslan, and, if once he showed up again at home, anything might happen to prevent his getting back. But Polly said she wouldn’t leave him, and Digory said it was jolly decent of her.

“I say,” said Polly, “I’ve still got the remains of that bag of toffee in my pocket. It’ll be better than nothing.”

“A lot better,” said Digory. “But be careful to get your hand into your pocket without touching your Ring.”

This was a difficult and delicate job but they managed it in the end. The little paper bag was very squashy and sticky when they finally got it out, so that it was more a question of tearing the bag off the toffees than of getting the toffees out of the bag. Some grown-ups (you know how fussy they can be about that sort of thing) would rather have gone without supper altogether than eaten those toffees. There were nine of them all told. It was Digory who had the bright idea of eating four each and planting the ninth; for, as he said, “if the bar off the lamp-post turned into a little light-tree, why shouldn’t this turn into a toffee-tree?” So they dibbled a small hole in the turf and buried the piece of toffee. Then they ate the other pieces, making them last as long as they could. It was a poor meal, even with all the paper they couldn’t help eating as well.

When Fledge had quite finished his own excellent supper he lay down. The children came and sat one on each side of him leaning against his warm body, and when he had spread a wing over each they were really quite snug. As the bright young stars of that new world came out they talked over everything: how Digory had hoped to get something for his Mother and how, instead of that, he had been sent on this message. And they repeated to one another all the signs by which they would know the place they were looking for — the blue lake and the hill with a garden on top of it. The talk was just beginning to slow down as they got sleepy, when suddenly Polly sat up wide awake and said “Hush!”

Everyone listened as hard as they could.

“Perhaps it was only the wind in the trees,” said Digory presently.

“I’m not so sure,” said Fledge. “Anyway — wait! There it goes again. By Aslan, it is something.”

The horse scrambled to its feet with a great noise and a great upheaval; the children were already on theirs. Fledge trotted to and fro, sniffing and whinnying. The children tip-toed this way and that, looking behind every bush and tree. They kept on thinking they saw things, and there was one time when Polly was perfectly certain she had seen a tall, dark figure gliding quickly away in a westerly direction. But they caught nothing and in the end Fledge lay down again and the children re-snuggled (if that is the right word) under his wings. They went to sleep at once. Fledge stayed awake much longer moving his ears to and fro in the darkness and sometimes giving a little shiver with his skin as if a fly had lighted on him: but in the end he too slept.

CHAPTER XIII

An Unexpected Meeting

“Wake up, Digory, wake up, Fledge,” came the voice of Polly. “It *has* turned into a toffee tree. And it’s the loveliest morning.”

The low early sunshine was streaming through the wood and the grass was grey with dew and the cobwebs were like silver. Just beside them was a little, very dark-wooded tree, about the size of an apple tree. The leaves were whitish and rather papery, like the herb called honesty, and it was loaded with little brown fruits that looked rather like dates.

“Hurrah!” said Digory. “But I’m going to have a dip first.” He rushed through a flowering thicket or two down to the river’s edge. Have you ever bathed in a mountain river that is rushing in shallow cataracts over red and blue and yellow stones with the sun on it? It is as good as the sea: in some ways almost better. Of course, he had to dress again without drying but it was well worth it. When he came back, Polly went down and had her bath; at least she said that was what she’d been doing, but we know she was not much of a swimmer and perhaps it is best not to ask too many questions. Fledge visited the river too but he only stood in mid stream, stooping down for a long drink of water and then shaking his mane and neighing several times.

Polly and Digory got to work on the toffee tree. The fruit was delicious: not exactly like toffee — softer for one thing, and juicy — but like fruit which reminded one of toffee. Fledge also made an excellent breakfast: he tried one of the toffee fruits and liked it but said he felt more like grass at that hour in the morning. Then with some difficulty the children got on his back and the second journey began.

It was even better than yesterday, partly because everyone was feeling so fresh, and partly because the newly risen sun was at their backs and, of course, everything looks nicer when the light is behind you. It was a wonderful ride. The big snowy mountains rose above them in every direction. The valleys, far beneath them, were so green, and all the streams which tumbled down from the glaciers into the main river were so blue, that it was like flying over gigantic pieces of jewellery. They would have liked this part of the adventure to go on longer than it did. But quite soon they

were all sniffing the air and saying “What is it?” and “Did you smell something?” and “Where’s it coming from?” For a heavenly smell, warm and golden, as if from all the most delicious fruits and flowers of the world, was coming up to them from somewhere ahead.

“It’s coming from that valley with the lake in it,” said Fledge.

“So it is,” said Digory. “And look! There’s a green hill at the far end of the lake. And look how blue the water is.”

“It must be the Place,” said all three.

Fledge came lower and lower in wide circles. The icy peaks rose up higher and higher above. The air came up warmer and sweeter every moment, so sweet that it almost brought the tears to your eyes. Fledge was now gliding with his great wings spread out motionless on each side, and his hoofs pawing for the ground. The steep green hill was rushing towards them. A moment later he alighted on its slope, a little awkwardly. The children rolled off, fell without hurting themselves on the warm, fine grass, and stood up panting a little.

They were about three quarters of the way up the hill, and set out at once to climb to the top. (I don’t think Fledge could have managed this without his wings to balance him and to give him the help of a flutter now and then.) All round the very top of the hill ran a high wall of green turf. Inside the wall trees were growing. Their branches hung out over the wall: their leaves showed not only green but also blue and silver when the wind stirred them. When the travellers reached the top they walked nearly all the way round it outside the green wall before they found the gates: high gates of gold, fast shut, facing due east.

Up till now I think Fledge and Polly had had the idea that they would go in with Digory. But they thought so no longer. You never saw a place which was so obviously private. You could see at a glance that it belonged to someone else. Only a fool would dream of going in unless he had been sent there on very special business. Digory himself understood at once that the others wouldn’t and couldn’t come in with him. He went forward to the gates alone.

When he had come close up to them he saw words written on the gold with silver letters; something like this:

Come in by the gold gates or not at all,
Take of my fruit for others or forbear.

For those who steal or those who climb my wall
Shall find their heart's desire and find despair.

"*Take of my fruit for others*," said Digory to himself. "Well, that's what I'm going to do. It means I mustn't eat any myself, I suppose. I don't know what all that jaw in the last line is about. *Come in by the gold gates*. Well who'd want to climb a wall if he could get in by a gate! But how do the gates open?" He laid his hand on them and instantly they swung apart, opening inwards, turning on their hinges without the least noise.

Now that he could see into the place it looked more private than ever. He went in very solemnly, looking about him. Everything was very quiet inside. Even the fountain which rose near the middle of the garden made only the faintest sound. The lovely smell was all round him: it was a happy place but very serious.

He knew which was the right tree at once, partly because it stood in the very centre and partly because the great silver apples with which it was loaded shone so and cast a light of their own down on the shadowy places where the sunlight did not reach. He walked straight across to it, picked an apple, and put it in the breast pocket of his Norfolk jacket. But he couldn't help looking at it and smelling it before he put it away.

It would have been better if he had not. A terrible thirst and hunger came over him and a longing to taste that fruit. He put it hastily into his pocket; but there were plenty of others. Could it be wrong to taste one? After all, he thought, the notice on the gate might not have been exactly an order; it might have been only a piece of advice — and who cares about advice? Or even if it were an order, would he be disobeying it by eating an apple? He had already obeyed the part about taking one "for others."

While he was thinking of all this he happened to look up through the branches towards the top of the tree. There, on a branch above his head, a wonderful bird was roosting. I say "roosting" because it seemed almost asleep: perhaps not quite. The tiniest slit of one eye was open. It was larger than an eagle, its breast saffron, its head crested with scarlet, and its tail purple.

"And it just shows," said Digory afterwards when he was telling the story to the others, "that you can't be too careful in these magical places. You never know what may be watching you." But I think Digory would not

have taken an apple for himself in any case. Things like Do Not Steal were, I think, hammered into boys' heads a good deal harder in those days than they are now. Still, we can never be certain.

Digory was just turning to go back to the gates when he stopped to have one last look round. He got a terrible shock. He was not alone. There, only a few yards away from him stood the Witch. She was just throwing away the core of an apple which she had eaten. The juice was darker than you would expect and had made a horrid stain round her mouth. Digory guessed at once that she must have climbed in over the wall. And he began to see that there might be some sense in that last line about getting your heart's desire and getting despair along with it. For the Witch looked stronger and prouder than ever, and even, in a way, triumphant: but her face was deadly white, white as salt.

All this flashed through Digory's mind in a second; then he took to his heels and ran for the gates as hard as he could pelt; the Witch after him. As soon as he was out, the gates closed behind him of their own accord. That gave him the lead but not for long. By the time he had reached the others and was shouting out "Quick, get on, Polly! Get up, Fledge," the Witch had climbed the wall, or vaulted over it, and was close behind him again.

"Stay where you are," cried Digory, turning round to face her, "or we'll all vanish. Don't come an inch nearer."

"Foolish boy," said the Witch. "Why do you run from me? I mean you no harm. If you do not stop and listen to me now you will miss some knowledge that would have made you happy all your life."

"Well I don't want to hear it, thanks," said Digory. But he did.

"I know what errand you have come on," continued the Witch. "For it was I who was close beside you in the woods last night and heard all your counsels. You have plucked fruit in the garden yonder. You have it in your pocket now. And you are going to carry it back, untasted, to the Lion; for *him* to eat, for *him* to use. You simpleton! Do you know what that fruit is? I will tell you. It is the apple of youth, the apple of life. I know, for I have tasted it; and I feel already such changes in myself that I know I shall never grow old or die. Eat it, Boy, eat it; and you and I will both live forever and be king and queen of this whole world — or of your world if we decide to go back there."

"No thanks," said Digory, "I don't know that I care much about living on and on after everyone I know is dead. I'd rather live an ordinary time and

die and go to Heaven."

"But what about this Mother of yours whom you pretend to love so?"

"What's she got to do with it?" said Digory.

"Do you not see, Fool, that one bite of that apple would heal her? You have it in your pocket. We are here by ourselves and the Lion is far away. Use your Magic and go back to your own world. A minute later you can be at your Mother's bedside, giving her the fruit. Five minutes later you will see the colour coming back to her face. She will tell you the pain is gone. Soon she will tell you she feels stronger. Then she will fall asleep — think of that; hours of sweet natural sleep, without pain, without drugs. Next day everyone will be saying how wonderfully she has recovered. Soon she will be quite well again. All will be well again. Your home will be happy again. You will be like other boys."

"Oh!" gasped Digory as if he had been hurt, and put his hand to his head. For he now knew that the most terrible choice lay before him.

"What has Lion ever done for you that you should be his slave?" said the Witch. "What can he do to you once you are back in your own world? And what would your Mother think if she knew that you *could* have taken her pain away and given her back her life and saved your Father's heart from being broken, and that you *wouldn't* — that you'd rather run messages for a wild animal in a strange world that is no business of yours?"

"I — I don't think he is a wild animal," said Digory in a dried-up sort of voice. "He is — I don't know — —"

"Then he is something worse," said the Witch. "Look what he has done to you already: look how heartless he has made you. That is what he does to everyone who listens to him. Cruel, pitiless boy! you would let your own Mother die rather than — —"

"Oh shut up," said the miserable Digory, still in the same voice. "Do you think I don't see? But I — I promised."

"Ah, but you didn't know what you were promising. And no one here can prevent you."

"Mother herself," said Digory, getting the words out with difficulty, "wouldn't like it — awfully strict about keeping promises — and not stealing — and all that sort of thing. *She'd* tell me not to do it — quick as anything — if she was here."

"But she need never know," said the Witch, speaking more sweetly than you would have thought anyone with so fierce a face could speak. "You

wouldn’t tell her how you’d got the apple. Your Father need never know. No one in your world need know anything about this whole story. You needn’t take the little girl back with you, you know.”

That was where the Witch made her fatal mistake. Of course Digory knew that Polly could get away by her own Ring as easily as he could get away by his. But apparently the Witch didn’t know this. And the meanness of the suggestion that he should leave Polly behind suddenly made all the other things the Witch had been saying to him sound false and hollow. And even in the midst of all his misery, his head suddenly cleared, and he said (in a different and much louder voice):

“Look here; where do *you* come into all this? Why are *you* so precious fond of *my* Mother all of a sudden? What’s it got to do with you? What’s your game?”

“Good for you, Digs,” whispered Polly in his ear. “Quick! Get away *now*.” She hadn’t dared to say anything all through the argument because, you see, it wasn’t her mother who was dying.

“Up then,” said Digory, heaving her on to Fledge’s back and then scrambling up as quickly as he could. The horse spread its wings.

“Go then, Fools,” called the Witch. “Think of me, Boy, when you lie old and weak and dying, and remember how you threw away the chance of endless youth! It won’t be offered you again.”

They were already so high that they could only just hear her. Nor did the Witch waste any time gazing up at them; they saw her set off northward down the slope of the hill.

They had started early that morning and what happened in the garden had not taken very long, so that Fledge and Polly both said they would easily get back to Narnia before nightfall. Digory never spoke on the way back, and the others were shy of speaking to him. He was very sad and he wasn’t even sure all the time that he had done the right thing: but whenever he remembered the shining tears in Aslan’s eyes he became sure.

All day Fledge flew steadily with untiring wings; eastward with the river to guide him, through the mountains and over the wild wooded hills, and then over the great waterfall and down, and down, to where the woods of Narnia were darkened by the shadow of the mighty cliff, till at last, when the sky was growing red with sunset behind them, he saw a place where many creatures were gathered together by the riverside. And soon he could see Aslan himself in the midst of them. Fledge glided down, spread out his

four legs, closed his wings, and landed cantering. Then he pulled up. The children dismounted. Digory saw all the animals, dwarfs, satyrs, nymphs and other things drawing back to the left and right to make way for him. He walked straight up to Aslan, handed him the apple and said:

"I've brought you the apple you wanted, sir."

CHAPTER XIV

The Planting of the Tree

"Well done," said Aslan in a voice that made the earth shake. Then Digory knew that all the Narnians had heard those words and that the story of them would be handed down from father to son in that new world for hundreds of years and perhaps forever. But he was in no danger of feeling conceited for he didn't think about it at all now that he was face to face with Aslan. This time he found he could look straight into the Lion's eyes. He had forgotten his troubles and felt absolutely content.

"Well done, son of Adam," said the Lion again. "For this fruit you have hungered and thirsted and wept. No hand but yours shall sow the seed of the Tree that is to be the protection of Narnia. Throw the apple towards the river bank where the ground is soft."

Digory did as he was told. Everyone had grown so quiet that you could hear the soft thump where it fell into the mud.

"It is well thrown," said Aslan. "Let us now proceed to the Coronation of King Frank of Narnia and Helen his Queen."

The children now noticed these two for the first time. They were dressed in strange and beautiful clothes, and from their shoulders rich robes flowed out behind them to where four Dwarfs held up the King's train and four River-Nymphs the Queen's. Their heads were bare; but Helen had let her hair down and it made a great improvement in her appearance. But it was neither hair nor clothes that made them look so different from their old selves. Their faces had a new expression, especially the King's. All the sharpness and cunning and quarrelsomeness which he had picked up as a London cabby seemed to have been washed away, and the courage and kindness which he had always had were easier to see. Perhaps it was the air of the young world that had done it, or talking with Aslan, or both.

"Upon my word," whispered Fledge to Polly. "My old master's been changed nearly as much as I have! Why, he's a real Master now."

"Yes, but don't buzz in my ear like that," said Polly. "It tickles so."

"Now," said Aslan, "some of you undo that tangle you have made with those trees and let us see what we shall find there."

Digory now saw that where four trees grew close together their branches had all been laced together or tied together with switches so as to make a sort of cage. The two Elephants with their trunks and a few Dwarfs with their little axes soon got it all undone. There were three things inside. One was a young tree that seemed to be made of gold; the second was a young tree that seemed to be made of silver; but the third was a miserable object in muddy clothes, sitting hunched up between them.

"Gosh!" whispered Digory. "Uncle Andrew!"

To explain all this we must go back a bit. The Beasts, you remember, had tried planting and watering him. When the watering brought him to his senses, he found himself soaking wet, buried up to his thighs in earth (which was quickly turning into mud) and surrounded by more wild animals than he had ever dreamed of in his life before. It is perhaps not surprising that he began to scream and howl. This was in a way a good thing, for it at last persuaded everyone (even the Warthog) that he was alive. So they dug him up again (his trousers were in a really shocking state by now). As soon as his legs were free he tried to bolt, but one swift curl of the Elephant's trunk round his waist soon put an end to that. Everyone now thought he must be safely kept somewhere till Aslan had time to come and see him and say what should be done about him. So they made a sort of cage or coop all round him. They then offered him everything they could think of to eat.

The Donkey collected great piles of thistles and threw them in, but Uncle Andrew didn't seem to care about them. The Squirrels bombarded him with volleys of nuts but he only covered his head with his hands and tried to keep out of the way. Several birds flew to and fro diligently dropping worms on him. The Bear was especially kind. During the afternoon he found a wild bees' nest and instead of eating it himself (which he would very much like to have done) this worthy creature brought it back to Uncle Andrew. But this was in fact the worst failure of all. The Bear lobbed the whole sticky mass over the top of the enclosure and unfortunately it hit Uncle Andrew slap in the face (not all the bees were dead). The Bear, who would not at all have minded being hit in the face by a honeycomb himself, could not understand why Uncle Andrew staggered back, slipped, and sat down. And it was sheer bad luck that he sat down on the pile of thistles. "And anyway," as the Warthog said, "Quite a lot of honey has got into the creature's mouth and that's bound to have done it some good." They were really getting quite fond of their strange pet and hoped that Aslan would

allow them to keep it. The cleverer ones were quite sure by now that at least some of the noises which came out of his mouth had a meaning. They christened him Brandy because he made that noise so often.

In the end, however, they had to leave him there for the night. Aslan was busy all that day instructing the new King and Queen and doing other important things, and could not attend to "poor old Brandy." What with the nuts, pears, apples and bananas that had been thrown in to him, he did fairly well for supper; but it wouldn't be true to say that he passed an agreeable night.

"Bring out that creature," said Aslan. One of the Elephants lifted Uncle Andrew in its trunk and laid him at the Lion's feet. He was too frightened to move.

"Please, Aslan," said Polly, "could you say something to — to unfrighten him? And then could you say something to prevent him from ever coming back here again."

"Do you think he wants to?" said Aslan.

"Well, Aslan," said Polly, "he might send someone else. He's so excited about the bar off the lamp-post growing into a lamp-post tree and he thinks — —"

"He thinks great folly, child," said Aslan. "This world is bursting with life for these few days because the song with which I called it into life still hangs in the air and rumbles in the ground. It will not be so for long. But I cannot tell that to this old sinner, and I cannot comfort him either; he has made himself unable to hear my voice. If I spoke to him, he would hear only growlings and roarings. Oh Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good! But I will give him the only gift he is still able to receive."

He bowed his great head rather sadly, and breathed into the Magician's terrified face. "Sleep," he said. "Sleep and be separated for some few hours from all the torments you have desired for yourself." Uncle Andrew immediately rolled over with closed eyes and began breathing peacefully.

"Carry him aside and lay him down," said Aslan. "Now, Dwarfs! Show your smith-craft. Let me see you make two crowns for your King and Queen."

More Dwarfs than you could dream of rushed forward to the Golden Tree. They had all its leaves stripped off, and some of its branches torn off too, before you could say Jack Robinson. And now the children could see

that it did not merely look golden but was of real, soft gold. It had of course sprung up from the place where the sovereigns had fallen out of Uncle Andrew's pocket when he was turned upside down; just as the silver tree had grown up from the half-crowns. From nowhere, as it seemed, piles of dry brushwood for fuel, a little anvil, hammers, tongs, and bellows were produced. Next moment (how those Dwarfs loved their work) the fire was blazing, the bellows were roaring, the gold was melting, the hammers were clinking. Two Moles, whom Aslan had set to dig (which was what they liked best) earlier in the day, poured out a pile of precious stones at the Dwarfs' feet. Under the clever fingers of the little smiths two crowns took shape — not ugly, heavy things like modern European crowns, but light, delicate, beautifully shaped circlets that you could really wear and look nicer by wearing. The King's was set with rubies and the Queen's with emeralds.

When the crowns had been cooled in the river Aslan made Frank and Helen kneel before him and he placed the crowns on their heads. Then he said, "Rise up King and Queen of Narnia, father and mother of many kings that shall be in Narnia and the Isles and Archenland. Be just and merciful and brave. The blessing is upon you."

Then everyone cheered or bayed or neighed or trumpeted or clapped its wings and the royal pair stood looking solemn and a little shy, but all the nobler for their shyness. And while Digory was still cheering he heard the deep voice of Aslan beside him, saying:

"Look!"

Everyone in that crowd turned its head, and then everyone drew a long breath of wonder and delight. A little way off, towering over their heads, they saw a tree which had certainly not been there before. It must have grown up silently, yet swiftly as a flag rises when you pull it up on a flagstaff, while they were all busied about the coronation. Its spreading branches seemed to cast a light rather than a shade, and silver apples peeped out like stars from under every leaf. But it was the smell which came from it, even more than the sight, that had made everyone draw in their breath. For a moment one could hardly think about anything else.

"Son of Adam," said Aslan, "you have sown well. And you, Narnians, let it be your first care to guard this Tree, for it is your Shield. The Witch of whom I told you has fled far away into the North of the world; she will live on there, growing stronger in dark Magic. But while that Tree flourishes she

will never come down into Narnia. She dare not come within a hundred miles of the Tree, for its smell, which is joy and life and health to you, is death and horror and despair to her."

Everyone was staring solemnly at the Tree when Aslan suddenly swung round his head (scattering golden gleams of light from his mane as he did so) and fixed his large eyes on the children. "What is it, children?" he said, for he caught them in the very act of whispering and nudging one another.

"Oh — Aslan, sir," said Digory, turning red, "I forgot to tell you. The Witch has already eaten one of those apples, one of the same kind that Tree grew from." He hadn't really said all he was thinking, but Polly at once said it for him. (Digory was always much more afraid than she of looking a fool.)

"So we thought, Aslan," she said, "that there must be some mistake, and she can't really mind the smell of those apples."

"Why do you think that, Daughter of Eve?" asked the Lion.

"Well, she ate one."

"Child," he replied, "that is why all the rest are now a horror to her. That is what happens to those who pluck and eat fruits at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The fruit is good, but they loathe it ever after."

"Oh I see," said Polly. "And I suppose because she took it in the wrong way it won't work with her. I mean it won't make her always young and all that?"

"Alas," said Aslan, shaking his head. "It will. Things always work according to their nature. She has won her heart's desire; she has unwearying strength and endless days like a goddess. But length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery and already she begins to know it. All get what they want: they do not always like it."

"I — I nearly ate one myself, Aslan," said Digory. "Would I — —"

"You would, child," said Aslan. "For the fruit always works — it must work — but it does not work happily for any who pluck it at their own will. If any Narnian, unbidden, had stolen an apple and planted it here to protect Narnia, it would have protected Narnia. But it would have done so by making Narnia into another strong and cruel empire like Charn, not the kindly land I mean it to be. And the Witch tempted you to do another thing, my son, did she not?"

"Yes, Aslan. She wanted me to take an apple home to Mother."

“Understand, then, that it would have healed her; but not to your joy or hers. The day would have come when both you and she would have looked back and said it would have been better to die in that illness.”

And Digory could say nothing, for tears choked him and he gave up all hopes of saving his Mother’s life; but at the same time he knew that the Lion knew what would have happened, and that there might be things more terrible even than losing someone you love by death. But now Aslan was speaking again:

“That is what *would* have happened, child, with a stolen apple. It is not what will happen now. What I give you now will bring joy. It will not, in your world, give endless life, but it will heal. Go. Pluck her an apple from the Tree.”

For a second Digory could hardly understand. It was as if the whole world had turned inside out and upside down. And then, like someone in a dream, he was walking across to the Tree, and the King and Queen were cheering him and all the creatures were cheering too. He plucked the apple and put it in his pocket. Then he came back to Aslan.

“Please,” he said, “may we go home now?” He had forgotten to say “Thank you,” but he meant it, and Aslan understood.

CHAPTER XV

The End of This Story and the Beginning of all the Others

"You need no Rings when I am with you," said the voice of Aslan. The children blinked and looked about them. They were once more in the Wood between the Worlds; Uncle Andrew lay on the grass, still asleep; Aslan stood beside them.

"Come," said Aslan, "it is time that you went back. But there are two things to see to first; a warning, and a command. Look here, children."

They looked and saw a little hollow in the grass, with a grassy bottom, warm and dry.

"When you were last here," said Aslan, "that hollow was a pool, and when you jumped into it you came to the world where a dying sun shone over the ruins of Charn. There is no pool now. That world is ended, as if it had never been. Let the race of Adam and Eve take warning."

"Yes, Aslan," said both the children. But Polly added, "But we're not quite as bad as that world, are we, Aslan?"

"Not yet, Daughter of Eve," he said. "Not yet. But you are growing more like it. It is not certain that some wicked one of your race will not find out a secret as evil as the Deplorable Word and use it to destroy all living things. And soon, very soon, before you are an old man and an old woman, great nations in your world will be ruled by tyrants who care no more for joy and justice and mercy than the Empress Jadis. Let your world beware. That is the warning. Now for the command. As soon as you can, take from this Uncle of yours his magic Rings and bury them so that no one can use them again."

Both the children were looking up into the Lion's face as he spoke these words. And all at once (they never knew exactly how it happened) the face seemed to be a sea of tossing gold in which they were floating, and such a sweetness and power rolled about them and over them and entered into them that they felt they had never really been happy or wise or good, or even alive and awake, before. And the memory of that moment stayed with them always, so that as long as they both lived, if ever they were sad or afraid or angry, the thought of all that golden goodness, and the feeling that it was still there, quite close, just round some corner or just behind some

door, would come back and make them sure, deep down inside, that all was well. Next minute all three of them (Uncle Andrew now awake) came tumbling into the noise, heat, and hot smell of London.

They were on the pavement outside the Ketterleys' front door, and except that the Witch, the horse, and the Cabby were gone, everything was exactly as they had left it. There was the lamp-post, with one arm missing; there was the wreck of the hansom cab; and there was the crowd. Everyone was still talking and people were kneeling beside the damaged policeman, saying things like, "He's coming round" or "How do you feel now, old chap?" or "The ambulance will be here in a jiffy."

"Great Scott!" thought Digory, "I believe the whole adventure's taken no time at all."

Most people were wildly looking round for Jadis and the horse. No one took any notice of the children for no one had seen them go or noticed them coming back. As for Uncle Andrew, what between the state of his clothes and the honey on his face, he could not have been recognised by anyone. Fortunately the front door of the house was open and the housemaid was standing in the doorway staring at the fun (what a day that girl was having!) so the children had no difficulty in bustling Uncle Andrew indoors before anyone asked any questions.

He raced up the stairs before them and at first they were very afraid he was heading for his attic and meant to hide his remaining magic rings. But they needn't have bothered. What he was thinking about was the bottle in his wardrobe, and he disappeared at once into his bedroom and locked the door. When he came out again (which was not for a long time) he was in his dressing gown and made straight for the bathroom.

"Can you get the other rings, Poll?" said Digory. "I want to go to Mother."

"Right. See you later," said Polly and clattered up the attic stairs.

Then Digory took a minute to get his breath, and then went softly into Mother's room. And there she lay, as he had seen her lie so many other times, propped up on the pillows, with a wan, pale face that would make you cry to look at it. Digory took the Apple of Life out of his pocket.

And just as the Witch Jadis had looked different when you saw her in our world instead of in her own, so the fruit of that mountain garden looked different too. There were of course all sorts of coloured things in the bedroom; the coloured counterpane on the bed, the wall-paper, the sunlight

from the window, and Mother's pretty, pale blue dressing jacket. But the moment Digory took the Apple out of his pocket, all those other things seemed to have scarcely any colour at all. Everyone of them, even the sunlight, looked faded and dingy. The brightness of the Apple threw strange lights on the ceiling. Nothing else was worth looking at: indeed you couldn't look at anything else. And the smell of the Apple of Youth was as if there was a window in the room that opened on Heaven.

"Oh, darling, how lovely," said Digory's Mother.

"You will eat it, won't you? Please," said Digory.

"I don't know what the Doctor would say," she answered. "But really — I almost feel as if I could."

He peeled it and cut it up and gave it to her piece by piece. And no sooner had she finished it than she smiled and her head sank back on the pillow and she was asleep: a real, natural, gentle sleep, without any of those nasty drugs, which was, as Digory knew, the thing in the whole world that she wanted most. And he was sure now that her face looked a little different. He bent down and kissed her very softly and stole out of the room with a beating heart; taking the core of the apple with him. For the rest of that day, whenever he looked at the things about him, and saw how ordinary and unmagical they were, he hardly dared to hope; but when he remembered the face of Aslan he did hope.

That evening he buried the core of the Apple in the back garden.

Next morning when the Doctor made his usual visit, Digory leaned over the bannisters to listen. He heard the Doctor come out with Aunt Letty and say:

"Miss Ketterley, this is the most extraordinary case I have known in my whole medical career. It is — it is like a miracle. I wouldn't tell the little boy anything at present; we don't want to raise any false hopes. But in my opinion — —" then his voice became too low to hear.

That afternoon he went down the garden and whistled their agreed secret signal for Polly (she hadn't been able to get back the day before).

"What luck?" said Polly, looking over the wall. "I mean, about your Mother?"

"I think — I *think* it is going to be all right," said Digory. "But if you don't mind I'd really rather not talk about it yet. What about the Rings?"

"I've got them all," said Polly. "Look, it's all right, I'm wearing gloves. Let's bury them."

“Yes, let’s. I’ve marked the place where I buried the core of the Apple yesterday.”

Then Polly came over the wall and they went together to the place. But, as it turned out, Digory need not have marked the place. Something was already coming up. It was not growing so that you could see it grow as the new trees had done in Narnia; but it was already well above ground. They got a trowel and buried all the magic rings in a circle round it.

About a week after this it was quite certain that Digory’s Mother was getting better. About a fortnight later she was able to sit out in the garden. And a month later that whole house had become a different place. Aunt Letty did everything that Mother liked; windows were opened, frowsy curtains were drawn back to brighten up the rooms, there were new flowers everywhere, and nicer things to eat, and the old piano was tuned and Mother took up her singing again, and had such games with Digory and Polly that Aunt Letty would say “I declare, Mabel, you’re the biggest baby of the three.”

When things go wrong, you’ll find they usually go on getting worse for some time; but when things once start going right they often go on getting better and better. After about six weeks of this lovely life there came a long letter from Father in India, which had wonderful news in it. Old Great-Uncle Kirk had died and this meant, apparently, that Father was now very rich. He was going to retire and come home from India forever and ever. And the great big house in the country, which Digory had heard of all his life and never seen, would now be their home: the big house with the suits of armour, the stables, the kennels, the river, the park, the hot-houses, the vineries, the woods, and the mountains behind it. So that Digory felt just as sure as you that they were all going to live happily ever after. But perhaps you would like to know just one or two things more.

Polly and Digory were always great friends and she came nearly every holiday to stay with them at their beautiful house in the country; and that was where she learned to ride and swim and milk and bake and climb.

In Narnia the Beasts lived in great peace and joy and neither the Witch nor any other enemy came to trouble that pleasant land for many hundred years. King Frank and Queen Helen and their children lived happily in Narnia and their second son became King of Archenland. The boys married nymphs and the girls married wood-gods and river-gods. The lamp-post which the Witch had planted (without knowing it) shone day and night in

the Narnian forest, so that the place where it grew came to be called Lantern Waste; and when, hundreds of years later, another child from our world got into Narnia, on a snowy night, she found the light still burning. And that adventure was, in a way, connected with the ones I have just been telling you.

It was like this. The tree which sprang from the Apple that Digory planted in the back garden, lived and grew into a fine tree. Growing in the soil of our world, far out of the sound of Aslan's voice and far from the young air of Narnia, it did not bear apples that would revive a dying woman as Digory's Mother had been revived, though it did bear apples more beautiful than any others in England, and they were extremely good for you, though not fully magical. But inside itself, in the very sap of it, the tree (so to speak) never forgot that other tree in Narnia to which it belonged. Sometimes it would move mysteriously when there was no wind blowing: I think that when this happened there were high winds in Narnia and the English tree quivered because, at that moment, the Narnian tree was rocking and swaying in a strong south western gale. However, that might be, it was proved later that there was still magic in its wood. For when Digory was quite middle aged (and he was a famous learned man, a Professor, and a great traveller by that time) and the Ketterleys' old house belonged to him, there was a great storm all over the south of England which blew the tree down. He couldn't bear to have it simply chopped up for firewood, so he had part of the timber made into a wardrobe, which he put in his big house in the country. And though he himself did not discover the magic properties of that wardrobe, someone else did. That was the beginning of all the comings and going between Narnia and our world, which you can read of in other books.

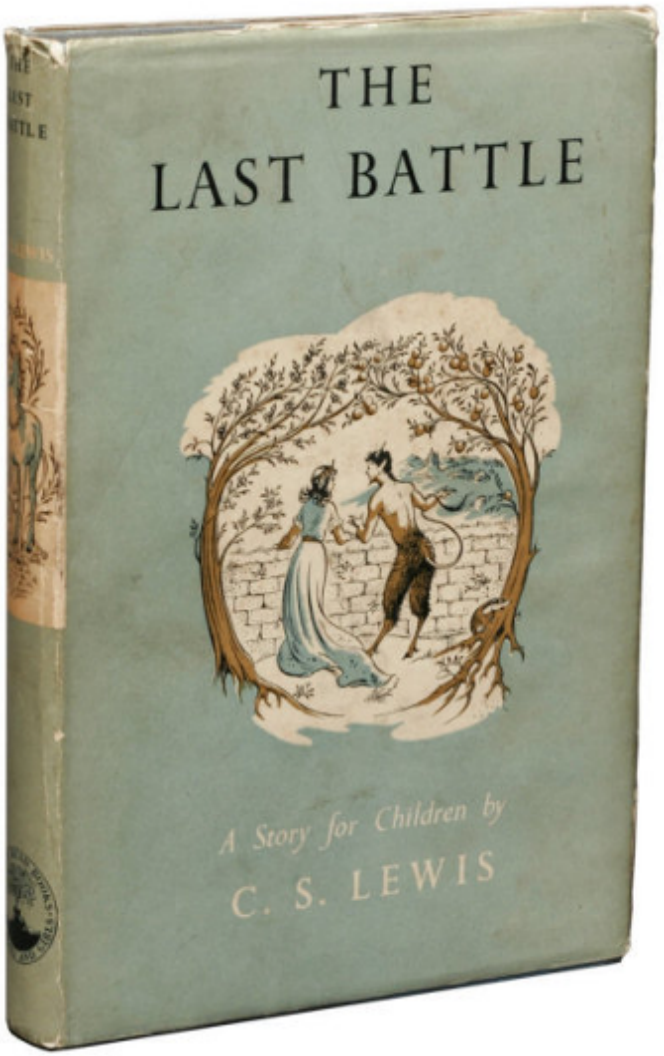
When Digory and his people went to live in the big country house, they took Uncle Andrew to live with them; for Digory's Father said, "We must try to keep the old fellow out of mischief, and it isn't fair that poor Letty should have him always on her hands." Uncle Andrew never tried any Magic again as long as he lived. He had learned his lesson, and in his old age he became a nicer and less selfish old man than he had ever been before. But he always liked to get visitors alone in the billiard room and tell them stories about a mysterious lady, a foreign royalty, with whom he had driven about London. "A devilish temper she had," he would say. "But she was a dem fine woman, sir, a dem fine woman."

THE LAST BATTLE (1956)



The final novel of the *Chronicles of Narnia* series was published by The Bodley Head in 1956. *The Last Battle* is set almost entirely in the Narnia world and the English children that participate arrive only in the middle of the narrative. Set some two-hundred Narnian years after *The Silver Chair* and about 2,500 years since the creation of the world narrated in *The Magician's Nephew*, the plot concerns how a false Aslan is set up in the north-western borderlands, rousing conflict between true and false Narnians, which merges with the enmity between Narnia and Calormen, whose people worship Tash.

The novel is set in Narnia during a time of peace and prosperity, which had commenced with the reign of King Caspian X. However, Roonwit the Centaur warns Tirian, the latest king of Narnia, that strange and evil things are happening in the land, and explains that the stars portend ominous developments. In the north of Narnia, an ape named Shift had persuaded a well-meaning but simple-minded donkey called Puzzle to dress in a lion's skin and pretend to be the Great Lion Aslan. Using Puzzle as his pawn, Shift convinces the Narnians that he speaks for Aslan and deceives a majority of them into serving the Calormenes and to cut down Talking Trees for lumber. The money will be paid into "Aslan's" treasury, held by Shift, on the pretext that it will be used for the good of the Narnians.



The first edition

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CHAPTER I

By Caldron Pool

In the last days of Narnia, far up to the west beyond Lantern Waste and close beside the great waterfall, there lived an Ape. He was so old that no one could remember when he had first come to live in those parts, and he was the cleverest, ugliest, most wrinkled Ape you can imagine. He had a little house, built of wood and thatched with leaves, up in the fork of a great tree, and his name was Shift. There were very few Talking Beasts or Men or Dwarfs, or people of any sort, in that part of the wood, but Shift had one friend and neighbour who was a donkey called Puzzle. At least they both said they were friends, but from the way things went on you might have thought Puzzle was more like Shift's servant than his friend. He did all the work. When they went together to the river, Shift filled the big skin bottles with water but it was Puzzle who carried them back. When they wanted anything from the towns further down the river, it was Puzzle who went down with empty panniers on his back and came back with the panniers full and heavy. And all the nicest things that Puzzle brought back were eaten by Shift; for as Shift said, "You see Puzzle, I can't eat grass and thistles like you, so it's only fair I should make it up in other ways." And Puzzle always said, "Of course, Shift, of course. I see that." Puzzle never complained, because he knew that Shift was far cleverer than himself and he thought it was very kind of Shift to be friends with him at all. And if ever Puzzle did try to argue about anything, Shift would always say, "Now, Puzzle, I understand what needs to be done better than you. You know you're not clever, Puzzle." And Puzzle always said, "No, Shift. It's quite true. I'm *not* clever." Then he would sigh and do whatever Shift had said.

One morning early in the year the pair of them were out walking along the shore of Caldron Pool. Caldron Pool is the big pool right under the cliffs at the western end of Narnia. The great waterfall pours down into it with a noise like everlasting thunder, and the River of Narnia flows out on the other side. The waterfall keeps the pool always dancing and bubbling and churning round and round as if it were on the boil, and that of course is how it got its name of Caldron Pool. It is liveliest in the early spring when the waterfall is swollen with all the snow that has melted off the mountains

from up beyond Narnia in the Western Wild from which the river comes. And as they looked at Caldron Pool, Shift suddenly pointed with his dark, shiny finger and said,

"Look! What's that?"

"What's what?" said Puzzle.

"That yellow thing that's just come down the waterfall. Look! There it is again, it's floating. We must find out what it is."

"Must we?" said Puzzle.

"Of course we must," said Shift. "It may be something useful. Just hop into the Pool like a good fellow and fish it out. Then we can have a proper look at it."

"Hop into the Pool?" said Puzzle, twitching his long ears.

"Well how are we to get it if you don't?" said the Ape.

"But — but," said Puzzle, "wouldn't it be better if you went in? Because, you see it's you who want to know what it is, and I don't much. And you've got hands, you see. You're as good as a Man or a Dwarf when it comes to catching hold of things. I've only got hoofs."

"Really, Puzzle," said Shift, "I didn't think you'd ever say a thing like that. I didn't think it of you, really."

"Why, what have I said wrong?" said the Ass, speaking in rather a humble voice, for he saw that Shift was very deeply offended. "All I meant was—"

"Wanting *me* to go into the water," said the Ape. "As if you didn't know perfectly well what weak chests Apes always have and how easily they catch cold! Very well. I *will* go in. I'm feeling cold enough already in this cruel wind. But I'll go in. I shall probably die. Then you'll be sorry." And Shift's voice sounded as if he was just going to burst into tears.

"Please don't, please don't, please don't," said Puzzle, half braying and half talking. "I never meant anything of the sort, Shift, really I didn't. You know how stupid I am and how I can't think of more than one thing at a time. I'd forgotten about your weak chest. Of course I'll go in. You mustn't think of doing it yourself. Promise me you won't, Shift."

So Shift promised, and Puzzle went cloppety-clop on his four hoofs round the rocky edge of the Pool to find a place where he could get in. Quite apart from the cold it was no joke getting into that quivering and foaming water, and Puzzle had to stand and shiver for a whole minute before he made up his mind to do it. But then Shift called out from behind

him and said: “Perhaps I’d better do it after all, Puzzle.” And when Puzzle heard that he said, “No, no. You promised. I’m in now,” and in he went.

A great mass of foam got him in the face and filled his mouth with water and blinded him. Then he went under altogether for a few seconds, and when he came up again he was in quite another part of the Pool. Then the swirl caught him and carried him round and round and faster and faster till it took him right under the waterfall itself, and the force of the water plunged him down, deep down, so that he thought he would never be able to hold his breath till he came up again. And when he had come up and when at last he got somewhere near the thing he was trying to catch, it sailed away from him till it too got under the fall and was forced down to the bottom. When it came up again it was farther from him than ever. But at last, when he was almost tired to death, and bruised all over and numb with cold, he succeeded in gripping the thing with his teeth. And out he came carrying it in front of him and getting his front hoofs tangled up in it, for it was as big as a large hearthrug, and it was very heavy and cold and slimy.

He flung it down in front of Shift and stood dripping and shivering and trying to get his breath back. But the Ape never looked at him or asked him how he felt. The Ape was too busy going round and round the Thing and spreading it out and patting it and smelling it. Then a wicked gleam came into his eye and he said.

“It is a lion’s skin.”

“Ee — auh — auh — oh, is it?” gasped Puzzle.

“Now I wonder ... I wonder ... I wonder,” said Shift to himself, for he was thinking very hard.

“I wonder who killed the poor lion,” said Puzzle presently. “It ought to be buried. We must have a funeral.”

“Oh, it wasn’t a Talking Lion,” said Shift. “You needn’t bother about *that*. There are no Talking Beasts up beyond the Falls, up in the Western Wild. This skin must have belonged to a dumb, wild lion.”

This, by the way, was true. A Hunter, a Man, had killed and skinned this lion somewhere up in the Western Wild several months before. But that doesn’t come into this story.

“All the same, Shift,” said Puzzle, “even if the skin only belonged to a dumb, wild lion, oughtn’t we to give it a decent burial? I mean, aren’t all lions rather — well, rather solemn. Because of you know Who. Don’t you see?”

“Don’t you start getting ideas into your head, Puzzle,” said Shift. “Because, you know, thinking isn’t your strong point. We’ll make this skin into a fine warm winter coat for you.”

“Oh, I don’t think I’d like that,” said the Donkey. “It would look — I mean, the other Beasts might think — that is to say, I shouldn’t feel — —”

“What are you talking about?” said Shift, scratching himself the wrong way up as Apes do.

“I don’t think it would be respectful to the Great Lion, to Aslan himself, if an ass like me went about dressed up in a lionskin,” said Puzzle.

“Now don’t stand arguing, please,” said Shift. “What does an ass like you know about things of that sort? You know you’re no good at thinking, Puzzle, so why don’t you let me do your thinking for you? Why don’t you treat me as I treat you? *I* don’t think I can do everything. I know you’re better at some things than I am. That’s why I let you go into the Pool; I knew you’d do it better than me. But why can’t I have my turn when it comes to something I *can* do and you can’t? Am I never to be allowed to do anything? Do be fair. Turn and turn about.”

“Oh well, of course, if you put it that way,” said Puzzle.

“I tell you what,” said Shift. “You’d better take a good brisk trot down river as far as Chippingford and see if they have any oranges or bananas.”

“But I’m so tired, Shift,” pleaded Puzzle.

“Yes, but you are very cold and wet,” said the Ape. “You want something to warm you up. A brisk trot would be just the thing. Besides, it’s market day at Chippingford to-day.” And then of course Puzzle said he would go.

As soon as he was alone Shift went shambling along, sometimes on two paws and sometimes on four, till he reached his own tree. Then he swung himself up from branch to branch, chattering and grinning all the time, and went into his little house. He found needle and thread and a big pair of scissors there; for he was a clever Ape and the Dwarfs had taught him how to sew. He put the ball of thread (it was very thick stuff, more like cord than thread) into his mouth so that his cheek bulged out as if he were sucking a big bit of toffee. He held the needle between his lips and took the scissors in his left paw. Then he came down the tree and shambled across to the lionskin. He squatted down and got to work.

He saw at once that the body of the lionskin would be too long for Puzzle and its neck too short. So he cut a good piece out of the body and

used it to make a long collar for Puzzle's long neck. Then he cut off the head and sewed the collar in between the head and the shoulders. He put threads on both sides of the skin so that it would tie up under Puzzle's chest and stomach. Every now and then a bird would pass overhead and Shift would stop his work, looking up anxiously. He did not want anyone to see what he was doing. But none of the birds he saw were Talking Birds, so it didn't matter.

Late in the afternoon Puzzle came back. He was not trotting but only plodding patiently along, the way donkeys do.

"There weren't any oranges," he said, "and there weren't any bananas. And I'm very tired." He lay down.

"Come and try on your beautiful new lionskin coat," said Shift.

"Oh bother that old skin," said Puzzle, "I'll try it on in the morning. I'm too tired tonight."

"You *are* unkind, Puzzle," said Shift. "If *you're* tired, what do you think *I* am? All day long, while you've been having a lovely refreshing walk down the valley, I've been working hard to make you a coat. My paws are so tired I can hardly hold these scissors. And now you won't say thank-you — and you won't even look at the coat — and you don't care — and — and __"

"My dear Shift," said Puzzle getting up at once, "I am so sorry. I've been horrid. Of course I'd love to try it on. And it looks simply splendid. Do try it on me at once. Please do."

"Well, stand still then," said the Ape. The skin was very heavy for him to lift, but in the end, with a lot of pulling and pushing and puffing and blowing, he got it onto the donkey. He tied it underneath Puzzle's body and he tied the legs to Puzzle's legs and the tail to Puzzle's tail. A good deal of Puzzle's grey nose and face could be seen through the open mouth of the lion's head. No one who had ever seen a real lion would have been taken in for a moment. But if someone who had never seen a lion looked at Puzzle in his lionskin, he just might mistake him for a lion, if he didn't come too close, and if the light was not too good, and if Puzzle didn't let out a bray and didn't make any noise with his hoofs.

"You look wonderful, wonderful," said the Ape. "If anyone saw you now, they'd think you were Aslan, the Great Lion, himself."

"That would be dreadful," said Puzzle.

“No it wouldn’t,” said Shift. “Everyone would do whatever you told them.”

“But I don’t want to tell them anything.”

“But think of the good we could do!” said Shift. “You’d have me to advise you, you know. I’d think of sensible orders for you to give. And everyone would have to obey us, even the King himself. We would set everything right in Narnia.”

“But isn’t everything right already?” said Puzzle.

“What!” cried Shift. “Everything right? — when there are no oranges or bananas?”

“Well, you know,” said Puzzle, “there aren’t many people — in fact, I don’t think there’s anyone but yourself — who wants those sort of things.”

“There’s sugar too,” said Shift.

“H’m, yes,” said the Ass. “It would be nice if there was more sugar.”

“Well then, that’s settled,” said the Ape. “You will pretend to be Aslan, and I’ll tell you what to say.”

“No, no, no,” said Puzzle. “Don’t say such dreadful things. It would be wrong, Shift. I may be not very clever but I know that much. What would become of us if the real Aslan turned up?”

“I expect he’d be very pleased,” said Shift. “Probably he sent us the lionskin on purpose, so that we could set things to right. Anyway, he never *does* turn up, you know. Not now-a-days.”

At that moment there came a great thunderclap right overhead and the ground trembled with a small earthquake. Both the animals lost their balance and were flung on their faces.

“There!” gasped Puzzle, as soon as he had breath to speak. “It’s a sign, a warning. I knew we were doing something dreadfully wicked. Take this wretched skin off me at once.”

“No, no,” said the Ape (whose mind worked very quickly). “It’s a sign the other way. I was just going to say that if the real Aslan, as you call him, meant us to go on with this, he would send us a thunderclap and an earth-tremor. It was just on the tip of my tongue, only the sign itself came before I could get the words out. You’ve *got* to do it now, Puzzle. And please don’t let us have any more arguing. You know you don’t understand these things. What could a donkey know about signs?”

CHAPTER II

The Rashness of the King

About three weeks later the last of the Kings of Narnia sat under the great oak which grew beside the door of his little hunting lodge, where he often stayed for ten days or so in the pleasant spring weather. It was a low, thatched building not far from the Eastern end of Lantern Waste and some way above the meeting of the two rivers. He loved to live there simply and at ease, away from the state and pomp of Cair Paravel, the royal city. His name was King Tirian, and he was between twenty and twenty-five years old; his shoulders were already broad and strong and his limbs, full of hard muscle, but his beard was still scanty. He had blue eyes and a fearless, honest face.

There was no one with him that spring morning except his dearest friend, Jewel the Unicorn. They loved each other like brothers and each had saved the other's life in the wars. The lordly beast stood close beside the King's chair, with its neck bent round polishing its blue horn against the creamy whiteness of its flank.

"I cannot set myself to any work or sport to-day, Jewel," said the King. "I can think of nothing but this wonderful news. Think you we shall hear more of them to-day?"

"They are the most wonderful tidings ever heard in our days or our father's or our grandfathers' days, Sire," said Jewel, "if they are true."

"How can they choose but be true?" said the King. "It is more than a week ago that the first birds came flying over us saying, Aslan is here, Aslan has come to Narnia again. And after that it was the squirrels. They had not seen him, but they said it was certain he was in the woods. Then came the Stag. He said he had seen him with his own eyes, a great way off, by moonlight, in Lantern Waste. Then came that dark Man with the beard, the merchant from Calormen. The Calormenes care nothing for Aslan as we do; but the man spoke of it as a thing beyond doubt. And there was the Badger last night; he too had seen Aslan."

"Indeed, Sire," answered Jewel, "I believe it all. If I seem not to, it is only that my joy is too great to let my belief settle itself. It is almost too beautiful to believe."

“Yes,” said the King with a great sigh, almost a shiver, of delight. “It is beyond all that I ever hoped for in all my life.”

“Listen!” said Jewel, putting his head on one side and cocking his ears forward.

“What is it?” asked the King.

“Hoofs, Sire,” said Jewel. “A galloping horse. A very heavy horse. It must be one of the Centaurs. And look, there he is.”

A great, golden-bearded Centaur, with man’s sweat on his forehead and horse’s sweat on his chestnut flanks, dashed up to the King, stopped, and bowed low. “Hail, King,” it cried in a voice as deep as a bull’s.

“Ho, there!” said the King, looking over his shoulder towards the door of the hunting lodge. “A bowl of wine for the noble Centaur. Welcome, Roonwit. When you have found your breath, you shall tell us your errand.”

A page came out of the house carrying a great wooden bowl, curiously carved, and handed it to the Centaur. The Centaur raised the bowl and said,

“I drink first to Aslan and truth, Sire, and secondly to your Majesty.”

He finished the wine (enough for six strong men) at one draught and handed the empty bowl back to the page.

“Now, Roonwit,” said the King. “Do you bring us more news of Aslan?”

Roonwit looked very grave, frowning a little.

“Sire,” he said. “You know how long I have lived and studied the stars; for we Centaurs live longer than you Men, and even longer than your kind, Unicorn. Never in all my days have I seen such terrible things written in the skies as there have been nightly since this year began. The stars say nothing of the coming of Aslan, nor of peace, nor of joy. I know by my art that there have not been such disastrous conjunctions of the planets for five hundred years. It was already in my mind to come and warn your Majesty that some great evil hangs over Narnia. But last night the rumour reached me that Aslan is abroad in Narnia. Sire, do not believe this tale. It cannot be. The stars never lie, but Men and Beasts do. If Aslan were really coming to Narnia, the sky would have foretold it. If he were really come, all the most gracious stars would be assembled in his honour. It is all a lie.”

“A lie!” said the King fiercely. “What creature in Narnia or all the world would dare to lie on such a matter?” And, without knowing it, he laid his hand on his sword hilt.

“That I know not, Lord King,” said the Centaur. “But I know there are liars on earth; there are none among the stars.”

“I wonder,” said Jewel, “whether Aslan might not come though all the stars foretold otherwise. He is not the slave of the stars but their Maker. Is it not said in all the old stories that He is not a Tame Lion?”

“Well said, well said, Jewel,” cried the King. “Those are the very words: *not a tame lion*. It comes in many tales.”

Roonwit had just raised his hand and was leaning forward to say something very earnestly to the King when all three of them turned their heads to listen to a wailing sound that was quickly drawing nearer. The wood was so thick to the west of them that they could not see the newcomer yet. But they could soon hear the words.

“Woe, woe, woe!” called the voice. “Woe for my brothers and sisters! Woe for the holy trees! The woods are laid waste. The axe is loosed against us. We are being felled. Great trees are falling, falling, falling.”

With the last “falling,” the speaker came in sight. She was like a woman but so tall that her head was on a level with the Centaur’s: yet she was like a tree too. It is hard to explain if you have never seen a Dryad but quite unmistakable once you have — something different in the colour, the voice, and the hair. King Tirian and the two Beasts knew at once that she was the nymph of a beech-tree.

“Justice, Lord King!” she cried. “Come to our aid. Protect your people. They are felling us in Lantern Waste. Forty great trunks of my brothers and sisters are already on the ground.”

“What, Lady! Felling Lantern Waste? Murdering the talking trees?” cried the King leaping to his feet and drawing his sword. “How dare they? And who dares it? Now by the Mane of Aslan — —”

“A-a-a-h,” gasped the Dryad shuddering as if in pain — shuddering time after time as if under repeated blows Then all at once she fell sideways as suddenly as if both her feet had been cut from under her. For a second they saw her lying dead on the grass and then she vanished. They knew what had happened. Her tree, miles away, had been cut down.

For a moment the King’s grief and anger were so great that he could not speak. Then he said:

“Come, friends. We must go up river and find the villains who have done this, with all the speed we can. I will leave not one of them alive.”

“Sire, with a good will,” said Jewel.

But Roonwit said, “Sire, be wary even in your just wrath. There are strange doings on foot. If there should be rebels in arms further up the

valley, we three are too few to meet them. If it would please you to wait while — —”

“I will not wait the tenth part of a second,” said the King. “But while Jewel and I go forward, do you gallop as hard as you may to Cair Paravel. Here is my ring for your token. Get me a score of men-at-arms, all well-mounted, and a score of Talking Dogs, and ten Dwarfs (let them all be fell archers), and a Leopard or so, and Stonefoot the Giant. Bring all these after us as quickly as can be.”

“With a good will, Sire,” said Roonwit. And at once he turned and galloped Eastward down the valley.

The King strode on at a great pace, sometimes muttering to himself and sometimes clenching his fists. Jewel walked beside him, saying nothing; so there was no sound between them but the faint jingle of a rich gold chain that hung round the Unicorn’s neck and the noise of two feet and four hoofs.

They soon reached the River and turned up it where there was a grassy road: they had the water on their left and the forest on their right. Soon after that they came to the place where the ground grew rougher and thick wood came down to the water’s edge. The road, what there was of it, now ran on the southern bank and they had to ford the River to reach it. It was up to Tirian’s armpits, but Jewel (who had four legs and was therefore steadier) kept on his right to break the force of the current, and Tirian put his strong arm round the Unicorn’s strong neck and they both got safely over. The King was still so angry that he hardly noticed the cold of the water. But of course he dried his sword very carefully on the shoulder of his cloak, which was the only dry part of him, as soon as they came to shore.

They were now going westward with the River on their right and Lantern Waste straight ahead of them. They had not gone more than a mile when they both stopped and both spoke at the same moment. The King said “What have we here” and Jewel said “Look!”

“It is a raft,” said King Tirian.

And so it was. Half a dozen splendid tree trunks, all newly cut and newly lopped of their branches, had been lashed together to make a raft, and were gliding swiftly down the River. On the front of the raft there was a water rat with a pole to steer it.

“Hey! Water Rat! What are you about?” cried the King.

“Taking logs down to sell to the Calormenes, Sire,” said the Rat, touching his ear as he might have touched his cap if he had had one.

“Calormenes!” thundered Tirian. “What do you mean? Who gave order for these trees to be felled?”

The River flows so swiftly at that time of the year that the raft had already glided past the King and Jewel. But the Water Rat looked back over its shoulders and shouted:

“The Lion’s orders, Sire. Aslan himself.” He added something more but they couldn’t hear it.

The King and the Unicorn stared at one another and both looked more frightened than they had ever been in any battle.

“Aslan,” said the King at last, in a very low voice. “Aslan. Could it be true? *Could* he be felling the holy trees and murdering the Dryads?”

“Unless the Dryads have all done something dreadfully wrong — —” murmured Jewel.

“But selling them to Calormenes!” said the King. “Is it possible?”

“I don’t know,” said Jewel miserably. “He’s not a *tame* Lion.”

“Well,” said the King at last, “we must go on and take the adventure that comes to us.”

“It is the only thing left for us to do, Sire,” said the Unicorn. He did not see at the moment how foolish it was for two of them to go alone; nor did the King. They were too angry to think clearly. But much evil came of their rashness in the end.

Suddenly the King leaned hard on his friend’s neck and bowed his head.

“Jewel,” he said, “What lies before us? Horrible thoughts arise in my heart. If we had died before to-day we should have been happy.”

“Yes,” said Jewel. “We have lived too long. The worst thing in the world has come upon us.” They stood like that for a minute or two and then went on.

Before long they could hear the hack-hack-hack of axes falling on timber, though they could see nothing yet because there was a rise of the ground in front of them. When they had reached the top of it they could see right into Lantern Waste itself. And the King’s face turned white when he saw it.

Right through the middle of that ancient forest — that forest where the trees of gold and of silver had once grown and where a child from our world had once planted the Tree of Protection — a broad lane had already

been opened. It was a hideous lane like a raw gash in the land, full of muddy ruts where felled trees had been dragged down to the river. There was a great crowd of people at work, and a cracking of whips, and horses tugging and straining as they dragged at the logs. The first thing that struck the King and the Unicorn was that about half the people in the crowd were not Talking Beasts but Men. The next thing was that these men were not the fair-haired men of Narnia: they were dark, bearded men from Calormen, that great and cruel country that lies beyond Archenland across the desert to the south. There was no reason, of course, why one should not meet a Calormene or two in Narnia — a merchant or an ambassador — for there was peace between Narnia and Calormen in those days. But Tirian could not understand why there are so many of them: nor why they were cutting down a Narnian forest. He grasped his sword tighter and rolled his cloak round his left arm. They came quickly down among the men.

Two Calormenes were driving a horse which was harnessed to a log. Just as the King reached them, the log got stuck in a bad muddy place.

“Get on, son of sloth! Pull, you lazy pig!” cried the Calormenes, cracking their whips. The horse was already straining himself as hard as he could; his eyes were red and he was covered with foam.

“Work, lazy brute,” shouted one of the Calormenes: and as he spoke he struck the horse savagely with his whip. It was then that the really dreadful thing happened.

Up till now Tirian had taken it for granted that the horses which the Calormenes were driving were their own horses; dumb, witless animals like the horses of our own world. And though he hated to see even a dumb horse overdriven, he was of course thinking more about the murder of the Trees. It had never crossed his mind that anyone would dare to harness one of the free Talking Horses of Narnia, much less to use a whip on it. But as that savage blow fell the horse reared up and said, half screaming:

“Fool and tyrant! Do you not see I am doing all I can?”

When Tirian knew that the Horse was one of his own Narnians, there came over him and over Jewel such a rage that they did not know what they were doing. The King’s sword went up, the Unicorn’s horn went down. They rushed forward together. Next moment both the Calormenes lay dead, the one beheaded by Tirian’s sword and the other gored through the heart by Jewel’s horn.

CHAPTER III

The Ape in Its Glory

“Master Horse, Master Horse,” said Tirian as he hastily cut its traces, “how came these aliens to enslave you? Is Narnia conquered? Has there been a battle?”

“No, Sire,” panted the horse. “Aslan is here. It is all by his orders. He has commanded — —”

“‘Ware danger, King,” said Jewel. Tirian looked up and saw that Calormenes (mixed with a few Talking Beasts) were beginning to run towards them from every direction. The two dead men had died without a cry and so it had taken a moment before the rest of the crowd knew what had happened. But now they did. Most of them had naked scimitars in their hands.

“Quick. On my back,” said Jewel.

The King flung himself astride of his old friend who turned and galloped away. He changed direction twice or thrice as soon as they were out of sight of their enemies, crossed a stream, and shouted without slackening his pace, “Whither away, Sire? To Cair Paravel?”

“Hold hard, friend,” said Tirian. “Let me off.” He slid off the Unicorn’s back and faced him.

“Jewel,” said the King. “We have done a dreadful deed.”

“We were sorely provoked,” said Jewel.

“But to leap on them unawares — without defying them — while they were unarmed — faugh! We are two murderers, Jewel. I am dishonoured forever.”

Jewel drooped his head. He too was ashamed.

“And then,” said the King, “the Horse said it was by Aslan’s orders. The Rat said the same. They all say Aslan is here. But if it were true?”

“But, Sire, how *could* Aslan be commanding such dreadful things?”

“He is not a *tame* Lion,” said Tirian. “How should we know what he would do? We, who are murderers. Jewel, I will go back. I will give up my sword and put myself in the hands of these Calormenes and ask that they bring me before Aslan. Let him do justice to me.”

“You will go to your death, then,” said Jewel.

“Do you think I care if Aslan dooms me to death?” said the King. “That would be nothing, nothing at all. Would it not be better to be dead than to have this horrible fear that Aslan has come and is not like the Aslan we have believed in and longed for? It is as if the sun rose one day and were a black sun.”

“I know,” said Jewel. “Or as if you drank water and it were *dry* water. You are in the right, Sire. This is the end of all things. Let us go and give ourselves up.”

“There is no need for both of us to go.”

“If ever we loved one another, let me go with you now,” said the Unicorn. “If you are dead and if Aslan is not Aslan, what life is left for me?”

They turned and walked back together, shedding bitter tears.

As soon as they came to the place where the work was going on the Calormenes raised a cry and came towards them with their weapons in hand. But the King held out his sword with the hilt towards them and said:

“I who was King of Narnia and am now a dishonoured knight give myself up to the justice of Aslan. Bring me before him.”

“And I give myself up too,” said Jewel.

Then the dark men came round them in a thick crowd, smelling of garlic and onions, their white eyes flashing dreadfully in their brown faces. They put a rope halter round Jewel’s neck. They took the King’s sword away and tied his hands behind his back. One of the Calormenes, who had a helmet instead of a turban and seemed to be in command, snatched the gold circlet off Tirian’s head and hastily put it away somewhere among his clothes. They led the two prisoners uphill to a place where there was a big clearing. And this was what the prisoners saw.

At the centre of the clearing, which was also the highest point of the hill, there was a little hut like a stable, with a thatched roof. Its door was shut. On the grass in front of the door there sat an Ape. Tirian and Jewel, who had been expecting to see Aslan and had heard nothing about an Ape yet, were very bewildered when they saw it. The Ape was of course Shift himself, but he looked ten times uglier than when he lived by Caldron Pool, for he was now dressed up. He was wearing a scarlet jacket which did not fit him very well, having been made for a dwarf. He had jewelled slippers on his hind paws which would not stay on properly because, as you know, the hind paws of an Ape are really like hands. He wore what seemed to be a

paper crown on his head. There was a great pile of nuts beside him and he kept cracking nuts with his jaws and spitting out the shells. And he also kept on pulling up the scarlet jacket to scratch himself. A great number of Talking Beasts stood facing him, and nearly every face in that crowd looked miserably worried and bewildered. When they saw who the prisoners were, they all groaned and whimpered.

"O Lord Shift, mouthpiece of Aslan," said the chief Calormene. "We bring you prisoners. By our skill and courage and by the permission of the great god Tash we have taken alive these two desperate murderers."

"Give me that man's sword," said the Ape. So they took the King's sword and handed it, with the sword-belt and all, to the monkey. And he hung it round his own neck: and it made him look sillier than ever.

"We'll see about those two later," said the Ape, spitting out a shell in the direction of the two prisoners. "I got some other business first. They can wait. Now listen to me, everyone. The first thing I want to say is about nuts. Where's that Head Squirrel got to?"

"Here, Sir," said a red squirrel, coming forward and making a nervous little bow.

"Oh you are, are you?" said the Ape with a nasty look. "Now attend to me. I want — I mean, Aslan wants — some more nuts. These you've brought aren't anything near enough. You must bring some more, do you hear? Twice as many. And they got to be here by sunset tomorrow, and there mustn't be any bad ones or any small ones among them."

A murmur of dismay ran through the other squirrels, and the Head Squirrel plucked up courage to say:

"Please, would Aslan himself speak to us about it? In we might be allowed to see him — —"

"Well you won't," said the Ape. "He may be very kind (though it's a lot more than most of you deserve) and come out for a few minutes to-night. Then you can all have a look at him. But he will *not* have you all crowding round him and pestering him with questions. Anything you want to say to him will be passed on through me: if I think it's worth bothering him about. In the meantime all you squirrels had better go and see about the nuts. And make sure they are here by tomorrow evening or, my word! you'll catch it."

The poor squirrels all scampered away as if a dog were after them. This new order was terrible news for them. The nuts they had carefully hoarded

for the winter had nearly all been eaten by now; and of the few that were left they had already given the Ape far more than they could spare.

Then a deep voice — it belonged to a great tusked and shaggy Boar — spoke from another part of the crowd.

"But *why* can't we see Aslan properly and talk to him?" it said. "When he used to appear in Narnia in the old days everyone could talk to him face to face."

"Don't you believe it," said the Ape. "And even if it was true, times have changed. Aslan says he's been far too soft with you before, do you see? Well, he isn't going to be soft any more. He's going to lick you into shape this time. He'll teach you to think he's a tame lion!"

A low moaning and whimpering was heard among the Beasts; and, after that, a dead silence which was more miserable still.

"And now there's another thing you got to learn," said the Ape. "I hear some of you are saying I'm an Ape. Well, I'm not. I'm a Man. If I look like an Ape, that's because I'm so very old: hundreds and hundreds of years old. And it's because I'm so old that I'm so wise. And it's because I'm so wise that I'm the only one Aslan is ever going to speak to. He can't be bothered talking to a lot of stupid animals. He'll tell me what you've got to do, and I'll tell the rest of you. And take my advice, and see you do it in double quick time, for He doesn't mean to stand any nonsense."

There was dead silence except for the noise of a very young badger crying and its mother trying to make it keep quiet.

"And now here's another thing," the Ape went on, fitting a fresh nut into its cheek, "I hear some of the horses are saying, Let's hurry up and get this job of carting timber over as quickly as we can, and then we'll be free again. Well, you can get that idea out of your heads at once. And not only the Horses either. Everybody who can work is going to be made to work in the future. Aslan has it all settled with the King of Calormen — The Tisroc, as our dark-faced friends, the Calormenes, call him. All you horses and bulls and donkeys are to be sent down into Calormen to work for your living — pulling and carrying the way horses and such do in other countries. And all you digging animals like moles and rabbits and Dwarfs are going down to work in the Tisroc's mines. And — —"

"No, no, no," howled the Beasts. "It can't be true. Aslan would never sell us into slavery to the King of Calormen."

“None of that! Hold your noise!” said the Ape with a snarl. “Who said anything about slavery? You won’t be slaves. You’ll be paid — very good wages too. That is to say, your pay will be paid in to Aslan’s treasury and he will use it all for everybody’s good.” Then he glanced, and almost winked, at the chief Calormene. The Calormene bowed and replied, in the pompous Calormene way:

“Most sapient Mouthpiece of Aslan, the Tisroc (may he live forever) is wholly of one mind with your lordship in this judicious plan.”

“There! You see!” said the Ape. “It’s all arranged. And all for your own good. We’ll be able, with the money you earn, to make Narnia a country worth living in. There’ll be oranges and bananas pouring in — and roads and big cities and schools and offices and whips and muzzles and saddles and cages and kennels and prisons — Oh, everything.”

“But we don’t want all those things,” said an old Bear. “We want to be free. And we want to hear Aslan speak himself.”

“Now don’t you start arguing,” said the Ape, “for it’s a thing I won’t stand. I’m a Man: you’re only a fat, stupid old Bear. What do you know about freedom? You think freedom means doing what you like. Well, you’re wrong. That isn’t true freedom. True freedom means doing what I tell you.”

“H-n-n-h,” grunted the Bear and scratched its head; it found this sort of thing hard to understand.

“Please, please,” said the high voice of a woolly lamb, who was so young that everyone was surprised he dared to speak at all.

“What is it now?” said the Ape. “Be quick.”

“Please,” said the Lamb, “I can’t understand. What have we to do with the Calormenes? We belong to Aslan. They belong to Tash. They have a god called Tash. They say he has four arms and the head of a vulture. They kill Men on his altar. I don’t believe there’s any such person as Tash. But if there was, how could Aslan be friends with him?”

All the animals cocked their heads sideways and all their bright eyes flashed towards the Ape. They knew it was the best question anyone had asked yet.

The Ape jumped up and spat at the Lamb.

“Baby!” he hissed. “Silly little bleater! Go home to your mother and drink milk. What do you understand of such things? But you others, listen. Tash is only another name for Aslan. All that old idea of us being right and the Calormenes wrong is silly. We know better now. The Calormenes use

different words but we all mean the same thing. Tash and Aslan are only two different names for you know Who. That's why there can never be any quarrel between them. Get that into your heads, you stupid brutes. Tash is Aslan: Aslan is Tash."

You know how sad your own dog's face can look sometimes. Think of that and then think of all the faces of those Talking Beasts — all those honest, humble, bewildered birds, bears, badgers, rabbits, moles, and mice — all far sadder than that. Every tail was down, every whisker drooped. It would have broken your heart with very pity to see their faces. There was only one who did not look at all unhappy.

It was a ginger cat — a great big Tom in the prime of life — who sat bolt upright with his tail curled round his toes, in the very front row of all the Beasts. He had been staring hard at the Ape and the Calormene captain all the time and had never once blinked his eyes.

"Excuse me," said the Cat very politely, "but this interests me. Does your friend from Calormen say the same?"

"Assuredly," said the Calormene. "The enlightened Ape — Man, I mean — is in the right. *Aslan* means neither less nor more than *Tash*."

"Especially, Aslan means *no more* than Tash?" suggested the Cat.

"No more at all," said the Calormene, looking the Cat straight in the face.

"Is that good enough for you, Ginger?" said the Ape.

"Oh certainly," said Ginger coolly. "Thank you very much. I only wanted to be quite clear. I think I am beginning to understand."

Up till now the King and Jewel had said nothing: they were waiting until the Ape should bid them speak, for they thought it was no use interrupting. But now, as Tirian looked round on the miserable faces of the Narnians, and saw how they would all believe that Aslan and Tash were one and the same, he could bear it no longer.

"Ape," he cried with a great voice, "you lie. You lie damnably. You lie like a Calormene. You lie like an Ape."

He meant to go on and ask how the terrible god Tash who fed on the blood of his people could possibly be the same as the good Lion by whose blood all Narnia was saved. If he had been allowed to speak, the rule of the Ape might have ended that day; the Beasts might have seen the truth and thrown the Ape down. But before he could say another word two Calormenes struck him in the mouth with all their force, and a third, from

behind, kicked his feet from under him. And as he fell, the Ape squealed in rage and terror:

"Take him away. Take him away. Take him where he cannot hear us, nor we hear him. There tie him to a tree. I will — I mean, Aslan will — do justice to him later."

CHAPTER IV

What Happened that Night

The King was so dizzy from being knocked down that he hardly knew what was happening until the Calormenes untied his wrists and put his arms straight down by his sides and set him with his back against an ash tree. Then they bound ropes round his ankles and his knees and his waist and his chest and left him there. What worried him worst at the moment — for it is often little things that are hardest to stand — was that his lip was bleeding where they had hit him and he couldn't wipe the little trickle of blood away although it tickled him.

From where he was he could still see the little stable on the top of the hill and the Ape sitting in front of it. He could just hear the Ape's voice still going on and, every now and then, some answer from the crowd but he could not make out the words.

"I wonder what they've done to Jewel," thought the King.

Presently the crowd of Beasts broke up and began going away in different directions. Some passed close to Tirian. They looked at him as if they were both frightened and sorry to see him tied up but none of them spoke. Soon they had all gone and there was silence in the wood. Then hours and hours went past and Tirian became first very thirsty and then very hungry; and as the afternoon dragged on and turned into evening, he became cold too. His back was very sore. The sun went down and it began to be twilight.

When it was almost dark Tirian heard a light pitter-patter of feet and saw some small creatures coming towards him. The three on the left were Mice, and there was a Rabbit in the middle: on the right were two Moles. Both of these were carrying little bags on their backs which gave them a curious look in the dark so that at first he wondered what kind of beasts they were. Then, in a moment, they were all standing up on their hind legs, laying their cool paws on his knees and giving his knees snuffly animal kisses. (They could reach his knees because Narnian Talking Beasts of that sort are bigger than the dumb beasts of the same kinds in England.)

"Lord King! dear Lord King," said their shrill voices, "we are so sorry for you. We daren't untie you because Aslan might be angry with us. But

we’ve brought you your supper.”

At once the first Mouse climbed nimbly up till he was perched on the rope that bound Tirian’s chest and was crinkling his blunt nose just in front of Tirian’s face. Then the second Mouse climbed up and hung on just below the first Mouse. The other beasts stood on the ground and began handing things up.

“Drink, Sire, and then you’ll find you are able to eat,” said the topmost Mouse, and Tirian found that a little wooden cup was being held to his lips. It was only the size of an eggcup so that he had hardly tasted the wine in it before it was empty. But then the Mouse passed it down and the others re-filled it and it was passed up again and Tirian emptied it a second time. In this way they went on till he had quite a good drink, which was all the better for coming in little doses, for that is more thirst-quenching than one long draught.

“Here is cheese, Sire,” said the first Mouse, “but not very much, for fear it would make you too thirsty.” And after the cheese they fed him with oatcakes and fresh butter, and then with some more wine.

“Now hand up the water,” said the first Mouse, “and I’ll wash the King’s face. There is blood on it.”

Then Tirian felt something like a tiny sponge dabbing his face, and it was most refreshing.

“Little friends,” said Tirian, “how can I thank you for all this?”

“You needn’t, you needn’t,” said the little voices. “What else could we do? *We* don’t want any other King. We’re your people. If it were only the Ape and the Calormenes who were against you, we would have fought till we were cut into pieces before we’d have let them tie you up. We would, we would indeed. But we can’t go against Aslan.”

“Do you think it really is Aslan?” asked the King.

“Oh yes, yes,” said the Rabbit. “He came out of the stable last night. We all saw him.”

“What was he like?” said the King.

“Like a terrible, great Lion, to be sure,” said one of the Mice.

“And you think it is really Aslan who is killing the Wood-Nymphs and making you all slaves to the King of Calormen?”

“Ah, that’s bad, isn’t it?” said the second Mouse. “It would have been better if we’d died before all this began. But there’s no doubt about it. Everyone says it is Aslan’s orders, and we’ve seen him. We didn’t think

Aslan would be like that. Why, we — we *wanted* him to come back to Narnia."

"He seems to have come back very angry this time," said the first Mouse. "We must all have done something dreadfully wrong without knowing it. He must be punishing us for something. But I do think we might be told what it was!"

"I suppose what we're doing now may be wrong," said the Rabbit.

"I don't care if it is," said one of the Moles. "I'd do it again."

But the others said, "Oh hush," and "do be careful," and then they all said, "We're sorry, dear King, but we must go back now. It would never do for us to be caught here."

"Leave me at once, dear Beasts," said Tirian. "I would not for all Narnia bring any of you into danger."

"Good night, good night," said the Beasts, rubbing their noses against his knees. "We will come back — if we can." Then they all pattered away and the wood seemed darker and colder and lonelier than it had been before they came.

The stars came out and time went slowly on — imagine how slowly — while the last King of Narnia stood stiff and sore and upright against the tree in his bonds. But at last something happened.

Far away there appeared a red light. Then it disappeared for a moment and came back again, bigger and stronger. Then he could see dark shapes going to and fro on this side of the light and carrying bundles and throwing them down. He knew now what he was looking at. It was a bonfire, newly lit, and people were throwing bundles of brushwood onto it. Presently it blazed up and Tirian could see that it was on the very top of the hill. He could see quite clearly the stable behind it, all lit up in the red glow, and a great crowd of Beasts and Men between the fire and himself. A small figure, hunched up beside the fire, must be the Ape. It was saying something to the crowd, but he could not hear what. Then it went and bowed three times to the ground in front of the door of the stable. Then it got up and opened the door. And something on four legs — something that walked rather stiffly — came out of the stable and stood facing the crowd.

A great wailing or howling went up, so loud that Tirian could hear some of the words.

"Aslan! Aslan! Aslan!" cried the Beasts. "Speak to us. Comfort us. Be angry with us no more."

From where Tirian was, he could not make out very clearly what the thing was; but he could see that it was yellow and hairy. He had never seen the Great Lion. He had never seen even a common lion. He couldn't be sure that what he saw was not the real Aslan. He had not expected Aslan to look like that stiff thing which stood and said nothing. But how could one be sure? For a moment horrible thoughts went through his mind: then he remembered the nonsense about Tash and Aslan being the same and knew that the whole thing must be a cheat.

The Ape put his head close up to the yellow thing's head as if he were listening to something it was whispering to him. Then he turned and spoke to the crowd, and the crowd wailed again. Then the yellow thing turned clumsily round and walked — you might almost say, waddled — back into the stable and the Ape shut the door behind it. After that the fire must have been put out for the light vanished quite suddenly, and Tirian was once more alone with the cold and the darkness.

He thought of other Kings who had lived and died in Narnia in old times and it seemed to him that none of them had ever been so unlucky as himself. He thought of his great-grandfather's great-grandfather, King Rilian, who had been stolen away by a Witch when he was only a young prince and kept hidden for years in the dark caves beneath the land of the Northern Giants. But then it had all come right in the end, for two mysterious children had suddenly appeared from the land beyond the world's end and had rescued him so that he came home to Narnia and had a long and prosperous reign. "It's not like that with me," said Tirian to himself. Then he went further back and thought about Rilian's father, Caspian the Seafarer, whose wicked uncle King Miraz had tried to murder him, and how Caspian fled away into the woods and lived among the Dwarfs. But that story too had all come right in the end too: for Caspian also had been helped by children — only there were four of them that time — who came from somewhere beyond the world and fought a great battle and set him on his father's throne. "But it was all long ago," said Tirian to himself. "That sort of thing doesn't happen now." And then he remembered (for he had always been good at history when he was a boy) how those same four children who had helped Caspian had been in Narnia over a thousand years before; and it was then that they had defeated the terrible White Witch and ended the Hundred Years of Winter, and after that they had reigned (all four of them together) at Cair Paravel, till they were no

longer children but great Kings and lovely Queens, and their reign had been the golden age of Narnia. And Aslan had come into that story a lot. He had come into all the other stories too, as Tirian now remembered. “Aslan — and children from another world,” thought Tirian. “They have always come in when things were at their worst. Oh, if only they could now.”

And he called out “Aslan! Aslan! Aslan! Come and help us Now.”

But the darkness and the cold and the quietness went on just the same.

“Let me be killed,” cried the King. “I ask nothing for myself. But come and save all Narnia.”

And still there was no change in the night or the wood, but there began to be a kind of change inside Tirian. Without knowing why, he began to feel a faint hope. And he felt somehow stronger. “Oh Aslan, Aslan,” he whispered. “If you will not come yourself, at least send me the helpers from beyond the world. Or let me call them. Let my voice carry beyond the world.” Then, hardly knowing that he was doing it, he suddenly cried out in a great voice:

“Children! Children! Friends of Narnia! Quick. Come to me. Across the worlds I call you; I Tirian, King of Narnia, Lord of Cair Paravel, and Emperor of the Lone Islands!”

And immediately he was plunged into a dream (if it was a dream) more vivid than any he had had in his life.

He seemed to be standing in a lighted room where seven people sat round a table. It looked as if they had just finished their meal. Two of these people were very old, an old man with a white beard and an old woman with wise, merry, twinkling eyes. He who sat at the right hand of the old man was hardly full grown, certainly younger than Tirian himself, but his face had already the look of a king and a warrior. And you could almost say the same of the other youth who sat at the right hand of the old woman. Facing Tirian across the table sat a fair-haired girl younger than either of these, and on either side of her, a boy and girl who were younger still. They were all dressed in what seemed to Tirian the oddest kind of clothes.

But he had no time to think about details like that, for instantly the youngest boy and both the girls started to their feet, and one of them gave a little scream. The old woman started and drew in her breath sharply. The old man must have made some sudden movement too for the wine glass which stood at his right hand was swept off the table: Tirian could hear the tinkling noise as it broke on the floor.

Then Tirian realised that these people could see him; they were staring at him as if they saw a ghost. But he noticed that the king-like one who sat at the old man's right never moved (though he turned pale) except that he clenched his hand very tight. Then he said:

"Speak, if you're not a phantom or a dream. You have a Narnian look about you and we are the seven friends of Narnia."

Tirian was longing to speak, and he tried to cry out aloud that he was Tirian of Narnia, in great need of help. But he found (as I have sometimes found in dreams too) that his voice made no noise at all.

The one who had already spoken to him arose to his feet. "Shadow or spirit or whatever you are," he said, fixing his eyes full upon Tirian. "If you are from Narnia, I charge you in the name of Aslan, speak to me. I am Peter the High King."

The room began to swim before Tirian's eyes. He heard the voices of those seven people all speaking at once, and all getting fainter every second, and they were saying things like, "Look! It's fading." "It's melting away." "It's vanishing." Next moment he was wide awake, still tied to the tree, colder and stiffer than ever. The wood was full of the pale, dreary light that comes before sunrise, and he was soaking wet with dew; it was nearly morning.

That waking was about the worst moment he had ever had in his life.

CHAPTER V

How Help Came to the King

But his misery did not last long. Almost at once there came a bump, and then a second bump, and two children were standing before him. The wood in front of him had been quite empty a second before and he knew they had not come from behind his tree, for he would have heard them. They had in fact simply appeared from nowhere. He saw at a glance that they were wearing the same queer, dingy sort of clothes as the people in his dream; and he saw, at a second glance, that they were the youngest boy and girl out of that party of seven.

"Gosh!" said the Boy, "that took one's breath away! I thought — —"

"Hurry up and get him untied," said the girl. "We can talk afterwards." Then she added, turning to Tirian, "I'm sorry we've been so long. We came the moment we could."

While she was speaking the Boy had produced a knife from his pocket and was quickly cutting the King's bonds: too quickly, in fact, for the King was so stiff and numb that when the last cord was cut he fell forward on his hands and knees. He couldn't get up again till he had brought some life back into his legs by a good rubbing.

"I say," said the girl. "It was you, wasn't it, who appeared to us that night when we were all at supper? Nearly a week ago."

"A week, fair maid?" said Tirian. "My dream led me into your world scarce ten minutes since."

"It's the usual muddle about times, Pole," said the Boy.

"I remember now," said Tirian. "That too comes in all the old tales. The time of your strange land is different from ours. But if we speak of Time, 'tis time to be gone from here: for my enemies are close at hand. Will you come with me?"

"Of course," said the girl. "It's you we've come to help."

Tirian got to his feet and led them rapidly downhill, southward and away from the stable. He knew well where he meant to go but his first aim was to get to rocky places where they would leave no trail, and his second to cross some water so that they would leave no scent. This took them about an hour's scrambling and wading and while that was going on nobody had any

breath to talk. But even so, Tirian kept on stealing glances at his companions. The wonder of walking beside the creatures from another world made him feel a little dizzy: but it also made all the old stories seem far more real than they had ever seemed before ... anything might happen now.

“Now,” said Tirian as they came to the head of a little valley which ran down before them among young birch trees, “we are out of danger of those villains for a space and may walk more easily.” The sun had risen, dew-drops were twinkling on every branch, and birds were singing.

“What about some grub? — I mean for you, Sir; we two have had our breakfast,” said the Boy.

Tirian wondered very much what he meant by “grub,” but when the Boy opened a bulgy satchel which he was carrying and pulled out a rather greasy and squashy packet, he understood. He was ravenously hungry, though he hadn’t thought about it till that moment. There were two hard-boiled egg sandwiches, and two cheese sandwiches, and two with some kind of paste in them. If he hadn’t been so hungry, he wouldn’t have thought much of the paste, for that is a sort of food nobody eats in Narnia. By the time he had eaten all six sandwiches they had come to the bottom of the valley and there they found a moss cliff with a little fountain bubbling out of it. All three stopped and drank and splashed their hot faces.

“And now,” said the girl as she tossed her wet hair back from her forehead, “aren’t you going to tell us who you are and why you were tied up and what it’s all about?”

“With a good will, damsel,” said Tirian. “But we must keep on the march.” So while they went on walking he told them who he was and all the things that had happened to him. “And now,” he said at the end, “I am going to a certain tower, one of three that were built in my grandsire’s time to guard Lantern Waste against certain perilous outlaws who dwelled there in his day. By Aslan’s good will I was not robbed of my keys. In that tower we shall find store of weapons and mail and some victuals also, though no better than dry biscuit. There also we can lie safe while we make our plans. And now, prithee, tell me who you two are and all your story.”

“I’m Eustace Scrubb and this is Jill Pole,” said the Boy. “And we were here once before, ages and ages ago, more than a year ago by our time, and there was a chap called Prince Rilian, and they were keeping this chap underground, and Puddle-glum put his foot in — —”

“Ha!” cried Tirian, “are you then that Eustace and that Jill who rescued King Rilian from his long enchantment?”

“Yes, that’s us,” said Jill. “So he’s King Rilian now, is he? Oh of course he would be. I forgot — —”

“Nay,” said Tirian, “I am the seventh in descent from him. He has been dead over two hundred years.”

Jill made a face. “Ugh!” she said. “That’s the horrid part about coming back to Narnia.” But Eustace went on.

“Well now you know who we are, Sire,” he said. “And it was like this. The Professor and Aunt Polly had got all us friends of Narnia together — —”

“I know not these names, Eustace,” said Tirian.

“They’re the two who came into Narnia at the very beginning, the day all the animals learned to talk.”

“By the Lion’s Mane,” cried Tirian. “Those two! The Lord Digory and the Lady Polly! From the dawn of the world! And still alive in your place? The wonder and the glory of it! But tell me, tell me.”

“She isn’t really our aunt, you know,” said Eustace. “She’s Miss Plummer, but we call her Aunt Polly. Well, those two got us all together: partly just for fun so that we could all have a good jaw about Narnia (for of course there’s no one else we can ever talk to about things like that) but partly because the Professor had a feeling that we were somehow wanted over here. Well then you came in like a ghost or goodness-knows-what and nearly frightened the lives out of us and vanished without saying a word. After that, we knew for certain there was something up. The next question was how to get here. You can’t go just by wanting to. So we talked and talked and at last the Professor said the only way would be by the Magic Rings. It was by those Rings that he and Aunt Polly got here long, long ago when they were only kids, years before we younger ones were born. But the Rings had all been buried in the garden of a house in London (that’s our big town, Sire) and the house had been sold. So then the problem was how to get at them. You’ll never guess what we did in the end! Peter and Edmund — that’s the High King Peter, the one who spoke to you — went up to London to get into the garden from the back, early in the morning before people were up. They were dressed like workmen so that if anyone did see them it would look as if they’d come to do something about the drains. I wish I’d been with them: it must have been glorious fun. And they must

have succeeded for next day Peter sent us a wire — that's a sort of message, Sire, I'll explain about it some other time — to say he'd got the Rings. And the day after that was the day Pole and I had to go back to school — we're the only two who are still at school and we're at the same one. So Peter and Edmund were to meet us at a place on the way down to school and hand over the Rings. It had to be us two who were to go to Narnia, you see, because the older ones couldn't come again. So we got into the train — that's kind of thing people travel in in our world: a lot of wagons chained together — and the Professor and Aunt Polly and Lucy came with us. We wanted to keep together as long as we could. Well there we were in the train. And we were just getting to the station where the others were to meet us, and I was looking out of the window to see if I could see them when suddenly there came a most frightful jerk and a noise: and there we were in Narnia and there was your Majesty tied up to the tree."

"So you never used the Rings?" said Tirian.

"No," said Eustace. "Never even saw them. Aslan did it all for us in his own way without any Rings."

"But the High King Peter has them," said Tirian.

"Yes," said Jill. "But we don't think he can use them. When the two other Pevensies — King Edmund and Queen Lucy — were last here, Aslan said they would never come to Narnia again. And he said something of the same sort to the High King, only longer ago. You may be sure he'll come like a shot if he's allowed."

"Gosh!" said Eustace. "It's getting hot in this sun. Are we nearly there, Sire?"

"Look," said Tirian and pointed. Not many yards away grey battlements rose above the treetops, and after a minute's more walking they came out in an open grassy space. A stream ran across it and on the far side of the stream stood a squat, square tower with very few and narrow windows and one heavy-looking door in the wall that faced them.

Tirian looked sharply this way and that to make sure that no enemies were in sight. Then he walked up to the tower and stood still for a moment fishing up his bunch of keys which he wore inside his hunting-dress on a narrow silver chain that went round his neck. It was a nice bunch of keys that he brought out, for two were golden and many were richly ornamented: you could see at once that they were keys made for opening solemn and secret rooms in palaces, or chests and caskets of sweet-smelling wood that

contained royal treasures. But the key which he now put into the lock of the door was big and plain and more rudely made. The lock was stiff and for a moment Tirian was afraid that he would not be able to turn it: But at last he did and the door swung open with a sullen creak.

“Welcome, friends,” said Tirian. “I fear this is the best palace that the King of Narnia can now offer to his guests.”

Tirian was pleased to see that the two strangers had been well brought up. They both said not to mention it and that they were sure it would be very nice.

As a matter of fact it was not particularly nice. It was rather dark and smelled very damp. There was only one room in it and this room went right up to the stone roof: a wooden staircase in one corner led up to a trap door by which you could get out on the battlements. There were a few rude bunks to sleep in, and a great many lockers and bundles. There was also a hearth which looked as if nobody had lit a fire in it for a great many years.

“We’d better go out and gather some firewood first thing, hadn’t we?” said Jill.

“Not yet, comrade,” said Tirian. He was determined that they should not be caught unarmed, and began searching the lockers, thankfully remembering that he had always been careful to have these garrison towers inspected once a year to make sure that they were stocked with all things needful. The bow strings were there in their coverings of oiled silk, the swords and spears were greased against rust, and the armour was kept bright in its wrappings. But there was something even better. “Look!” said Tirian as he drew out a long mail shirt of a curious pattern and flashed it before the children’s eyes.

“That’s funny looking mail, Sire,” said Eustace.

“Aye, lad,” said Tirian. “No Narnian dwarf smithied that. ’Tis mail of Calormen, outlandish gear. I have ever kept a few suits of it in readiness, for I never knew when I or my friends might have reason to walk unseen in the Tisroc’s land. And look on this stone bottle. In this there is a juice which, when we have rubbed it on our hands and faces, will make us brown as Calormenes.”

“Oh hurrah!” said Jill. “Disguises! I love disguises.”

Tirian showed them how to pour out a little of the juice into the palms of their hands and then rub it well over their faces and necks, right down to the

shoulders, and then on their hands, right up to the elbows. He did the same himself.

“After this has hardened on us,” he said, “we may wash in water and it will not change. Nothing but oil and ashes will make us white Narnians again. And now, sweet Jill, let us go see how this mail-shirt becomes you. ’Tis something too long, yet not so much as I feared. Doubtless it belonged to a page in the train of one of their Tarkaans.”

After the mail shirts they put on Calormene helmets, which are little round ones fitting tight to the head and having a spike on top. Then Tirian took long rolls of some white stuff out of the locker and wound them over the helmets till they became turbans: but the little steel spike still stuck up in the middle. He and Eustace took curved Calormene swords and little round shields. There was no sword light enough for Jill, but he gave her a long, straight hunting knife which might do for a sword at a pinch.

“Hast any skill with the bow, maiden?” said Tirian.

“Nothing worth talking of,” said Jill blushing. “Scrubb’s not bad.”

“Don’t you believe her, Sire,” said Eustace. “We’ve both been practicing archery ever since we got back from Narnia last time, and she’s about as good as I now. Not that either of us is much.”

Then Tirian gave Jill a bow and a quiver full of arrows. The next business was to light a fire, for inside that tower it still felt more like a cave than like anything indoors and set one shivering. But they got warm gathering the wood — the sun was now at its highest — and when once the blaze was roaring up the chimney the place began to look cheerful. Dinner was, however, a dull meal, for the best they could do was to pound up some of the hard biscuit which they found in a locker and pour it into boiling water, with salt, so as to make a kind of porridge. And there was nothing to drink but water.

“I wish we’d brought a packet of tea,” said Jill.

“Or a tin of cocoa,” said Eustace.

“A firkin or so of good wine in each of these towers would not have been amiss,” said Tirian.

CHAPTER VI

A Good Night's Work

About four hours later Tirian flung himself into one of the bunks to snatch a little sleep. The two children were already snoring: he had made them go to bed before he did because they would have to be up most of the night and he knew that at their age they couldn't do without sleep. Also, he had tired them out. First he had given Jill some practice in archery and found that, though not up to Narnian standards, she was really not too bad. Indeed she had succeeded in shooting a rabbit (not a *Talking* rabbit, of course: there are lots of the ordinary kind about in Western Narnia) and it was already skinned, cleaned, and hanging up. He had found that both the children knew all about this chilly and smelly job; they had learned that kind of thing on their great journey through Giant-Land in the days of Prince Rilian. Then he had tried to teach Eustace how to use his sword and shield. Eustace had learned quite a lot about sword fighting on his earlier adventures but that had been all with a straight Narnian sword. He had never handled a curved Calormene scimitar and that made it hard, for many of the strokes are quite different and some of the habits he had learned with the long sword had now to be unlearned again. But Tirian found that he had a good eye and was very quick on his feet. He was surprised at the strength of both the children: in fact they both seemed to be already much strong and bigger and more grown-up than they had been when he first met them a few hours ago. It is one of the effects which Narnian air often has on visitors from our world.

All three of them agreed that the very first thing they must do was to go back to Stable Hill and try to rescue Jewel the Unicorn. After that, if they succeeded, they would try to get away Eastward and meet the little army which Roonwit the Centaur would be bringing from Cair Paravel.

An experienced warrior and huntsman like Tirian can always wake up at the time he wants. So he gave himself till nine o'clock that night and then put all worries out of his head and fell asleep at once. It seemed only a moment later when he woke but he knew by the light and the very feel of things that he had timed his sleep exactly. He got up, put on his helmet-and-turban (he had slept in his mail-shirt), and then shook the other two till they

woke up. They looked, to tell the truth, very grey and dismal as they climbed out of their bunks and there was a good deal of yawning.

"Now," said Tirian, "we go due North from here — by good fortune 'tis a starry night — and it will be much shorter than our journey this morning, for then we went roundabout but now we shall go straight. If we are challenged, then do you two hold your peace and I will do my best to talk like a curst, cruel, proud lord of Calormen. If I draw my sword then thou, Eustace, must do likewise and let Jill leap behind us and stand with an arrow on the string. But if I cry 'Home,' then fly for the Tower both of you. And let none try to fight on — not even one stroke — after I have given the retreat: such false valour has spoiled many notable plans in the wars. And now friends, in the name of Aslan let us go forward."

Out they went into the cold night. All the great northern stars were burning above the treetops. The North-Star of that world is called the Spear-Head: it is brighter than our Pole Star.

For a time they could go straight towards the Spear-Head but presently they came to a dense thicket so that they had to go out of their course to get round it. And after that — for they were still overshadowed by branches — it was hard to pick up their bearings. It was Jill who set them right again: she had been an excellent Guide in England. And of course she knew her Narnian stars perfectly, having travelled so much in the wild Northern Lands, and could work out the direction from other stars even when the Spear-Head was hidden. As soon as Tirian saw that she was the best pathfinder of the three of them he put her in front. And then he was astonished to find how silently and almost invisibly she glided on before them.

"By the Mane!" he whispered to Eustace. "This girl is a wondrous wood-maid. If she had Dryad's blood in her she could scarce do it better."

"She's so small, that's what helps," whispered Eustace. But Jill from in front said: "S-s-s-h, less noise."

All round them the wood was very quiet. Indeed it was far too quiet. On an ordinary Narnian night there ought to have been noises — an occasional cheery "Good night" from a hedgehog, the cry of an owl overhead, perhaps a flute in the distance to tell of Fauns dancing, or some throbbing, hammering noises from Dwarfs underground. All that was silenced: gloom and fear reigned over Narnia.

After a time they began to go steeply uphill and the trees grew further apart. Tirian could dimly make out the well known hilltop and the stable. Jill was now going with more and more caution: she kept on making signs to the others with her hand to do the same. Then she stopped dead still and Tirian saw her gradually sink down into the grass and disappear without a sound. A moment later she rose again, put her mouth close to Tirian's ear, and said in the lowest possible whisper, "Get down. *Thee* better." She said *thee* for *see* not cause she had a lisp but because she knew that the hissing letter S is the part of a whisper most likely to be overhead. Tirian at once lay down, almost as silently as Jill, but not quite for he was heavier and older. And once they were down, he saw how from that position you could see the edge of the hill sharp against the star-strewn sky. Two black shapes rose against it: one was the stable, and the other, a few feet in front of it, was a Calormene sentry. He was keeping very ill watch: not walking or even standing but sitting with his spear over his shoulder and his chin on his chest. "Well done," said Tirian to Jill. She had shown him exactly what he needed to know.

They got up and Tirian now took the lead. Very slowly, hardly daring to breathe, they made their way up to a little clump of trees which was not more than forty feet away from the sentinel.

"Wait here till I come again," he whispered to the other two. "If I miscarry, fly." Then he sauntered out boldly in full view of the enemy. The man started when he saw him and was just going to jump to his feet: he was afraid Tirian might be one of his own officers and that he would get into trouble for sitting down. But before he could get up, Tirian had dropped on one knee beside him, saying:

"Art thou a warrior of the Tisroc's, may he live forever? It cheers my heart to meet thee among all these beasts and devils of Narnians. Give me thy hand, friend."

Before he well knew what was happening the Calormene sentry found his right hand seized in a mighty grip. Next instant someone was kneeling on his legs and dagger was pressed against his neck.

"One noise and thou art dead," said Tirian in his ear. "Tell me where the Unicorn is and thou shall live."

"B — behind the stable, O My Master," stammered the unfortunate man.

"Good. Rise up and lead me to him."

As the man got up the point of the dagger never left his neck. It only travelled round (cold and rather ticklish) as Tirian got behind him and settled it at a convenient place under his ear. Tremblingly he went round to the back of the stable.

Though it was dark Tirian could see the white shape of Jewel at once.

"Hush!" he said. "No, do not neigh. Yes, Jewel, it is I. How have they tied thee?"

"Hobbled by all four legs and tied with a bridle to a ring in the stable wall," came Jewel's voice.

"Stand here, sentry, with your back to the wall. So. Now, Jewel: set the point of your horn against this Calormene's breast."

"With a good will, Sire," said Jewel.

"If he moves, rive him to the heart." Then in a few seconds Tirian cut the ropes. With the remains of them he bound the sentry hand and foot. Finally he made him open his mouth, stuffed it full of grass and tied him up from scalp to chin so that he could make no noise, lowered the man into a sitting position and set him against the wall.

"I have done thee some discourtesy, soldier," said Tirian. "But such was my need. If we meet again I may happen to do thee a better turn. Now, Jewel, let us go softly."

He put his left arm round the beast's neck and bent and kissed its nose and both had great joy. They went back as quietly as possible to the place where he had left the children. It was darker in there under the trees and he nearly ran into Eustace before he saw him.

"All's well," whispered Tirian. "A good night's work. Now for home."

They turned and had gone a few paces when Eustace said, "Where are you, Pole?" There was no answer. "Is Jill on the other side of you, Sire?" he asked.

"What?" said Tirian. "Is she not on the other side of *you*?"

It was a terrible moment. They dared not shout but they whispered her name in the loudest whispers they could manage. There was no reply.

"Did she go from you while I was away?" asked Tirian.

"I didn't see or hear her go," said Eustace. "But she could have gone without my knowing. She can be as quiet as a cat; you've seen for yourself."

At that moment a far off drumbeat was heard. Jewel moved his ears forward. "Dwarfs," he said.

“And treacherous Dwarfs, enemies, as likely as not.” muttered Tirian.

“And here comes something on hoofs, much nearer,” said Jewel.

The two humans and the Unicorn stood dead still. There were now so many different things to worry about that they didn’t know what to do. The noise of hoofs came steadily nearer. And then, quite close to them, voice whispered:

“Hallow! Are you all there?”

Thank heaven, it was Jill’s.

“Where the *devil* have you been to?” said Eustace in a furious whisper, for he had been very frightened.

“In the Stable,” gasped Jill, but it was the sort of gasp you give when you’re struggling with suppressed laughter.

“Oh,” growled Eustace, “you think it funny, do you? Well all I can say is — —”

“Have you got Jewel, Sire?” asked Jill.

“Yes. Here he is. What is that beast with you?”

“That’s *him*,” said Jill. “But let’s be off home before anyone wakes up.” And again there came little explosions of laughter.

The others obeyed at once for they had already lingered long enough in that dangerous place and the dwarf drums seemed to have come a little nearer. It was only after they had been walking southward for several minutes that Eustace said:

“Got *him*? What do you mean?”

“The false Aslan,” said Jill.

“What!” said Tirian. “Where have you been? What have you done?”

“Well, Sire,” said Jill. “As soon as I saw that you’d got the sentry out of the way I thought, hadn’t I better have a look inside the Stable and see what really *is* there? So I crawled along. It was as easy as anything to draw the bolt. Of course it was pitch-black inside and smelled like any other stable. Then I struck a light and — would you believe it? — there was nothing at all there but this old donkey with a bundle of lionskin tied onto his back. So I drew my knife and told him he’d have to come along with me. As a matter of fact I needn’t have threatened him with the knife at all. He was very fed up with the stable and quite ready to come — weren’t you, Puzzle dear?”

“Great Scott!” said Eustace. “Well I’m — I’m jiggered. I was jolly angry with you a moment ago, and I still think it was mean of you to sneak off without the rest of us: but I must admit — well, I mean to say — well it was

a perfectly gorgeous thing to do. If she were a boy, she'd have to be knighted, wouldn't she, Sire?"

"If she were a boy," said Tirian, "she'd be whipped for disobeying orders." And in the dark no one could see whether he said this with a frown or a smile. Next minute there was a sound of rasping metal.

"What are you doing, Sire?" asked Jewel sharply.

"Drawing my sword to smite off the head of the accursed Ass," said Tirian in a terrible voice. "Stand clear, girl."

"Oh don't, please don't," said Jill. "Really, you mustn't. It wasn't his fault. It was all the Ape. He didn't know any better. And he's very sorry. He's a nice donkey. His name's Puzzle. And I've got my arms round his neck."

"Jill," said Tirian, "you are the bravest and most woodwise of all my subjects, but also the most malapert and disobedient. Well: let the Ass live. What have you to say for yourself, Ass?"

"Me, Sire?" came the donkey's voice. "I'm sure I'm very sorry if I've done wrong. The Ape said Aslan *wanted* me to dress up like that. And I thought he'd know. I'm not clever like him. I only did what I was told. It wasn't any fun for me living in that Stable. I don't even know what's been going on outside. He never let me out except for a minute or two at night. Some days they forgot to give me any water too."

"Sire," said Jewel. "Those Dwarfs are coming nearer and nearer. Do we want to meet them?"

Tirian thought for a moment and then suddenly gave a great laugh out loud. Then he spoke, not this time in a whisper. "By the Lion," he said, "I am growing slow-witted! Meet them? Certainly we will meet them. We will meet anyone now. We have this Ass to show them. Let them see the thing they have feared and bowed to. We can show them the truth of the Ape's vile plot. His secret's out. The tide's turned. Tomorrow we shall hang that Ape on the highest tree in Narnia. No more whispering and skulking and disguises. Where are these honest Dwarfs? We have good news for them."

When you have been whispering for hours the mere sound of anyone talking out loud has a wonderfully stirring effect. The whole party began talking and laughing: even Puzzle lifted up his head and gave a grand Haw-hee-haw-hee-hee; a thing the Ape hadn't allowed him to do for days. Then they set off in the direction of the drumming. It grew steadily louder and soon they could see torchlight as well. They came out on one of those rough

roads (we should hardly call them roads at all in England) which ran through Lantern Waste. And there, marching sturdily along, were about thirty Dwarfs, all with their little spades and mattocks over their shoulders. Two armed Calormenes led the column and two more brought up the rear.

"Stay!" thundered Tirian as he stepped out on the road. "Stay, soldiers. Whither do you lead these Narnian Dwarfs and by whose orders?"

CHAPTER VII

Mainly About Dwarfs

The two Calormene soldiers at the head of the column, seeing what they took for a Tarkaan or great lord with two armed pages, came to a halt and raised their spears in salute.

"O My Master," said one of them, "We lead these manikins to Calormen to work in the mines of the Tisroc, may-he-live-forever."

"By the great god Tash, they are very obedient," said Tirian. Then suddenly he turned to the Dwarfs themselves. About one in six of them carried a torch and by that flickering light he could see their bearded faces all looking at him with grim and dogged expressions. "Has the Tisroc fought a great battle, Dwarfs, and conquered your land," he asked, "that thus you go patiently to die in the salt pits of Pugrahan?"

The two soldiers glared at him in surprise but the Dwarfs all answered, "Aslan's orders, Aslan's orders. He's sold us. What can we do against *him*?"

"Tisroc indeed!" added one and spat. "I'd like to see him try it!"

"Silence, dog!" said the chief soldier.

"Look!" said Tirian, pulling Puzzle forward into the light. "It has all been a lie. Aslan has not come to Narnia at all. You have been cheated by the Ape. This is the thing he brought out of the stable to show you. Look at it."

What the Dwarfs saw, now that they could see it close, was certainly enough to make them wonder how they had ever been taken in. The lionskin had got pretty untidy already during Puzzle's long imprisonment in the stable and it had been knocked crooked during his journey through the dark wood. Most of it was in a big lump on one shoulder. The head, besides being pushed sidewise, had somehow got very far back so that anyone could now see his silly, gentle, donkey face gazing out of it. Some grass stuck out of one corner of his mouth, for he'd been doing a little quiet nibbling as they brought him along. And he was muttering, "It wasn't my fault, I'm not clever. I never said I *was*."

For one second all the Dwarfs were staring at Puzzle with wide open mouths and then one the soldiers said sharply, "Are you mad, My Master! What are you doing to the slaves?" and the other said, "And who are you?"

Neither of their spears were at the salute now — both were down and ready for action.

"Give the password," said the chief soldier.

"This is my password," said the King as he drew his sword. "*The light is dawning, the lie broken*. Now guard thee, miscreant, for I am Tirian of Narnia."

He flew upon the chief soldier like lightning, Eustace, who had drawn his sword when he saw the King draw his, rushed at the other one: his face was deadly pale, but I wouldn't blame him for that. And he had the luck that beginners sometimes do have. He forgot all that Tirian had tried to teach him that afternoon, slashed wildly (indeed I'm not sure his eyes weren't shut) and suddenly found, to his own great surprise, that the Calormene lay dead at his feet. And though that was a great relief, it was, at the moment, rather frightening. The King's fight lasted a second or two longer: then he too had killed his man and shouted to Eustace, "'Ware the other two."

But the Dwarfs had settled the two remaining Calormenes. There was no enemy left.

"Well struck, Eustace!" cried Tirian, clapping him on the back. "Now, Dwarfs, you are free. Tomorrow I will lead you to free all Narnia. Three cheers for Aslan!"

But the result which followed was simply wretched. There was a feeble attempt from a few Dwarfs (about five) which died away all at once: from several others there were sulky growls. Many said nothing at all.

"Don't they understand?" said Jill impatiently.

"What's wrong with all you Dwarfs? Don't you hear what the King says? It's all over. The Ape isn't going to rule Narnia any longer. Everyone can go back to ordinary life. You can have fun again. Aren't you glad?"

After a pause of nearly a minute a not-very-nice looking Dwarf with hair and beard as black as soot said:

"And who might you be, Missie?"

"I'm Jill," she said. "The same Jill who rescued King Rilian from the enchantment — and this is Eustace who did it too — and we've come back from another world after hundreds of years. Aslan sent us."

The Dwarfs all looked at one another with grins; sneering grins, not merry ones.

"Well," said the Black Dwarf (whose name was Griffle), "I don't know how all you chaps feel, but I feel I've heard as much about Aslan as I want

to for the rest of my life."

"That's right, that's right," growled the other Dwarfs. "It's all a trick, all a blooming trick."

"What do you mean?" said Tirian. He had not been pale when he was fighting but he was pale now. He had thought this was going to be a beautiful moment, but it was turning out more like a bad dream.

"You must think we're blooming soft in the head, that you must," said Griffle. "We've been taken in once and now you expect us to be taken in again the next minute. We've no more use for stories about Aslan, see! Look at him! An old moke with long ears!"

"By heaven, you make me mad," said Tirian. "Which of us said *that* was Aslan? That is the Ape's imitation of the real Aslan. Can't you understand?"

"And you've got a better imitation, I suppose!" said Griffle. "No thanks. We've been fooled once and we're not going to be fooled again."

"I have not," said Tirian angrily, "I serve the real Aslan."

"Where's he? Who's he? Show him to us!" said several Dwarfs.

"Do you think I keep him in my wallet, fools?" said Tirian. "Who am I that I could make Aslan appear at my bidding? He's not a tame lion."

The moment those words were out of his mouth he realised that he had made a false move. The Dwarfs at once began repeating "not a tame lion, not a tame lion," in a jeering singsong. "That's what the other lot kept on telling us," said one.

"Do you mean you don't believe in the real Aslan?" said Jill. "But I've seen him. And he has sent us two here out of a different world."

"Ah," said Griffle with a broad smile. "So *you* say. They've taught you your stuff all right. Saying your lessons, ain't you?"

"Churl," cried Tirian, "will you give a lady a lie to her very face?"

"You keep a civil tongue in your head, Mister," replied the Dwarf. "I don't think we want any more kings — if you *are* Tirian, which you don't look like him — no more than we want any Aslans. We're going to look after ourselves from now on and touch our caps to nobody. See?"

"That's right," said the other Dwarfs. "We're on our own now. No more Aslan, no more kings, no more silly stories about other worlds. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs." And they began to fall into their places and to get ready for marching back to wherever they had come from.

"Little beasts!" said Eustace. "Aren't you even going to say *thank you* for being saved from the salt-mines?"

“Oh, we know all about that,” said Griffle over his shoulder. “You wanted to make use of us, that’s why you rescued us. You’re playing some game of your own. Come on you chaps.”

And the Dwarfs struck up the queer little marching song which goes with the drumbeat, and off they tramped into the darkness.

Tirian and his friends stared after them. Then he said the single word “Come,” and they continued their journey.

They were a silent party. Puzzle felt himself to be still in disgrace, and also he didn’t really quite understand what had happened. Jill, besides being disgusted with the Dwarfs, was very impressed with Eustace’s victory over the Calormene and felt almost shy. As for Eustace, his heart was still beating rather quickly. Tirian and Jewel walked sadly together in the rear. The King had his arm on the Unicorn’s shoulder and sometimes the Unicorn nuzzled the King’s cheek with his soft nose. They did not try to comfort one another with words. It wasn’t very easy to think of anything to say that would be comforting. Tirian had never dreamed that one of the results of an Ape’s setting up a false Aslan would be to stop people from believing in the real one. He had felt quite sure that the Dwarfs would rally to his side the moment he showed them how they had been deceived. And then next night he would have led them to Stable Hill and shown Puzzle to all the creatures and everyone would have turned against the Ape and, perhaps after a scuffle with the Calormenes, the whole thing would have been over. But now, it seemed, he could count on nothing. How many other Narnians might turn the same way as the Dwarfs?

“Somebody’s coming after us, I think,” said Puzzle suddenly.

They stopped and listened. Sure enough, there was a thump-thump of small feet behind them.

“Who goes there!” shouted the King.

“Only me, Sire,” came a voice. “Me, Poggin the Dwarf. I’ve only just managed to get away from the others. I’m on your side, Sire: and on Aslan’s. If you can put a Dwarfish sword in my fist, I’d gladly strike a blow on the right side before all’s done.”

Everyone crowded round him and welcomed him and praised him and slapped him on the back. Of course one single Dwarf could not make a very great difference, but it was somehow very cheering to have even one. The whole party brightened up. But Jill and Eustace didn’t stay bright for very

long, for they were now yawning their heads off and too tired to think about anything but bed.

It was at the coldest hour of the night, just before dawn, that they got back to the Tower. If there had been a meal ready for them they would have been glad enough to eat, but the bother and delay of getting one was not to be thought of. They drank from a stream, splashed their faces with water, and tumbled into their bunks, except for Puzzle and Jewel who said they'd be more comfortable outside. This perhaps was just as well, for a Unicorn and a fat, full-grown donkey indoors always make a room feel rather crowded.

Narnian Dwarfs, though less than four feet high, are for their size about the toughest and strongest creatures there are, so that Poggin, in spite of a heavy day and a late night, woke fully refreshed before any of the others. He at once took Jill's bow, went out and shot a couple of wood pigeons. Then he sat plucking them on the door-step and chatting to Jewel and Puzzle. Puzzle looked and felt a good deal better this morning. Jewel, being a Unicorn and therefore one of the noblest and most delicate of beasts, had been very kind to him, talking to him about things of the sort they could both understand like grass and sugar and the care of one's hoofs. When Jill and Eustace came out of the Tower yawning and rubbing their eyes at almost half past ten, the Dwarf showed them where they could gather plenty of a Narnian weed called Wild Fresney, which looks rather like our wood sorel but tastes a good deal nicer when cooked. (It needs a little butter and pepper to make it perfect, but they hadn't these.) So with one thing and another, they had the makings of a capital stew for their breakfast or dinner, whichever you choose to call it. Tirian went a little further off into the wood with an axe and brought back some branches for fuel. While the meal was cooking — which seemed a very long time, especially as it smelled nicer and nicer the nearer it came to being done — the King found a complete Dwarfish outfit for Poggin: mail-shirt, helmet, shield, sword, belt, and dagger. Then he inspected Eustace's sword and found that Eustace had put it back in the sheath all messy from killing the Calormene. He was scolded for that and made to clean and polish it.

All this while Jill went to and fro, sometimes stirring the pot and sometimes looking out enviously at the Donkey and the Unicorn who were contentedly grazing. How many times that morning she wished she could eat grass!

But when the meal came everyone felt it had been worth waiting for, and there were second helpings all round. When everyone had eaten as much as he could, the three humans and the Dwarf came and sat on the doorstep, the four-footed ones lay down facing them, the Dwarf (with permission both from Jill and from Tirian) lit his pipe, and the King said:

"Now, friend Poggin, you have more news of the enemy, most likely, than we. Tell us all you know. And first, what tale do they tell of my escape?"

"As cunning a tale, Sire, as ever was devised," said Poggin. "It was the Cat, Ginger, who told it, and most likely made it up too. This Ginger, Sire — oh, he's a slyboots if ever a cat was — said he was walking past the tree to which those villains bound your Majesty. And he said (saving your reverence) that you were howling and swearing and cursing Aslan: 'language I wouldn't like to repeat' were the words he used, looking ever so prim and proper — you know the way a Cat can when it pleases. And then, says Ginger, Aslan himself suddenly appeared in a flash of lightning and swallowed your Majesty up at one mouthful. All the Beasts trembled at this story and some fainted right away. And of course the Ape followed it up. There, he says, see what Aslan does to those who don't respect him. Let that be a warning to you all. And the poor creatures wailed and whined and said, it will, it will. So that in the upshot your Majesty's escape has not set them thinking whether you still have loyal friends to aid you, but only made them more afraid and more obedient to the Ape."

"What devilish policy!" said Tirian. "This Ginger, then, is close in the Ape's counsels."

"It's more a question by now, Sire, if the Ape is in *his* counsels," replied the Dwarf. "The Ape has taken to drinking, you see. My belief is that the plot is now mostly carried on by Ginger or Rishda — that's the Calormene captain. And I think some words that Ginger has scattered among the Dwarfs are chiefly to blame for the scurvy return they made you. And I'll tell you why. One of those dreadful midnight meetings had just broken up the night before last and I'd gone a bit of the way home when I found I'd left my pipe behind. It was a real good 'un, an old favourite, so I went back to look for it. But before I got to the place where I'd been sitting (it was black as pitch there), I heard a cat's voice say *Mew* and a Calormene voice say 'here ... speak softly,' so I just stood as still as if I were frozen. And these two were Ginger and Rishda Tarkaan as they call him. 'Noble

Tarkaan,’ said the Cat in that silky voice of his. ‘I just wanted to know exactly what we both meant to-day about Aslan meaning *no more* than Tash.’ ‘Doubtless, most sagacious of cats,’ says the other, ‘you have perceived my meaning.’ ‘You mean,’ says Ginger, ‘that there’s no such person as either.’ ‘All who are enlightened know that,’ said the Tarkaan. ‘Then we can understand one another,’ purrs the Cat. ‘Do you, like me, grow a little weary of the Ape?’ ‘A stupid, greedy brute,’ says the other, ‘but we must use him for the present. Thou and I must provide for all things in secret and make the Ape do our will.’ ‘And it would be better, wouldn’t it,’ said Ginger, ‘to let some of the more enlightened Narnians into our counsels: one by one, as we find them apt. For the Beasts who really believe in Aslan may turn at any moment: and will, if the Ape’s folly betrays his secret. But those who care neither for Tash nor Aslan but have only an eye to their own profit, and such reward as the Tisroc may give them when Narnia is a Calormene province, will be firm.’ ‘Excellent Cat,’ said the Captain. ‘But choose which ones carefully.’”

While the Dwarf had been speaking the day seemed to have changed. It had been sunny when they sat down. Now Puzzle shivered. Jewel shifted his head uneasily. Jill looked up.

“It’s clouding over,” she said.

“And it’s so cold,” said Puzzle.

“Cold enough, by the Lion!” said Tirian, blowing on his hands. “And faugh! What foul smell is this?”

“Phew!” gasped Eustace. “It’s like something dead. Is there a dead bird somewhere about? And why didn’t we notice it before?”

With a great upheaval Jewel scrambled to his feet and pointed with his horn.

“Look!” he cried. “Look at it! Look, look!”

Then all six of them saw; and over all their faces there came an expression of uttermost dismay.

CHAPTER VIII

What News the Eagle Brought

In the shadow of the trees on the far side of the clearing something was moving. It was gliding very slowly Northward. At first glance you might have mistaken it for smoke, for it was grey and you could see things through it. But the deathly smell was not the smell of smoke. Also, this thing kept its shape instead of billowing and curling as smoke would have done. It was roughly the shape of a man but it had the head of a bird; some bird of prey with a cruel, curved beak. It had four arms which it held high above its head, stretching them out Northward as if it wanted to snatch all Narnia in its grip; and its fingers — all twenty of them — were curved like its beak and had long, pointed, bird-like claws instead of nails. It floated on the grass instead of walking, and the grass seemed to wither beneath it.

After one look at it Puzzle gave a screaming bray and darted into the Tower. And Jill (who was no coward, as you know) hid her face in her hands to shut out the sight of it. The others watched it for perhaps a minute, until it streamed away into the thicker trees on their right and disappeared. Then the sun came out again, and the birds once more began to sing.

Everyone started breathing properly again and moved. They had all been still as statues while it was in sight.

"What was it?" said Eustace in a whisper.

"I have seen it once before," said Tirian. "But that time it was carved in stone and overlaid with gold and had solid diamonds for eyes. It was when I was no older than thou, and had gone as a guest to the Tisroc's court in Tashbaan. He took me into the great temple of Tash. There I saw it, carved above the altar."

"Then that — that thing — was Tash?" said Eustace.

But instead of answering him Tirian slipped his arm behind Jill's shoulders and said, "How is it with you, Lady?"

"A-all right," said Jill, taking her hands away from her pale face and trying to smile. "I'm all right. It only made me feel a little sick for a moment."

"It seems, then," said the Unicorn, "That there is a real Tash, after all."

“Yes,” said the Dwarf. “And this fool of an Ape, who didn’t believe in Tash, will get more than he bargained for! He called for Tash: Tash has come.”

“Where has it — he — the Thing — gone to?” said Jill.

“North into the heart of Narnia,” said Tirian. “It has come to dwell among us. They have called it and it has come.”

“Ho, ho, ho!” chuckled the Dwarf, rubbing its hairy hands together. “It will be a surprise for the Ape. People shouldn’t call for demons unless they really mean what they say.”

“Who knows if Tash will be visible to the Ape?” said Jewel.

“Where has Puzzle got to?” said Eustace.

They all shouted out Puzzle’s name and Jill went round to the other side of the Tower to see if he had gone there. They were quite tired of looking for him when at last his large grey head peered cautiously out of the doorway and he said, “Has it gone away?” And when at last they got him to come out, he was shivering the way a dog shivers before a thunderstorm.

“I see now,” said Puzzle, “that I really have been a very bad donkey. I ought never to have listened to Shift. I never thought things like this would begin to happen.”

“If you’d spent less time saying you weren’t clever and more time trying to be as clever as you could — —” began Eustace but Jill interrupted him.

“Oh leave poor old Puzzle alone,” she said. “It was all a mistake; wasn’t it, Puzzle dear?” And she kissed him on the nose.

Though rather shaken by what they had seen, the whole party now sat down again and went on with their talk.

Jewel had little to tell them. While he was a prisoner he had spent nearly all his time tied up at the back of the Stable, and had of course heard none of the enemies’ plans. He had been kicked (he’d done some kicking back too) and beaten and threatened with death unless he would say that he believed it was Aslan who was brought out and shown to them by firelight every night. In fact he was going to be executed this very morning if he had not been rescued. He didn’t know what had happened to the Lamb.

The question they had to decide was whether they would go to Stable Hill again that night, show Puzzle to the Narnians and try to make them see how they had been tricked, or whether they should steal away eastward to meet the help which Roonwit the Centaur was bringing up from Cair Paravel and return against the Ape and his Calormenes in force. Tirian

would very much like to have followed the first plan: he hated the idea of leaving the Ape to bully his people one moment longer than need be. On the other hand, the way the Dwarfs had behaved last night was a warning. Apparently one couldn't be sure how people would take it even if he showed them Puzzle. And there were the Calormene soldiers to be reckoned with. Poggin thought there were about thirty of them. Tirian felt sure that if the Narnians all rallied to his side, he and Jewel and the children and Poggin (Puzzle didn't count for much) would have a good chance of beating them. But how if half the Narnians — including all the Dwarfs — just sat and looked on? or even fought against him? The risk was too great. And there was, too, the cloudy shape of Tash. What might it do?

And then, as Poggin pointed out, there was no harm in leaving the Ape to deal with his own difficulties for a day or two. He would have no Puzzle to bring out and show now. It wasn't easy to see what story he — or Ginger — could make up to explain that. If the Beasts asked night after night to see Aslan, and no Aslan was brought out, surely even the simplest of them would get suspicious.

In the end they all agreed that the best thing was to go off and try to meet Roonwit.

As soon as they had decided this, it was wonderful how much more cheerful everyone became. I don't honestly think that this was because any of them was afraid of a fight (except perhaps Jill and Eustace). But I daresay that each of them, deep down inside was very glad not to go any nearer — or not yet — to that horrible bird-headed thing which, visible or invisible, was now probably haunting Stable Hill. Anyway, one always feels better when one has made up one's mind.

Tirian said they had better remove their disguises, as they didn't want to be mistaken for Calormenes and perhaps attacked by any loyal Narnians they might meet. The Dwarf made up a horrid-looking mess of ashes from the hearth and grease out of the jar of grease, which was kept for rubbing on swords and spearheads. Then they took off their Calormene armour and went down to the stream. The nasty mixture made a lather just like soft soap: it was a pleasant, homely sight to see Tirian and the two children kneeling beside the water and scrubbing the backs of their necks or puffing and blowing as they splashed the lather off. Then they went back to the Tower with red, shiny faces, looking like people who have been given an extra-specially good wash before a party. They re-armed themselves in true

Narnian style with straight swords and three-cornered shields. “Body of me,” said Tirian. “That is better. I feel a true man again.”

Puzzle begged very hard to have the lionskin taken off him. He said it was too hot and the way it was rucked up on his back was uncomfortable: also, it made him look so silly. But they told him he would have to wear it a bit longer, for they still wanted to show him in that get-up to the other Beasts, even though they were now going to meet Roonwit first.

What was left of the pigeon meat and rabbit meat was not worth bringing away but they took some biscuits. Then Tirian locked the door of the Tower and that was the end of their stay there.

It was a little after two in the afternoon when they set out, and it was the first really warm day of that spring. The young leaves seemed to be much further out than yesterday: the snowdrops were over, but they saw several primroses. The sunlight slanted through the trees, birds sang, and always (though usually out of sight) there was the noise of running water. It was hard to think of horrible things like Tash. The children felt, “This is really Narnia at last.” Even Tirian’s heart grew lighter as he walked ahead of them, humming an old Narnian marching song which had the refrain:

Ho, rumble, rumble, rumble, rumble,
Rumble drum belaboured.

After the King came Eustace and Poggin the Dwarf. Poggin was telling Eustace the names of all the Narnian trees, birds, and plants which he didn’t know already. Sometimes Eustace would tell him about English ones.

After them came Puzzle, and after him Jill and Jewel walking very close together. Jill had, as you might say quite fallen in love with the Unicorn. She thought — and she wasn’t far wrong — that he was the shiningest, delicatest, most graceful animal she had ever met: and he was so gentle and soft of speech that, if you hadn’t known, you would hardly have believed how fierce and terrible he could be in battle.

“Oh, this is nice!” said Jill. “Just walking along like this. I wish there could be more of *this* sort of adventure. It’s a pity there’s always so much happening in Narnia.”

But the Unicorn explained to her that she was quite mistaken. He said that the Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve were brought out of their

own strange world into Narnia only at times when Narnia was stirred and upset, but she mustn't think it was always like that. In between their visits there were hundreds and thousands of years when peaceful King followed peaceful King till you could hardly remember their names or count their numbers, and there was really hardly anything to put into the History Books. And he went on to talk of old Queens and heroes whom she had never heard of. He spoke of Swanwhite the Queen who had lived before the days of the White Witch and the Great Winter, who was so beautiful that when she looked into any forest pool the reflection of her face shone out of the water like a star by night for a year and a day afterwards. He spoke of Moonwood the Hare, who had such ears that he could sit by Caldron Pool under the thunder of the great waterfall and hear what men spoke in whispers at Cair Paravel. He told how King Gale, who was ninth in descent from Frank the first of all Kings, had sailed far away into the Eastern seas and delivered the Lone Islanders from a dragon and how, in return, they had given him the Lone Islands to be part of the royal lands of Narnia for ever. He talked of whole centuries in which all Narnia was so happy that notable dances and feasts, or at most tournaments, were the only things that could be remembered, and every day and week had been better than the last. And as he went on, the picture of all those happy years, all the thousands of them, piled up in Jill's mind till it was rather like looking down from a high hill onto a rich, lovely plain full of woods and waters and cornfields, which spread away and away till it got thin and misty from distance. And she said:

"Oh, I do hope we can soon settle the Ape and get back to those good, ordinary times. And then I hope they'll go on for ever and ever and ever. *Our* world is going to have an end some day. Perhaps this one won't. Oh, Jewel — wouldn't it be lovely if Narnia just went on and on — like what you said it has been?"

"Nay, sister," answered Jewel, "all worlds draw to an end; except Aslan's own country."

"Well, at least," said Jill, "I hope the end of this one is millions of millions of millions of years away — hullo! what are we stopping for?"

The King and Eustace and the Dwarf were all staring up at the sky. Jill shuddered, remembering what horrors they had seen already. But it was nothing of that sort this time. It was small, and looked black against the blue.

“I dare swear,” said the Unicorn, “from its flight, that it is a Talking bird.”

“So think I,” said the King. “But is it a friend, or a spy of the Ape’s?”

“To me, Sire,” said the Dwarf, “it has a look of Farsight the Eagle.”

“Ought we to hide under the trees!” said Eustace.

“Nay,” said Tirian, “best stand still as rocks. He would see us for certain if we moved.”

“Look! He wheels, he has seen us already,” said Jewel, “He is coming down in wide circles.”

“Arrow on string, Lady,” said Tirian to Jill. “But by no means shoot till I bid you. He may be a friend.”

If one had known what was going to happen next, it would have been a treat to watch the grace and ease with which the huge bird glided down. He alighted on a rocky crag a few feet from Tirian, bowed his crested head, and said in his strange eagle’s voice, “Hail, King.”

“Hail, Farsight,” said Tirian. “And since you call me King, I may well believe you are not a follower of the Ape and his false Aslan. I am glad of your coming.”

“Sire,” said the Eagle, “when you have heard my news you will be sorrier at my coming than of the greatest woe that ever befell you.”

Tirian’s heart seemed to stop beating at these words, but he set his teeth and said “Tell on.”

“Two sights have I seen,” said Farsight. “One was Cair Paravel filled with dead Narnians and living Calormenes: the Tisrocs banner advanced upon your royal battlements: and your subjects flying from the city — this way and that, into the woods. Cair Paravel was taken from the sea. Twenty great ships of Calormen put in there in the dark of the night before last night.”

No one could speak.

“And the other sight, five leagues nearer than Cair Paravel, was Roonwit the Centaur lying dead with Calormene arrow in his side. I was with him in his last hour and he gave me this message to your Majesty: to remember that all worlds draw to an end and that noble death is a treasure which no one is too poor to buy.”

“So,” said the King, after a long silence, “Narnia is no more.”

CHAPTER IX

The Great Meeting on Stable Hill

For a long time they could not speak nor even shed a tear. Then the Unicorn stamped the ground with his hoof, and shook his mane, and spoke.

"Sire," he said, "There is now no need of counsel. We see that the Ape's plans were laid deeper than we dreamed. Doubtless he has been long in secret traffic with the Tisroc, and as soon as he had found the lionskin, he sent him word to make ready his navy for the taking of Cair Paravel and all Narnia. Nothing now remains for us seven but to go back to Stable Hill, proclaim the truth, and take the adventure that Aslan sends us. And if, by a great marvel, we defeat those thirty Calormenes who are with the Ape, then to turn again and die in battle with the far greater host of them that will soon march from Cair Paravel."

Tirian nodded. But he turned to the children and said: "Now, friends, it is time for you to go hence into your own world. Doubtless you have done all that you were sent to do."

"B — but we've done nothing," said Jill who was shivering, not with fear exactly but because everything was horrible.

"Nay," said the King, "you loosed me from the tree: you glided before me like a snake last night in the wood and took Puzzle: and you, Eustace, killed your man. But you are too young to share in such a bloody end as we others must meet to-night or, it may be, three days hence. I entreat you — nay, I command you — to return to your own place. I should be put to shame if I let such young warriors fall in battle on my side."

"No, no, no," said Jill (very white when she began speaking and then suddenly very red and then white again). "We won't, I don't care what you say. We're going to stick with you whatever happens, aren't we, Eustace?"

"Yes, but there's no need to get so worked up about it," said Eustace who had stuck his hands in his pockets (forgetting how very odd that looks when you are wearing a mail shirt). "Because you see, we haven't any choice. What's the good of talking about our going back! How? We've got no magic for doing it!"

This was very good sense but, at the moment, Jill hated Eustace for saying it. He was fond of being dreadfully matter-of-fact when other people

got excited.

When Tirian realised that the two strangers could not get home (unless Aslan suddenly whisked them away) he next wanted them to go across the southern mountains into Archenland where they might possibly be safe. But they didn't know their way and there was no one to send with them. Also, as Poggin said, once the Calormenes had Narnia they would certainly take Archenland in the next week or so: the Tisroc had always wanted to have these Northern countries for his own. In the end Eustace and Jill begged so hard that Tirian said they could come with him and take their chance — or, as he much more sensibly called it "the adventure that Aslan would send them."

The King's first idea was that they should not go back to Stable Hill — they were sick of the very name of it by now — till after dark. But the Dwarf told them that if they arrived here by daylight they would probably find the place deserted, except perhaps for a Calormene sentry. The Beasts were far too frightened by what the Ape (and Ginger) had told them about this new angry Aslan — or Tashlan — to go near it except when they were called together for those horrible midnight meetings. And Calormenes are never good woodsmen. Poggin thought that even by daylight they could easily get round to somewhere behind the stable without being seen. This would be much harder to do when the night had come and the Ape might be calling the Beasts together and all the Calormenes were on duty. And when the meeting did begin they could leave Puzzle at the back of the stable, completely out of sight, till the moment at which they wanted to produce him. This was obviously a good thing: for their only chance was to give the Narnians a sudden surprise.

Everyone agreed and the whole party set off on a new line — north-west — towards the hated Hill. The Eagle sometimes flew to and fro above them, sometimes he sat perched on Puzzle's back. No one — not even the King himself except in some great need — would dream of *riding* on a Unicorn.

This time Jill and Eustace walked together. They had been feeling very brave when they were begging to be allowed to come with the others, but now they didn't feel brave at all.

"Pole," said Eustace in a whisper. "I may as well tell you I've got the wind up."

"Oh *you're* all right, Scrubb," said Jill. "You can fight. But I — I'm just shaking, if you want to know the truth."

“Oh shaking’s nothing,” said Eustace. “I’m feeling I’m going to be sick.”

“Don’t talk about *that*, for goodness’ sake,” said Jill.

They went on in silence for a minute or two.

“Pole,” said Eustace presently.

“What?” said she.

“What’ll happen if we get killed here?”

“Well, we’ll be dead, I suppose.”

“But I mean, what will happen in our own world? Shall we wake up and find ourselves back in that trail? Or shall we just vanish and never be heard of any more? Or shall we be dead in England?”

“Gosh. I never thought of that.”

“It’ll be rum for Peter and the others if they saw me waving out of the window and then when the train comes in we’re nowhere to be found! Or if they found two — I mean, if we’re dead over there in England.”

“Ugh!” said Jill. “What a horrid idea.”

“It wouldn’t be horrid for *us*,” said Eustace. “*We* shouldn’t be there.”

“I almost wish — no I don’t, though,” said Jill.

“What were you going to say?”

“I was going to say I wished we’d never come. But I don’t, I don’t, I don’t. Even if we *are* killed. I’d rather be killed fighting for Narnia than grow old and stupid at home and perhaps go about in a bathchair and then die in the end just the same.”

“Or be smashed up by British Railways!”

“Why d’you say that?”

“Well when that awful jerk came — the one that seemed to throw us into Narnia — I thought it was the beginning of a railway accident. So I was jolly glad to find ourselves here instead.”

While Jill and Eustace were talking about this, the others were discussing their plans and becoming less miserable. That was because they were now thinking of what was to be done this very night and the thought of what had happened to Narnia — the thought that all her glories and joys were over — was pushed away into the back part of their minds. The moment they stopped talking it would come out and make them wretched again: but they kept on talking. Poggin was really quite cheerful about the nights’ work they had to do. He was sure that the Boar and the Bear, and probably all the Dogs would come over to their side at once. And he couldn’t believe that all the other Dwarfs would stick to Griffle. And

fighting by firelight and in and out among trees would be an advantage to the weaker side. And then, if they could win tonight, need they really throw their lives away by meeting the main Calormene army a few days later?

Why not hide in the woods, or even up in the Western Waste beyond the great waterfall and live like outlaws? And they might gradually get stronger and stronger, for Talking Beasts and Archenlanders would be joining them every day. And at last they'd come out of hiding and sweep the Calormenes (who would have got careless by then) out of the country and Narnia would be revived. After all, something very like that had happened in the time of King Miraz!

And Tirian heard all this and thought "But what about Tash?" and felt in his bones that none of it was going to happen. But he didn't say so.

When they got nearer to Stable Hill of course everyone became quiet. Then the real wood-work began. From the moment at which they first saw the Hill to the moment at which they all arrived at the back of the Stable, it took them over two hours. It's the sort of thing one couldn't describe properly unless one wrote pages and pages about it. The journey from each bit of cover to the next was a separate adventure, and there were very long waits in between, and several false alarms. If you are a good Scout or a good Guide, you will know already what it must have been like. By about sunset they were all safe in a clump of holly trees about fifteen yards behind the stable. They all munched some biscuit and lay down.

Then came the worst part, the waiting. Luckily for the children they slept for a couple of hours, but of course they woke up when the night grew cold, and what's worse, woke up very thirsty and with no chance of getting a drink. Puzzle just stood, shivering a little with nervousness, and said nothing. But Tirian, with his head against Jewel's flank, slept as sound as if he were in his royal bed at Cair Paravel, till the sound of a gong beating awoke him and he sat up and saw that there was firelight on the far side of the stable and knew that the hour had come.

"Kiss me, Jewel," he said. "For certainly this is our last night on earth. And if ever I offended against you in any matter great or small, forgive me now."

"Dear King," said the Unicorn, "I could almost wish you had, so that I might forgive it. Farewell. We have known great joys together. If Aslan gave me my choice I would choose no other life than the life I have had and no other death than the one we go to."

Then they woke up Farsight who was asleep with his head under his wing (it made him look as if he had no head at all) and crept forward to the stable. They left Puzzle (not without a kind word, for no one was angry with him now) just behind it, telling him not to move till someone came to fetch him, and took up their position at one end of the stable.

The bonfire had not been lit for long and was just beginning to blaze up. It was only a few feet away from them, and the great crowd of Narnian creatures were on the other side of it, so that Tirian could not at first see them very well, though of course he saw dozens of eyes shining with the reflection of the fire, as you've seen a rabbit's or cat's eyes in the headlights of a car. And just as Tirian took his place, the gong stopped beating and from somewhere on his left three figures appeared. One was Rishda Tarkaan, the Calormene Captain. The second was the Ape. He was holding onto the Tarkaan's hand with one paw and kept whimpering and muttering, "Not so fast, don't go so fast, I'm not at *all* well. Oh my poor head! These midnight meetings are getting too much for me. Apes aren't meant to be up at night: It's not as if I was a rat or a bat — oh my poor head." On the other side of the Ape, walking very soft and stately, with his tail straight up in the air, came Ginger the Cat. They were heading for the bonfire and were so close to Tirian that they would have seen him at once if they had looked in the right direction. Fortunately they did not. But Tirian heard Rishda say to Ginger in a low voice:

"Now Cat, to thy post. See thou play thy part well."

"Miaow, miaow. Count on me!" said Ginger. Then he stepped away beyond the bonfire and sat down in the front row of the assembled Beasts: in the audience, as you might say.

For really, as it happened, the whole thing was rather like a theatre. The crowd of Narnians were like the people in the seats; the little grassy place just in front of the stable, where the bonfire burned and the Ape and the Captain stood to talk to the crowd, was like the stage; the stable itself was like the scenery at the back of the stagehand Tirian and his friends were like people peering round from behind the scenery. It was a splendid position. If any of them stepped forward into the full firelight, all eyes would be fixed on him at once: on the other hand, so long as they stood still in the shadow of the end wall of the stable, it was a hundred to one against their being noticed.

Rishda Tarkaan dragged the Ape up close to the fire. The pair of them turned to face the crowd, and this of course meant that their backs were towards Tirian and his friends.

"Now, Monkey," said Rishda Tarkaan in a low voice. "Say the words that wiser heads have put into thy mouth. And hold up thy head." As he spoke he gave the Ape a little prod or kick from behind with the point of his toe.

"Do leave me alone," muttered Shift. But he sat up straighter and began, in a louder voice ——

"Now listen, all of you. A terrible thing has happened. A wicked thing. The wickedest thing that ever was done in Narnia. And Aslan — —"

"Tashlan, fool," whispered Rishda Tarkaan.

"Tashlan I mean, of course," said the Ape, "is very angry about it."

There was a terrible silence while the Beasts waited to hear what new trouble was in store for them. The little party by the end-wall of the stable also held their breath. What on earth was coming now?

"Yes," said the Ape. "At this very moment, when the Terrible One himself is among us — there in the stable just behind me — one wicked Beast has chosen to do what you'd think no one would dare to do even if *He* were a thousand miles away. It has dressed itself up in a lionskin and is wandering about in these very woods pretending to be Aslan."

Jill wondered for a moment if the Ape had gone mad. Was he going to tell the whole truth? A roar of horror and rage went up from the Beasts. "Grrr!" came the growls, "Who is he? Where is he? Just let me get my teeth into him!"

"It was seen last night," screamed the Ape, "but it got away. It's a donkey! A common, miserable Ass! If any of you see that Ass — —"

"Grrr!" growled the Beasts. "We will, we will. He'd better keep out of *our* way."

Jill looked at the King: his mouth was open and his face was full of horror. And then she understood the devilish cunning of the enemies' plan. By mixing a little truth with it they had made their lie far stronger. What was the good, now, of telling the Beasts that an ass had been dressed up as a lion to deceive them? The Ape would only say, "That's just what I've said." What was the good of showing them Puzzle in his lionskin? They would only tear him in pieces. "That's taken the wind out of our sails," whispered Eustace. "The ground is taken from under our feet," said Tirian. "Curst,

curst cleverness!” said Poggin. “I’ll be sworn that this new lie is of Ginger’s making.”

CHAPTER X

Who Will Go into the Stable?

Jill felt something tickling her ear. It was Jewel the Unicorn, whispering to her with the wide whisper of a horse's mouth. As soon as she heard what he was saying she nodded and tiptoed back to where Puzzle was standing. Quickly and quietly she cut the last cords that bound the lionskin to him. It wouldn't do for him to be caught with *that* on, after what the Ape had said! She would like to have hidden the skin itself somewhere very far away, but it was too heavy. The best she could do was to kick it in among the thickest bushes. Then she made signs to Puzzle to follow her and they both joined the others.

The Ape was speaking again.

"And after a horrid thing like that, Aslan — Tashlan — is angrier than ever. He says he's been a great deal too good to you, coming out every night to be looked at, see! Well, he's not coming out any more."

Howls and mewings and squeals and grunts were the Animals' answer to this, but suddenly a quite different voice broke in with a loud laugh.

"Hark what the monkey says," it shouted. "We know why he isn't going to bring his precious Aslan out. I'll tell you why: because he hasn't got him. He never had anything except an old donkey with a lionskin on its back. Now he's lost *that* and he doesn't know what to do."

Tirian could not see the faces on the other side of the fire very well but he guessed this was Griffle the Chief Dwarf. And he was quite certain of it when, a second later, all the Dwarfs' voices joined in, singing:

"Don't know what to do! Don't know what to do! Don't know what to do-o-o!"

"Silence!" thundered Rishda Tarkaan, "Silence, children of mud! Listen to me, you other Narnians, lest I give command to my warriors to fall upon you with the edge of the sword. The Lord Shift has already told you of that wicked Ass. Do you think, because of him that there is no *real* Tashlan in the Stable! Do you? Beware, beware."

"No, no," shouted most of the crowd. But the Dwarfs said "That's right, Darkie, you've got it. Come on, Monkey, show us what's in the stable, seeing is believing."

When next there was a moment's quiet the Ape said:

"You Dwarfs think you're very clever, don't you? But not so fast. I never said you couldn't see Tashlan. Anyone who likes, can see him."

The whole assembly became silent. Then, after nearly a minute, the Bear began in a slow, puzzled voice.

"I don't quite understand all this," it grumbled, "I thought you said ——"

"*You* thought!" repeated the Ape. "As if anyone could call what goes on in your head *thinking*. Listen, you others. Anyone can see Tashlan. But he's not coming out. You have to go in and see *him*."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you," said dozens of voices. "That's what we wanted! We can go in and see him face to face. And now he'll be kind and it will all be as it used to be." And the Birds chattered, and the Dogs barked excitedly. Then suddenly, there was a great stirring and a noise of creatures rising to their feet, and in a second the whole lot of them would have been rushing forward and trying to crowd into the Stable door all together. But the Ape shouted:

"Get back! Quiet! Not so fast."

The Beasts stopped, many of them with one paw in the air, many with tails wagging, and all of them with heads on one side.

"I thought you said," began the Bear, but Shift interrupted.

"Anyone can go in," he said. "But, one at a time. Who'll go first? He didn't *say* he was feeling very kind. He's been licking his lips a lot since he swallowed up the wicked King the other night. He's been growling a good deal this morning. I wouldn't much like to go into that Stable myself tonight. But just as you please. Who'd like to go in first? Don't blame me if he swallows you whole or blasts you into a cinder with the mere terror of his eyes. That's your affair. Now then! Who's first? What about one of you Dwarfs?"

"Dilly, dilly, come and be killed!" sneered Griffle. "How do we know what you've got in there?"

"Ho-ho!" cried the Ape. "So you're beginning to think there's *something* there, eh? Well, all you Beasts were making noise enough a minute ago. What's struck you all dumb? Who's going in first?"

But the Beasts all stood looking at one another and began backing away from the Stable. Very few tails were wagging now. The Ape waddled to and

fro jeering at them. “Ho-ho-ho!” he chuckled. “I thought you were all so eager to see Tashlan face to face! Changed your mind, eh!”

Tirian bent his head to hear something that Jill was trying to whisper in his ear. “What do you think is really inside the Stable?” she said. “Who knows?” said Tirian. “Two Calormenes with drawn swords, as likely as not, one on each side of the door.” “You don’t think,” said Jill “It might be ... you know ... that horrid thing we saw?” “Tash himself?” whispered Tirian. “There’s no knowing. But courage, child: we are all between the paws of the true Aslan.”

Then a most surprising thing happened. Ginger the Cat said, in a cool, clear voice, not at all as if he was excited, “I’ll go in, if you like.”

Every creature turned and fixed its eyes on the Cat.

“Mark their subtleties, Sire,” said Poggin to the King. “This curst cat is in the plot, in the very centre of it. Whatever is in the Stable will not hurt him, I’ll be bound. Then Ginger will come out again and say that he has seen some wonder.”

But Tirian had no time to answer him. The Ape was calling the Cat to come forward. “Ho-ho!” said the Ape, “so you, a pert Puss, would look upon Him face to face. Come on, then! I’ll open the door for you. Don’t blame me if He scares the whiskers off your face. That’s your affair.”

And the Cat got up and came out of its place in the crowd, walking primly and daintily, with its tail in the air, not one hair on its sleek coat out of place. It came on till it had passed the fire and was so close that Tirian, from where he stood with his shoulder against the end-wall of the stable, could look right into its face. Its big green eyes never blinked. (“Cool as a cucumber,” muttered Eustace. “*It* knows it has nothing to fear.”) The Ape, chuckling and making faces, shuffled across beside the Cat: put up his paw: drew the bolt and opened the door. Tirian thought he could hear the Cat purring as it walked into the dark doorway.

“Aii-aii-aouwee! — —” The most horrible caterwaul you ever heard made everyone jump. You have been wakened yourself by cats quarrelling or making love on the roof in the middle of the night: you know the sound.

This was worse. The Ape was knocked head over heels by Ginger coming back out of the Stable at top speed. If you had not known he was a cat, you might have thought he was a ginger-coloured streak of lightning. He shot across the open grass, back into the crowd. No one wants to meet a cat in that state. You could see animals getting out of his way, left and right.

He dashed up a tree, whisked round, and hung head downwards. His tail was bristled out till it was nearly as thick as his whole body: his eyes were like saucers of green fire: along his back every single hair stood on end.

"I'd give my beard," whispered Poggin, "to know whether that brute is only acting or whether it has really found something in there that frightened it!"

"Peace, friend," said Tirian, for the Captain and the Ape were also whispering and he wanted to hear what they said. He did not succeed, except that he heard the Ape once more whimpering "My head, my head," but he got the idea that those two were almost as puzzled by the cat's behaviour as himself.

"Now, Ginger," said the Captain. "Enough of that noise. Tell them what thou hast seen."

"Aii — Aii — Aaow — Awah," screamed the Cat.

"Art thou not called a *Talking* Beast?" said the Captain. "Then hold thy devilish noise and talk."

What followed was rather horrible. Tirian felt quite certain (and so did the others) that the Cat was trying to say something: but nothing came out of its mouth except the ordinary, ugly cat-noises you might hear from any angry or frightened old Tom in a backyard in England. And the longer he caterwauled the less like a Talking Beast he looked. Uneasy whimperings and little sharp squeals broke out from among the other Animals.

"Look, look!" said the voice of the Boar. "It can't talk. It has forgotten how to talk! It has gone back to being a dumb beast. Look at its face." Everyone saw that it was true. And then the greatest terror of all fell upon those Narnians. For every one of them had been taught — when it was only a chick or a puppy or a cub — how Aslan at the beginning of the world had turned the beasts of Narnia into Talking Beasts and warned them that if they weren't good they might one day be turned back again and be like the poor witless animals one meets in other countries. "And now it is coming upon us," they moaned.

"Mercy! Mercy!" wailed the Beasts. "Spare us, Lord Shift, stand between us and Aslan, you must always go in and speak to him for us. We daren't, we daren't."

Ginger disappeared further up into the tree. No one ever saw him again.

Tirian stood with his hand on his sword-hilt and his head bowed. He was dazed with the horrors of that night. Sometimes he thought it would be best

to draw his sword at once and rush upon the Calormenes: then next moment he thought it would be better to wait and see what new turn affairs might take. And now a new turn came.

"My Father," came a clear, ringing voice from the left of the crowd. Tirian knew at once that it was one of the Calormenes speaking, for in the Tisroc's army the common soldiers call the officers, "My Master," but the officers call their senior officers, "My Father." Jill and Eustace didn't know this but, after looking this way and that, they saw the speaker, for of course people at the sides of the crowd were easier to see than people in the middle where the glare of the fire made all beyond it look rather black. He was young and tall and slender, and even rather beautiful in the dark, haughty, Calormene way.

"My Father," he said to the Captain, "I also desire to go in."

"Peace, Emeth," said the Captain, "Who called thee to counsel? Does it become a boy to speak?"

"My Father," said Emeth. "Truly I am younger than thou, yet I also am of the blood of the Tarkaans even as thou art, and I also am the servant of Tash. Therefore...."

"Silence," said Rishda Tarkaan. "Am I not thy Captain? Thou has nothing to do with this Stable. It is for the Narnians."

"Nay, my Father," answered Emeth. "Thou hast said that their Aslan and our Tash are all one. And if that is the truth, then Tash himself is in yonder. And how then sayest thou that I have nothing to do with Him? for gladly would I die a thousand deaths if I might look once on the face of Tash."

"Thou art a fool and understandest nothing," said Rishda Tarkaan. "These be high matters."

Emeth's face grew sterner. "Is it then not true that Tash and Aslan are all one?" he asked. "Has the Ape lied to us?"

"Of course they're all one," said the Ape.

"Swear it, Ape," said Emeth.

"Oh dear!" whimpered Shift, "I wish you'd all stop bothering me. My head does ache. Yes, yes, I swear it."

"Then, My Father," said Emeth, "I am utterly determined to go in."

"Fool," began Rishda Tarkaan, but at once the Dwarfs began shouting: "Come along, Darkie. Why don't you let him in? Why do you let Narnians in and keep your own people out? What have you got in there that you don't want your own men to meet?"

Tirian and his friends could only see the back of Rishda Tarkaan, so they never knew what his face looked like as he shrugged his shoulders and said, “Bear witness all that I am guiltless of this young fool’s blood. Get thee in, rash boy, and make haste.”

Then, just as Ginger had done, Emeth came walking forward into the open strip of grass between the bonfire and the Stable. His eyes were shining, his face very solemn, his hand was on his sword-hilt, and he carried his head high. Jill felt like crying when she looked at his face. And Jewel whispered in the King’s ear, “By the Lion’s Mane, I almost love this young warrior, Calormene though he be. He is worthy of a better god than Tash.”

“I do wish we knew what is really inside there,” said Eustace.

Emeth opened the door and went in, into the black mouth of the Stable. He closed the door behind him. Only a few moments passed — but it seemed longer — before the door opened again. A figure in Calormene armour reeled out, fell on its back, and lay still: the door closed behind it. The Captain leaped towards it and bent down to stare at its face. He gave a start of surprise. Then he recovered himself and turned to the crowd, crying out:

“The rash boy has had his will. He has looked on Tash and is dead. Take warning, all of you.”

“We will, we will,” said the poor Beasts. But Tirian and his friends stared first at the dead Calormene and then at one another. For they, being so close, could see what the crowd, being further off and beyond the fire, could not see: this dead man was not Emeth. He was quite different: an older man, thicker and not so tall, with a big beard.

“Ho-ho-ho,” chuckled the Ape. “Any more? Any one else want to go in? Well, as you’re all shy, I’ll choose the next. You, you Boar! On you come. Drive him up, Calormenes. He *shall* see Tashlan face to face.”

“O-o-mpy,” grunted the Boar, rising heavily to his feet. “Come on, then. Try my tusks.”

When Tirian saw that brave Beast getting ready to fight for its life — and Calormene soldiers beginning to close in on it with their drawn scimitars — and no one going to its help — something seemed to burst inside him. He no longer cared if this was the best moment to interfere or not.

“Swords out,” he whispered to the others. “Arrow on string. Follow.”

Next moment the astonished Narnians saw seven figures leap forth in front of the Stable, four of them in shining mail. The King’s sword flashed

in the firelight as he waved it above his head and cried in a great voice:

“Here stand I, Tirian of Narnia, in Aslan’s name, to prove with my body that Tash is a foul fiend, the Ape, a manifold traitor, and these Calormenes, worthy of death. To my side, all true Narnians. Would you wait till your new masters have killed you all one by one?”

CHAPTER XI

The Pace Quickens

Quick as lightning, Rishda Tarkaan leaped back out of reach of the King's sword. He was no coward, and would have fought single-handed against Tirian and the Dwarf if need were. But he could not take on the Eagle and the Unicorn as well. He knew how Eagles can fly into your face and peck at your eyes and blind you with their wings. And he had heard from his father (who had met Narnians in battle) that no man, except with arrows or a long spear, can match a Unicorn, for it rears on its hind legs as it falls upon you and then you have its hoofs and its horn and its teeth to deal with all at once. So he rushed into the crowd and stood calling out:

"To me, to me, warriors of the Tisroc, may-he-live-for-ever. To me, all loyal Narnians, lest the wrath of Tashlan fall upon you!"

While this was happening two other things happened as well. The Ape had not realised his danger as quickly as the Tarkaan. For a second or so he remained squatting beside the fire staring at the newcomers. Then Tirian rushed upon the wretched creature, picked it up by the scruff of the neck, and dashed back to the Stable shouting, "Open the door!" Poggin opened it. "Go and drink your own medicine, Shift!" said Tirian and hurled the Ape through into the darkness. But as the Dwarf banged the door shut again, a blinding greenish-blue light shone out from the inside of the Stable, the earth shook, and there was a strange noise — a clucking and screaming as if it was the hoarse voice of some monstrous bird. The Beasts moaned and howled and called out "Tashlan! Hide us from him!" and many fell down, and many hid their faces in their wings or paws. No one except Farsight the Eagle, who has the best eyes of all living things, noticed the face of Rishda Tarkaan at that moment. And from what Farsight saw there he knew at once that Rishda was just as surprised, and nearly as frightened, as everyone else. "There goes one," thought Farsight, "who had called on gods he does not believe in. How will it be with him if they have really come?"

The third thing — which also happened at the same moment — was the only really beautiful thing that night. Every single Talking Dog in the whole meeting (there were fifteen of them) came bounding and barking joyously to the King's side. They were mostly great big dogs with thick shoulders

and heavy jaws. Their coming was like the breaking of a great wave on the seabeach: it nearly knocked you down. For though they were Talking Dogs they were just as doggy as they could be: and they all stood up and put their front paws on the shoulders of the humans and licked their faces, all saying at once: “Welcome! Welcome! We’ll help, we’ll help, help, help. Show us how to help, show us how, how. How-how-how?”

It was so lovely that it made you want to cry. This, at last, was the sort of thing they had been hoping for. And when, a moment later, several little animals (mice and moles and a squirrel or so) came pattering up, squealing with joy, and saying “See, see. We’re here,” and when, after that, the Bear and the Boar came too, Eustace began to feel that perhaps, after all, everything might be going to come right. But Tirian gazed round and saw how very few of the animals had moved.

“To me! to me!” he called. “Have you all turned cowards since I was your King?”

“We daren’t,” whimpered dozens of voices. “Tashlan would be angry. Shield us from Tashlan.”

“Where are all the Talking Horses?” asked Tirian.

“We’ve seen, we’ve seen,” squealed the Mice. “The Ape has made them work. They’re all tied — down at the bottom of the hill.”

“Then all you little ones,” said Tirian, “you nibblers and gnawers and nutcrackers, away with you as fast as you can scamper and see if the Horses are on our side. And if they are, get your teeth into the ropes and gnaw till the Horses are free, and bring them hither.”

“With a good will, Sire,” came the small voices, and with a whisk of tails those sharp-eyed and sharp-toothed folk were off. Tirian smiled for mere love as he saw them go. But it was already time to be thinking of other things. Rishda Tarkaan was giving his orders.

“Forward,” he said. “Take all of them alive if you can and hurl them into the Stable: or drive them into it. When they are all in we will put fire to it and make them an offering to the great god Tash.”

“Ha!” said Farsight to himself. “So that is how he hopes to win Tash’s pardon for his unbelief.”

The enemy line — about half of Rishda’s force — was now moving forward, and Tirian had barely time to give his orders.

“Out on the left, Jill, and try to shoot all you may before they reach us. Boar and Bear next to her. Poggin on my left, Eustace on my right. Hold the

right wing, Jewel. Stand by him, Puzzle, and use your hoofs. Hover and strike, Farsight. You Dogs, just behind us. Go in among them after the swordplay has begun. Aslan to our aid!”

Eustace stood with his heart beating terribly, hoping and hoping that he would be brave. He had never seen anything (though he had seen both a dragon and a sea-serpent) that made his blood run so cold as that line of dark-faced bright-eyed men. There were fifteen Calormenes, a Talking Bull of Narnia, Slinkey the Fox, and Wraggle the Satyr. Then he heard twang-and-zipp on his left and one Calormene fell: then twang-and-zipp again and the Satyr was down. “Oh, well done, daughter!” came Tirian’s voice; and then the enemy were upon them.

Eustace could never remember what happened in the next two minutes. It was all like a dream (the sort you have when your temperature is over 100) until he heard Rishda Tarkaan’s voice calling out from the distance:

“Retire. Back hither and re-form.”

Then Eustace came to his senses and saw the Calormenes scampering back to their friends. But not all of them. Two lay dead, pierced by Jewel’s horn, one by Tirian’s sword. The Fox lay dead at his own feet, and he wondered if it was he who had killed it. The Bull also was down, shot through the eye by an arrow from Jill and gashed in his side by the Boar’s tusk. But our side had its losses too. Three dogs were killed and a fourth was hobbling behind the line on three legs and whimpering. The Bear lay on the ground, moving feebly. Then it mumbled in its throaty voice, bewildered to the last, “I — I don’t —— understand,” laid its big head down on the grass as quietly as a child going to sleep, and never moved again.

In fact, the first attack had failed. Eustace didn’t seem able to be glad about it: he was so terribly thirsty and his arm ached so.

As the defeated Calormenes went back to their commander, the Dwarfs began jeering at them.

“Had enough, Darkies?” they yelled. “Don’t you like it? Why doesn’t your great Tarkaan go and fight himself instead of sending you to be killed? Poor Darkies!”

“Dwarfs,” cried Tirian. “Come here and use your swords, not your tongues. There is still time. Dwarfs of Narnia! You can fight well, I know. Come back to your allegiance.”

“Yah!” sneered the Dwarfs. “Not likely. You’re just as big humbugs as the other lot. We don’t want any Kings. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs. Boo!”

Then the Drum began: not a Dwarf drum this time, but a big bull’s hide Calormene drum. The children from the very first hated the sound. *Boom — boom — ba-ba-boom* it went. But they would have hated it far worse if they had known what it meant. Tirian did. It meant that there were other Calormene troops somewhere near and that Rishda Tarkaan was calling them to his aid. Tirian and Jewel looked at one another sadly. They had just begun to hope that they might win that night: but it would be all over with them if new enemies appeared.

Tirian gazed despairingly round. Several Narnians were standing with the Calormenes whether through treachery or in honest fear of “Tashlan.” Others were sitting still, staring, not likely to join either side. But there were fewer animals now: the crowd was much smaller. Clearly, several of them had just crept quietly away during the fighting.

Boom — boom — ba-ba-boom went the horrible drum. Then another sound began to mix with it. “Listen!” said Jewel: and then “Look!” said Farsight. A moment later there was no doubt what is was. With a thunder of hoofs, with tossing heads, widened nostrils, and waving manes, over a score of Talking Horses of Narnia came charging up the hill. The gnawers and nibblers had done their work.

Poggin the Dwarf and the children opened their mouths to cheer but that cheer never came. Suddenly the air was full of the sound of twanging bow-strings and hissing arrows. It was the Dwarfs who were shooting and — for a moment Jill could hardly believe her eyes — they were shooting the Horses. Dwarfs are deadly archers. Horse after horse rolled over. Not one of those noble Beasts ever reached the King.

“Little swine,” shrieked Eustace, dancing in his rage. “Dirty, filthy, treacherous little brutes.” Even Jewel said, “Shall I run after those Dwarfs, Sire, and spit ten of them on my horn at each plunge?” But Tirian, with his face as stern as stone, said, “Stand fast, Jewel. If you must weep, sweetheart (this was to Jill) turn your face aside and see you wet not your bowstring. And peace, Eustace. Do not scold, like a kitchen-girl. No warrior scolds. Courteous words or else hard knocks are his only language.”

But the Dwarfs jeered back at Eustace. “That was a surprise for you, little boy, eh? Thought we were on your side, did you? No fear. We don’t

want any Talking Horses. We don't want you to win any more than the other gang. You can't take *us* in. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs."

Rishda Tarkaan was still talking to his men, doubtless making arrangements for the next attack and probably wishing he had sent his whole force into the first. The drum boomed on. Then, to their horror, Tirian and his friends heard, far fainter as if from a long way off, an answering drum. Another body of Calormenes had heard Rishda's signal and were coming to support him. You would not have known from Tirian's face that he had now given up all hope.

"Listen," he whispered in a matter-of-fact voice, "we must attack now, before yonder miscreants are strengthened by their friends."

"Bethink you, Sire," said Poggin, "that here we have the good wooden wall of the Stable at our backs. If we advance, shall we not be encircled and get sword-points between our shoulders?"

"I would say as you do, Dwarf," said Tirian, "were it not their very plan to force us into the Stable. The further we are from its deadly door, the better."

"The King is right," said Farsight. "Away from this accursed Stable, and whatever goblin lives inside it, at all costs."

"Yes, do let's," said Eustace. "I'm coming to hate the very sight of it."

"Good," said Tirian. "Now look yonder to our left. You see a great rock that gleams white like marble in the firelight. First we will fall upon those Calormenes. You, maiden, shall move out on our left and shoot as fast as ever you may into their ranks: and you, Eagle, fly at their faces from the right. Meanwhile we others will be charging them. When we are so close, Jill, that you can no longer shoot at them for fear of striking us, go back to the white rock and wait. You others, keep your ears wide even in the fighting. We must put them to flight in a few minutes or else not at all, for we are fewer than they. As soon as I call *Back*, then rush to join Jill at the white rock, where we shall have protection behind us and can breathe awhile. Now, be off, Jill."

Feeling terribly alone, Jill ran out about twenty feet, put her right leg back and her left leg forward, and set an arrow to her string. She wished her hands were not shaking so. "That's a rotten shot!" she said as her first arrow sped towards the enemy and flew over their heads. But she had another on the string next moment: she knew that speed was what mattered. She saw something big and black, darting into the faces of the Calormenes. That was

Farsight. First one man, and then another, dropped his sword and put up both his hands to defend his eyes. Then one of her own arrows hit a man, and another hit a Narnian wolf, who had, it seemed, joined the enemy. But she had been shooting only for a few seconds when she had to stop. With a flash of swords and of the Boar's tusks and Jewel's horn, and with deep baying from the dogs, Tirian and his party were rushing on their enemies, like men in a hundred yards' race. Jill was astonished to see how unprepared the Calormenes seemed to be. She did not realise that this was the result of her work and the Eagle's. Very few troops can keep on looking steadily to the front if they are getting arrows in their faces from one side and being pecked by an eagle on the other.

"Oh well done. *Well* done!" shouted Jill. The King's party were cutting their way right into the enemy. The Unicorn was tossing men as you'd toss hay on a fork. Even Eustace seemed to Jill (who after all didn't know very much about swordsmanship) to be fighting brilliantly. The Dogs were at the Calormenes' throats. It was going to work! It was victory at last ——

With a horrible, cold shock Jill noticed a strange thing. Though Calormenes were falling at each Narnian sword-stroke, they never seemed to get any fewer. In fact, there were actually more of them now than when the fight began. There were more every second. They were running up from every side. They were new Calormenes. These ones had spears. There was such a crowd of them that she could hardly see her own friends. Then she heard Tirian's voice crying:

"Back! To the rock!"

The enemy had been reinforced. The drum had done its work.

CHAPTER XII

Through the Stable Door

Jill ought to have been back at the white rock already but she had quite forgotten that part of her orders the excitement of watching the fight. Now she remembered. She turned at once and ran to it, and arrived there barely a second before the others. It thus happened that all of them, for a moment, had their backs to the enemy. They all wheeled round the moment they had reached it. A terrible sight met their eyes.

A Calormene was running towards the Stable door carrying something that kicked and struggled. As he came between them and the fire they could see clearly both the shape of the man and the shape of what he carried. It was Eustace.

Tirian and the Unicorn rushed out to rescue him. But the Calormene was now far nearer to the door than they. Before they had covered half the distance he had flung Eustace in and shut the door on him. Half a dozen more Calormenes had run up behind him. They formed line on the open space before the Stable. There was no getting at it now.

Even then Jill remembered to keep her face turned aside, well away from her bow. “Even if I can’t stop blubbing, I *won’t* get my string wet,” she said.

“‘Ware arrows,” said Poggin suddenly.

Everyone ducked and pulled his helmet well over his nose. The Dogs crouched behind. But though a few arrows came their way, it soon became clear that they were not being shot at. Griffle and his Dwarfs were at their archery again. This time they were coolly shooting at the Calormenes.

“Keep it up, boys!” came Griffle’s voice. “All together. Carefully. We don’t want Darkies any more than we want Monkeys — or Lions — or Kings. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs.”

Whatever else you may say about Dwarfs, no one can say they aren’t brave. They could easily have got away to some safe place. They preferred to stay and kill as many of both sides as they could, except when both sides were kind enough to save them trouble by killing one another. They wanted Narnia for their own.

What perhaps they had not taken into account was that the Calormenes were mailclad and the Horses had had no protection. Also the Calormenes

had a leader. Rishda Tarkaan's voice cried out:

"Thirty of you keep watch on those fools by the white rock. The rest, after me, that we may teach these sons of earth a lesson."

Tirian and his friends, still panting from their fight and thankful for a few minutes' rest, stood and looked on while the Tarkaan led his men against the Dwarfs. It was a strange scene by now. The fire had sunk lower: the light it gave was now less and of a darker red. As far as one could see, the whole place of assembly was now empty except for the Dwarfs and the Calormenes. In that light one couldn't make out much of what was happening. It sounded as if the Dwarfs were putting up a good fight. Tirian could hear Griffle using dreadful language, and every now and then the Tarkaan calling "Take all you can alive! Take them alive!"

Whatever that fight may have been like, it did not last long. The noises of it died away. Then Jill saw the Tarkaan coming back to the stable: eleven men followed him, dragging eleven bound Dwarfs. (Whether the others had all been killed, or whether some of them had got away, was never known.)

"Throw them into the shrine of Tash," said Rishda Tarkaan.

And when the eleven Dwarfs, one after the other, had been flung or kicked into that dark doorway and the door had been shut again, he bowed low to the Stable and said:

"These also are for thy burnt offering, Lord Tash."

And all the Calormenes banged the flats of their swords on their shields and shouted, "Tash! Tash! The great god Tash! Inexorable Tash!" (There was no nonsense about "Tashlan" now.)

The little party by the white rock watched these doings and whispered to one another. They had found a trickle of water coming down the rock and all had drunk eagerly — Jill and Poggin and the King in their hands, while the four-footed ones lapped from the little pool which it had made at the foot of the stone. Such was their thirst that it seemed the most delicious drink they had ever had in their lives, and while they were drinking they were perfectly happy and could not think of anything else.

"I feel in my bones," said Poggin, "that we shall all, one by one, pass through that dark door before morning. I can think of a hundred deaths I would rather have died."

"It is indeed a grim door," said Tirian. "It is more like a mouth."

"Oh, can't we do *anything* to stop it?" said Jill in a shaken voice.

“Nay, fair friend,” said Jewel, nosing her gently. “It may be for us the door to Aslan’s country and we shall sup at his table tonight.”

Rishda Tarkaan turned his back on the Stable and walked slowly to a place in front of the white rock.

“Hearken,” he said. “If the Boar and the Dogs and the Unicorn will come over to me and put themselves in my mercy, their lives shall be spared. The Boar shall go to a cage in the Tisroc’s garden, the Dogs to the Tisroc’s kennels, and the Unicorn, when I have sawn his horn off, shall draw a cart. But the Eagle, the children, and he who was the King shall be offered to Tash this night.”

The only answer was growls.

“Get on, warriors,” said the Tarkaan. “Kill the beasts, but take the two-legged ones alive.”

And then the last battle of the last King of Narnia began.

What made it hopeless, even apart from the numbers of the enemy, was the spears. The Calormenes who had been with the Ape almost from the beginning had had no spears: that was because they had come into Narnia by ones and twos, pretending to be peaceful merchants, and of course they had carried no spears for a spear is not a thing you can hide. The new ones must have come in later, after the Ape was already strong and they could march openly. The spears made all the difference. With a long spear you can kill a boar before you are in reach of his tusks and a unicorn before you are in reach of his horn; if you are very quick and keep your head. And now the levelled spears were closing in on Tirian and his last friends. Next minute they were all fighting for their lives.

In a way it wasn’t quite so bad as you might think. When you are using every muscle to the full — ducking under a spear-point here, leaping over it there, lunging forward, drawing back, wheeling round — you haven’t much time to feel either frightened or sad. Tirian knew he could do nothing for the others now; they were all doomed together. He vaguely saw the Boar go down on one side of him, and Jewel fighting furiously on the other. Out of the corner of one eye he saw, but only just saw, a big Calormene pulling Jill away somewhere by her hair. But he hardly thought about any of these things. His only thought now was to sell his life as dearly as he could. The worst of it was that he couldn’t keep to the position in which he had started, under the white rock. A man who is fighting a dozen enemies at once must take his chances wherever he can; must dart in wherever he sees an enemy’s

breast or neck unguarded. In a very few strokes this may get you quite a distance from the spot where you began. Tirian soon found that he was getting further and further to the right, nearer to the Stable. He had a vague idea in his mind that there was some good reason for keeping away from it. But he couldn't now remember what the reason was. And anyway, he couldn't help it.

All at once everything came quite clear. He found he was fighting the Tarkaan himself. The bonfire (what was left of it) was straight in front. He was in fact fighting in the very doorway of the Stable, for it had been opened and two Calormenes were holding the door, ready to slam it shut the moment he was inside. He remembered everything now, and he realised that the enemy had been edging him to the Stable on purpose ever since the fight began. And while he was thinking this, he was still fighting the Tarkaan as hard as he could.

A new idea came into Tirian's head. He dropped his sword, darted forward, in under the sweep of the Tarkaan's scimitar, seized his enemy by the belt with both hands, and jumped back into the Stable, shouting:

"Come in and meet Tash yourself!"

There was a deafening noise. As when the Ape had been flung in, the earth shook and there was a blinding light.

The Calormene soldiers outside screamed, "Tash, Tash!" and banged the door. If Tash wanted their own Captain, Tash must have him. They, at any rate, did not want to meet Tash.

For a moment or two Tirian did not know where he was or even who he was. Then he steadied himself, blinked, and looked around. It was not dark inside the Stable, as he had expected. He was in strong light: that was why he was blinking.

He turned to look at Rishda Tarkaan, but Rishda was not looking at him. Rishda gave a great wail and pointed; then he put his hands before his face and fell flat, face downwards on the ground. Tirian looked in the direction where the Tarkaan had pointed. And then he understood.

A terrible figure was coming towards them. It was far smaller than the shape they had seen from the Tower, though still much bigger than a man, and it was the same. It had a vulture's head and four arms. Its beak was open and its eyes blazed. A croaking voice came from its beak.

"Thou hast called me into Narnia, Rishda Tarkaan. Here I am. What hast thou to say?"

But the Tarkaan neither lifted his face from the ground nor said a word. He was shaking like a man with a bad hiccup. He was brave enough in battle: but half his courage had left him earlier that night when he first began to suspect that there might be a real Tash. The rest of it had left him now.

With a sudden jerk — like a hen stooping to pick up a worm — Tash pounced on the miserable Rishda and tucked him under the upper of his two left arms. Then Tash turned his head sidewise to fix Tirian with one of his terrible eyes: for of course, having a bird's head, he couldn't look at you straight.

But immediately, from behind Tash, strong and calm as the summer sea, a voice said:

"Begone, Monster, and take your lawful prey to your own place: in the name of Aslan and Aslan's great Father, the Emperor-over-sea."

The hideous creature vanished, with the Tarkaan still under its arm. And Tirian turned to see who had spoken. And what he saw then set his heart beating as it had never beaten in any fight.

Seven Kings and Queens stood before him, all with crowns on their heads and all in glittering clothes, but the Kings wore fine mail as well and had their swords drawn in their hands. Tirian bowed courteously and was about to speak when the youngest of the Queens laughed.

He stared hard at her face, and then gasped with amazement, for he knew her. It was Jill: but not Jill as he had last seen her with her face all dirt and tears and an old drill dress half slipping off one shoulder. Now she looked cool and fresh, as fresh as if she had just come from bathing. And at first he thought she looked older, but then didn't, and he could never make up his mind on that point. And then he saw that the youngest of the Kings was Eustace: but he also was changed as Jill was changed.

Tirian suddenly felt awkward about coming among these people with the blood and dust and sweat of a battle still on him. Next moment he realised that he was not in that state at all. He was fresh and cool and clean, and dressed in such clothes as he would have worn for a great feast at Cair Paravel. (But in Narnia your good clothes were never your uncomfortable ones. They knew how to make things that felt beautiful as well as looking beautiful in Narnia: and there was no such thing as starch or flannel or elastic to be found from one end of the country to the other.)

“Sire,” said Jill, coming forward and making a beautiful curtsey, “let me make you known to Peter the High King over all Kings in Narnia.”

Tirian had no need to ask which was the High King, for he remembered his face (though here it was far nobler) from his dream. He stepped forward, sank on one knee and kissed Peter’s hand.

“High King,” he said. “You are welcome to me.”

And the High King raised him and kissed him on both cheeks as a High King should. Then he led him to the eldest of the Queens — but even she was not old, and there were no grey hairs on her head and no wrinkles on her cheek — and said, “Sir, this is that Lady Polly who came into Narnia on the First Day, when Aslan made the trees grow and the Beasts talk.” He brought him next to a man whose golden beard flowed over his breast and whose face was full of wisdom. “And this is my brother, king Edmund: and this my sister, the Queen Lucy.”

“Sir,” said Tirian, when he had greeted all these. “If I have read the chronicles aright, there should be another. Has not your Majesty two sisters? Where is Queen Susan?”

“My sister Susan,” answered Peter shortly and gravely, “is no longer a friend of Narnia.”

“Yes,” said Eustace, “and whenever you’ve tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about Narnia, she says ‘What wonderful memories you have! Fancy your still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children.’”

“Oh Susan!” said Jill, “she’s interested in nothing now-a-days except nylons and lipstick and invitations. She always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up.”

“Grown-up, indeed,” said the Lady Polly. “I wish she *would* grow up. She wasted all her school time wanting to be the age she is now, and she’ll waste all the rest of her life trying to stay that age. Her whole idea is to race on to the silliest time of one’s life as quick as she can and then stop there as long as she can.”

“Well, don’t let’s talk about that now,” said Peter. “Look! Here are lovely fruit trees. Let us taste them.”

And then, for the first time, Tirian looked about him and realised how very queer this adventure was.

CHAPTER XIII

How the Dwarfs Refused to be Taken In

Tirian had thought — or he would have thought if he had had time to think at all — that they were inside a little thatched stable, about twelve feet long and six feet wide. In reality they stood on grass, the deep blue sky was overhead, and the air which blew gently on their faces was that of a day in early summer. Not far away from them rose a grove of trees, thickly leaved, but under every leaf there peeped out the gold or faint yellow or purple or glowing red of fruits such as no one has seen in our world. The fruit made Tirian feel that it must be autumn: but there was something in the feel of the air that told him it could not be later than June. They all moved towards the trees.

Everyone raised his hand to pick the fruit he best liked the look of, and then everyone paused for a second. This fruit was so beautiful that each felt, "It can't be meant for me ... surely we're not allowed to pluck it."

"It's all right," said Peter. "I know what we're all thinking. But I'm sure, quite sure, we needn't. I've a feeling we've got to the country where everything is allowed."

"Here goes, then!" said Eustace. And they all began to eat.

What was the fruit like? Unfortunately, no one can describe a taste. All I can say is that, compared with those fruits, the freshest grapefruit you've ever eaten was dull, and the juiciest orange was dry, and the most melting pear was hard and woody, and the sweetest wild strawberry was sour. And there were no seeds or stones, and no wasps. If you had once eaten that fruit, all the nicest things in this world would taste like medicines after it. But I can't describe it. You can't find out what it is like unless you can get to that country and taste for yourself.

When they had eaten enough, Eustace said to King Peter, "You haven't yet told us how you got here. You were just going to, when King Tirian turned up."

"There's not much to tell," said Peter. "Edmund and I were standing on the platform and we saw your train coming in. I remember thinking it was taking the bend far too fast. And I remember thinking how funny it was that

our people were probably in the same train though Lucy didn't know about it — —"

"Your people, High King?" said Tirian.

"I mean my Father and Mother — Edmund's and Lucy's and mine."

"Why were they?" asked Jill. "You don't mean to say *they* know about Narnia?"

"Oh no, it had nothing to do with Narnia. They were on their way to Bristol. I'd only heard they were going that morning. But Edmund said they'd be bound to be going by that train." (Edmund was the sort of person who knows about railways).

"And what happened then?" said Jill.

"Well, it's not very easy to describe, is it, Edmund?" said the High King.

"Not very," said Edmund. "It wasn't at all like that other time when we were pulled out of our own world by Magic. There was a frightful roar and something hit me with a bang, but it didn't hurt. And I felt not so much scared as — well, excited. Oh — and this is one queer thing. I'd had a rather sore knee, from a hack at rugger. I noticed it had suddenly gone. And I felt very light. And then — here we were."

"It was much the same for us in the railway carriage," said the Lord Digory, wiping the last traces of the fruit from his golden beard. "Only I think you and I, Polly, chiefly felt that we'd been unstiffened. You youngsters won't understand. But we stopped feeling old."

"Youngsters, indeed!" said Jill. "I don't believe you two really are much older than we are here."

"Well if we aren't, we have been," said the Lady Polly.

"And what has been happening since you got here?" asked Eustace.

"Well," said Peter, "for a long time (at least I suppose it was a long time) nothing happened. Then the door opened — —"

"The door?" said Tirian.

"Yes," said Peter, "The door you came in — or came out — by. Have you forgotten?"

"But where is it?"

"Look," said Peter and pointed.

Tirian looked and saw the queerest and most ridiculous thing you can imagine. Only a few yards away, clear to be seen in the sunlight, there stood up a rough wooden door and, round it, the framework of the doorway: nothing else, no walls, no roof. He walked towards it, bewildered, and the

others followed, watching to see what he would do. He walked round to the other side of the door. But it looked just the same from the other side: he was still in the open air, on a summer morning. The door was simply standing up by itself as if it had grown there like a tree.

"Fair Sir," said Tirian to the High King, "this is a great marvel."

"It is the door you came through with that Calormene five minutes ago," said Peter smiling.

"But did I not come in out of the wood into the Stable? Whereas this seems to be a door leading from nowhere to nowhere."

"It looks like that if you walk *round* it," said Peter. "But put your eye to that place where there is a crack between two of the planks and look *through*."

Tirian put his eye to the hole. At first he could see nothing but blackness. Then, as his eyes grew used to it, he saw the dull red glow of a bonfire that was nearly going out, and above that, in a black sky, stars. Then he could see dark figures moving about or standing between him and the fire: he could hear them talking and their voices were like those of Calormenes. So he knew that he was looking out through the Stable door into the darkness of Lantern Waste where he had fought his last battle. The men were discussing whether to go in and look for Rishda Tarkaan (but none of them wanted to do that) or to set fire to the Stable.

He looked round again and could hardly believe his eyes. There was the blue sky overhead, and grassy country spreading as far as he could see in every direction, and his new friends all round him, laughing.

"It seems, then," said Tirian, smiling himself, "that the Stable seen from within and the Stable seen from without are two different places."

"Yes," said the Lord Digory. "Its inside is bigger than its outside."

"Yes," said Queen Lucy. "In our world too, a Stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world." It was the first time she had spoken, and from the thrill in her voice Tirian now knew why. She was drinking everything in more deeply than the others. She had been too happy to speak. He wanted to hear her speak again, so he said:

"Of your courtesy, Madam, tell on. Tell me your whole adventure."

"After the shock and the noise," said Lucy, "we found ourselves here. And we wondered at the door, as you did. Then the door opened for the first time (we saw darkness through the doorway when it did) and there came through a big man with a naked sword. We saw by his arms that he was a

Calormene. He took his stand beside the door with his sword raised, resting on his shoulder, ready to cut down anyone who came through. We went to him and spoke to him, but we thought he could neither see nor hear us. And he never looked round on the sky and the sunlight and the grass: I think he couldn't see them either. So then we waited a long time. Then we heard the bolt being drawn on the other side of the door. But the man didn't get ready to strike with his sword till he could see who was coming. So we supposed he had been told to strike some and spare others. But at the very moment when the door opened, all of a sudden Tash was there, on this side of the door; none of us saw where he came from. And through the door there came a big Cat. It gave one look at Tash and ran for its life: just in time, for he pounced at it and the door hit his beak as it was shut. The man could see Tash. He turned very pale and bowed down before the Monster: but it vanished.

"Then we waited a long time again. At last the door opened for the third time and there came in a young Calormene. I liked him. The sentinel at the door started, and looked very surprised, when he saw him. I think he'd been expecting someone quite different — —"

"I see it all now," said Eustace (he had the bad habit of interrupting stories). "The Cat was to go in first and the sentry had orders to do him no harm. Then the Cat was to come out and say he's seen their beastly Tashlan and *pretend* to be frightened to scare the other Animals. But what Shift never guessed was that the real Tash would turn up; so Ginger came out really frightened. And after that, Shift would send in anyone he wanted to get rid of and the sentry would kill them. And — —"

"Friend," said Tirian softly, "you hinder the lady in her tale."

"Well," said Lucy, "the sentry was surprised. That gave the other man just time to get on guard. They had a fight. He killed the sentry and flung him outside the door. Then he came walking slowly forward to where we were. He could see us, and everything else. We tried to talk to him but he was rather like a man in a trance. He kept on saying, 'Tash, Tash, where is Tash? I go to Tash.' So we gave it up and he went away somewhere — over there. I liked him. And after that ... ugh!" Lucy made a face.

"After that," said Edmund, "someone flung a monkey through the door. And Tash was there again. My sister is so tender-hearted she doesn't like to tell you that Tash made one peck and the Monkey was gone!"

“Serves him right!” said Eustace. “All the same, I hope he’ll disagree with Tash too.”

“And after that,” said Edmund, “came about a dozen Dwarfs: and then Jill, and Eustace, and last of all yourself.”

“I hope Tash ate the Dwarfs too,” said Eustace. “Little swine.”

“No, he didn’t,” said Lucy. “And don’t be horrid. They’re still here. In fact you can see them from here. And I’ve tried and tried to make friends with them but it’s no use.”

“*Friends* with them!” cried Eustace. “If you knew how those Dwarfs have been behaving!”

“Oh stop it, Eustace,” said Lucy. “Do come and see them. King Tirian, perhaps you could do something with them.”

“I can feel no great love for Dwarfs to-day,” said Tirian. “Yet at your asking, Lady, I would do a greater thing than this.”

Lucy led the way and soon they could all see the Dwarfs. They had a very odd look. They weren’t strolling about or enjoying themselves (although the cords with which they had been tied seemed to have vanished) nor were they lying down and having a rest. They were sitting very close together in a little circle facing one another. They never looked round or took any notice of the humans till Lucy and Tirian were almost near enough to touch them. Then the Dwarfs all cocked their heads as if they couldn’t see any one but were listening hard and trying to guess by the sound what was happening.

“Look out!” said one of them in a surly voice. “Mind where you’re going. Don’t walk into our faces!”

“All right!” said Eustace indignantly. “We’re not blind. We’ve got eyes in our heads.”

“They must be darn good ones if you can see in here,” said the same Dwarf whose name was Diggle.

“In where?” asked Edmund.

“Why you bone-head, in *here* of course,” said Diggle. “In this pitch-black, poky, smelly little hole of a stable.”

“Are you blind?” said Tirian.

“Ain’t we all blind in the dark!” said Diggle.

“But it isn’t dark, you poor stupid Dwarfs,” said Lucy. “Can’t you see? Look up! Look round! Can’t you see the sky and the trees and the flowers? Can’t you see *me*?”

“How in the name of all Humbug can I see what ain’t there? And how can I see you any more than you can see me in this pitch darkness?”

“But I *can* see you,” said Lucy. “I’ll prove I can see you. You’ve got a pipe in your mouth.”

“Anyone that knows the smell of baccy could tell that,” said Diggle.

“Oh the poor things! This is dreadful,” said Lucy. Then she had an idea. She stooped and picked some wild violets. “Listen, Dwarf,” she said. “Even if your eyes are wrong, perhaps your nose is all right: can you smell *that*.” She leaned across and held the fresh, damp flowers to Diggle’s ugly nose. But she had to jump back quickly in order to avoid a blow from his hard little fist.

“None of that!” he shouted. “How dare you! What do you mean by shoving a lot of filthy stable-litter in my face? There was a thistle in it too. It’s like your sauce! And who are you anyway?”

“Earth-man,” said Tirian, “she is the Queen Lucy, sent hither by Aslan out of the deep past. And it is for her sake alone that I, Tirian, your lawful King, do not cut all your heads from your shoulders, proved and twice-proved traitors that you are.”

“Well if that doesn’t beat everything!” exclaimed Diggle. “How *can* you go on talking all that rot? Your wonderful Lion didn’t come and help you, did he? Thought not. And now — even now — when you’ve been beaten and shoved into this black hole, just the same as the rest of us, you’re still at your old game. Starting a new lie! Trying to make us believe we’re none of us shut up, and it ain’t dark, and heaven knows what.”

“There is no black hole, save in your own fancy, fool,” cried Tirian. “Come *out of* it.” And, leaning forward, he caught Diggle by the belt and the hood and swung him right out of the circle of Dwarfs. But the moment Tirian put him down, Diggle darted back to his place among the others, rubbing his nose and howling:

“Ow! Ow! What d’you do that for! Banging my face against the wall. You’ve nearly broken my nose.”

“Oh dear!” said Lucy “What *are* we to do for them?”

“Let ’em alone,” said Eustace: but as he spoke the earth trembled. The sweet air grew suddenly sweeter. A brightness flashed behind them. All turned. Tirian turned last because he was afraid. There stood his heart’s desire, huge and real, the golden Lion, Aslan himself, and already the others were kneeling in a circle round his forepaws and burying their hands and

faces in his mane as he stooped his great head to touch them with his tongue. Then he fixed his eyes upon Tirian, and Tirian came near, trembling, and flung himself at the Lion's feet, and the Lion kissed him and said, "Well done, last of the Kings of Narnia who stood firm at the darkest hour."

"Aslan," said Lucy through her tears, "could you — will you — do something for these poor Dwarfs?"

"Dearest," said Aslan, "I will show you both what I can, and what I cannot, do." He came close to the Dwarfs and gave a low growl: low, but it set all the air shaking. But the Dwarfs said to one another, "Hear that? That's the gang at the other end of the Stable. Trying to frighten us. They do it with a machine of some kind. Don't take any notice. They won't take *us* in again!"

Aslan raised his head and shook his mane. Instantly a glorious feast appeared on the Dwarfs' knees: pies and tongues and pigeons and trifles and ices, and each Dwarf had a goblet of good wine in his right hand. But it wasn't much use. They began eating and drinking greedily enough, but it was clear that they couldn't taste it properly. They thought they were eating and drinking only the sort of things you might find in a Stable. One said he was trying to eat hay and another said he had got a bit of an old turnip and a third said he'd found a raw cabbage leaf. And they raised golden goblets of rich red wine to their lips and said "Ugh! Fancy drinking dirty water out of a trough that a donkey's been at! Never thought we'd come to this." But very soon every Dwarf began suspecting that every other Dwarf had found something nicer than he had, and they started grabbing and snatching, and went on to quarrelling, till in a few minutes there was a free fight and all the good food was smeared on their faces and clothes or trodden under foot. But when at last they sat down to nurse their black eyes and their bleeding noses, they all said:

"Well, at any rate there's no Humbug here. We haven't let anyone take us in. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs."

"You see," said Aslan. "They will not let us help them. They have chosen cunning instead of belief. Their prison is only in their own minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in that they can not be taken out. But come, children. I have other work to do."

He went to the Door and they all followed him. He raised his head and roared "Now it is time!" then louder "Time!"; then so loud that it could

have shaken the stars, “TIME.” The Door flew open.

CHAPTER XIV

Night Falls on Narnia

They all stood beside Aslan, on his right side, and looked through the open doorway.

The bonfire had gone out. On the earth all was blackness: in fact you could not have told that you were looking into a wood, if you had not seen where the dark shapes of the trees ended and the stars began. But when Aslan had roared yet again, out on their left they saw another black shape. That is, they saw another patch where there were no stars: and the patch rose up higher and higher and became the shape of a man, the hugest of all giants. They all knew Narnia well enough to work out where he must be standing. He must be on the high moorlands that stretch away to the North beyond the River Shribble. Then Jill and Eustace remembered how once long ago, in the deep caves beneath those moors, they had seen a great giant asleep and been told that his name was Father Time, and that he would wake on the day the world ended.

"Yes," said Aslan, though they had not spoken. "While he lay dreaming his name was Time. Now that he is awake he will have a new one."

Then the great giant raised a horn to his mouth. They could see this by the change of the black shape he made against the stars. After that — quite a bit later, because sound travels so slowly — they heard the sound of the horn: high and terrible, yet of a strange, deadly beauty.

Immediately the sky became full of shooting stars. Even one shooting star is a fine thing to see; but these were dozens, and then scores, and then hundreds, till it was like silver rain: and it went on and on. And when it had gone on for some while, one or two of them began to think that there was another dark shape against the sky as well as the giant's. It was in a different place, right overhead, up in the very roof of the sky as you might call it. "Perhaps it is a cloud," thought Edmund. At any rate, there were no stars there: just blackness. But all around, the downpour of stars went on. And then the starless patch began to grow, spreading further and further out from the centre of the sky. And presently a quarter of the whole sky was black, and then a half, and at last the rain of shooting stars was going on only low down near the horizon.

With a thrill of wonder (and there was some terror in it too) they all suddenly realized what was happening. The spreading blackness was not a cloud at all: it was simply emptiness. The black part of the sky was the part in which there were no stars left. All the stars were falling: Aslan had called them home.

The last few seconds before the rain of stars had quite ended were very exciting. Stars began falling all round them. But stars in that world are not the great flaming globes they are in ours. They are people (Edmund and Lucy had once met one). So now they found showers of glittering people, all with long hair like burning silver and spears like white-hot metal, rushing down to them out of the black air, swifter than falling stones. They made a hissing noise as they landed and burnt the grass. And all these stars glided past them and stood somewhere behind, a little to the right.

This was a great advantage, because otherwise, now that there were no stars in the sky, everything would have been completely dark and you could have seen nothing. As it was, the crowd of stars behind them cast a fierce, white light over their shoulders. They could see mile upon mile of Narnian woods spread out before them, looking as if they were flood-lit. Every bush and almost every blade of grass had its black shadow behind it. The edge of every leaf stood out so sharp that you'd think you could cut your finger on it.

On the grass before them lay their own shadows. But the great thing was Aslan's shadow. It streamed away to their left, enormous and very terrible. And all this was under a sky that would now be starless for ever.

The light from behind them (and a little to their right) was so strong that it lit up even the slopes of the Northern Moors. Something was moving there. Enormous animals were crawling and sliding down into Narnia: great dragons and giant lizards and featherless birds with wings like bat's wings. They disappeared into the woods and for a few minutes there was silence. Then there came — at first from very far off — sounds of wailing and then, from every direction, a rustling and a pattering and a sound of wings. It came nearer and nearer. Soon one could distinguish the scamper of little feet from the padding of big paws, and the clack-clack of light little hoofs from the thunder of great ones. And then one could see thousands of pairs of eyes gleaming. And at last, out of the shadow of the trees, racing up the hill for dear life, by thousands and by millions, came all kinds of creatures — Talking Beasts, Dwarfs, Satyrs, Fauns, Giants, Calormenes, men from

Archenland, Monopods, and strange unearthly things from the remote islands or the unknown Western lands. And all these ran up to the doorway where Aslan stood.

This part of the adventure was the only one which seemed rather like a dream at the time and rather hard to remember properly afterwards. Especially, one couldn't say how long it had taken. Sometimes it seemed to have lasted only a few minutes, but at others it felt as if it might have gone on for years. Obviously, unless either the Door had grown very much larger or the creatures had suddenly grown as small as gnats, a crowd like that couldn't ever have tried to get through it. But no one thought about that sort of thing at the time.

The creatures came rushing on, their eyes brighter and brighter as they drew nearer and nearer to the standing Stars. But as they came right up to Aslan one or other of two things happened to each of them. They all looked straight in his face; I don't think they had any choice about that. And when some looked, the expression of their faces changed terribly — it was fear and hatred: except that, on the faces of Talking Beasts, the fear and hatred lasted only for a fraction of a second. You could see that they suddenly ceased to be *Talking* Beasts. They were just ordinary animals. And all the creatures who looked at Aslan in that way swerved to their right, his left, and disappeared into his huge black shadow, which (as you have heard) streamed away to the left of the doorway. The children never saw them again. I don't know what became of them. But the others looked in the face of Aslan and loved him, though some of them were very frightened at the same time. And all these came in at the Door, in on Aslan's right. There were some queer specimens among them. Eustace even recognised one of those very Dwarfs who had helped to shoot the Horses. But he had no time to wonder about that sort of thing (and anyway it was no business of his) for a great joy put everything else out of his head. Among the happy creatures who now came crowding round Tirian and his friends were all those whom they had thought dead. There was Roonwit the Centaur and Jewel the Unicorn, and the good Boar and the good Bear and Farsight the Eagle, and the dear Dogs and the Horses, and Poggin the Dwarf.

"Further in and higher up!" cried Roonwit and thundered away in a gallop to the West. And though they did not understand him, the words somehow set them tingling all over. The Boar grunted at them cheerfully. The Bear was just going to mutter that he still didn't understand, when he

caught sight of the fruit trees behind them. He waddled to those trees as fast as he could and there, no doubt, found something he understood very well. But the Dogs remained, wagging their tails and Poggin remained, shaking hands with everyone and grinning all over his honest face. And Jewel leaned his snowy white head over the King's shoulder and the King whispered in Jewel's ear. Then everyone turned his attention again to what could be seen through the Doorway.

The Dragons and Giant Lizards now had Narnia to themselves. They went to and fro tearing up the trees by the roots and crunching them up as if they were sticks of rhubarb. Minute by minute the forests disappeared. The whole country became bare and you could see all sorts of things about its shape — all the little humps and hollows — which you had never noticed before. The grass died. Soon Tirian found that he was looking at a world of bare rock and earth. You could hardly believe that anything had ever lived there. The monsters themselves grew old and lay down and died. Their flesh shrivelled up and the bones appeared: soon they were only huge skeletons that lay here and there on the dead rock, looking as if they had died thousands of years ago. For a long time everything was still.

At last something white — long, level line of whiteness that gleamed in the light of the standing stars — came moving towards them from the eastern end of the world. A widespread noise broke the silence: first a murmur, then a rumble, then a roar. And now they could see what it was that was coming, and how fast it came. It was a foaming wall of water. The sea was rising. In that treeless world you could see it very well. You could see all the rivers getting wider and the lakes getting larger, and separate lakes joining into one, and valleys turning into new lakes, and hills turning into islands, and then those islands vanishing. And the high moors to their left and the higher mountains to their right crumbled and slipped down with a roar and a splash into the mounting water; and the water came swirling up to the very threshold of the Doorway (but never passed it) so that the foam splashed about Aslan's forefeet. All now was level water from where they stood to where the water met the sky.

And out there it began to grow light. A streak of dreary and disastrous dawn spread along the horizon, and widened and grew brighter, till in the end they hardly noticed the light of the stars who stood behind them. At last the sun came up. When it did, the Lord Digory and the Lady Polly looked at one another and gave a little nod: those two, in a different world, had once

seen a dying sun, and so they knew at once that this sun also was dying. It was three times — twenty times — as big as it ought to be, and very dark red. As its rays fell upon the great Time-giant, he turned red too: and in the reflection of that sun the whole waste of shoreless waters looked like blood.

Then the Moon came up, quite in her wrong position, very close to the sun, and she also looked red. And at the sight of her the sun began shooting out great flames, like whiskers or snakes of crimson fire, towards her. It is as if he were an octopus trying to draw her to himself in his tentacles. And perhaps he did draw her. At any rate she came to him, slowly at first, but then more and more quickly, till at last his long flames licked round her and the two ran together and became one huge ball like a burning coal. Great lumps of fire came dropping out of it into the sea and clouds of steam rose up.

Then Aslan said, “Now make an end.”

The giant threw his horn into the sea. Then he stretched out one arm — very black it looked, and thousands of miles long — across the sky till his hand reached the Sun. He took the Sun and squeezed it in his hand as you would squeeze an orange. And instantly there was total darkness.

Everyone except Aslan jumped back from the ice-cold air which now blew through the Doorway. Its edges were already covered with icicles.

“Peter, High King of Narnia,” said Aslan. “Shut the Door.”

Peter, shivering with cold, leaned out into the darkness and pulled the Door to. It scraped over ice as he pulled it. Then, rather clumsily (for even in that moment his hands had gone numb and blue) he took out a golden key and locked it.

They had seen strange things enough through that Doonvay. But it was stranger than any of them to look round and find themselves in warm daylight, the blue sky above them, flowers at their feet, and laughter in Aslan’s eyes.

He turned swiftly round, crouched lower, lashed himself with his tail and shot away like a golden arrow.

“Come further in! Come further up!” he shouted over his shoulder. But who could keep up with him at that pace? They set out walking westward to follow him.

“So,” said Peter, “Night falls on Narnia. What, Lucy! You’re not *crying*? With Aslan ahead, and all of us here?”

“Don’t try to stop me, Peter,” said Lucy, “I am sure Aslan would not. I am sure it is not wrong to mourn for Narnia. Think of all that lies dead and frozen behind that door.”

“Yes and I *did* hope,” said Jill, “that it might go on for ever. I knew *our* world couldn’t. I did think Narnia might.”

“I saw it begin,” said the Lord Digory. “I did not think I would live to see it die.”

“Sirs,” said Tirian. “The ladies do well to weep. See I do so myself. I have seen my mother’s death. What world but Narnia have I ever known? It were no virtue, but great discourtesy, if we did not mourn.”

They walked away from the Door and away from the Dwarfs who still sat crowded together in their imaginary Stable. And as they went they talked to one another about old wars and old peace and ancient Kings and all the glories of Narnia.

The Dogs were still with them. They joined in the conversation but not very much because they were too busy racing on ahead and racing back and rushing off to sniff at smells in the grass till they made themselves sneeze. Suddenly they picked up a scent which seemed to excite them very much. They all started arguing about it— “Yes it is — No it isn’t — That’s just what I said — anyone can smell what *that* is — Take your great nose out of the way and let someone else smell.”

“What is it, cousins?” said Peter.

“A Calormene, Sire,” said Several Dogs at once.

“Lead on to him, then,” said Peter. “Whether he meets us in peace or war, he shall be welcome.”

The Dogs darted on ahead and came back a moment later, running as if their lives depended on it, and barking loudly to say that it really was a Calormene. (Talking Dogs, just like the common ones, behave as if they thought whatever they are doing at the moment, immensely important.)

The others followed where the Dogs led them and found a young Calormene sitting under a chestnut tree beside a clear stream of water. It was Emeth. He rose at once and bowed gravely.

“Sir,” he said to Peter, “I know not whether you are my friend or my foe, but I should count it my honour to have you for either. Has not one of the poets said that a noble friend is the best gift and a noble enemy the next best?”

“Sir,” said Peter, “I do not know that there need be any war between you and us.”

“Do tell us who you are and what’s happened to you,” said Jill.

“If there’s going to be a story, let’s all have a drink and sit down,” barked the Dogs. “We’re quite blown.”

“Well of course you will be, if you keep tearing about the way you have done,” said Eustace.

So the humans sat down on the grass. And when the Dogs had all had a very noisy drink out of the stream they all sat down, bolt upright, panting, with their tongues hanging out of their heads a little on one side, to hear the story. But Jewel remained standing, polishing his horn against his side.

CHAPTER XV

Further Up and Further In

"Know, O Warlike Kings," said Emeth, "and you, O Ladies, whose beauty illuminates the universe, that I am Emeth, the seventh son of Harpa Tarkaan of the city of Tehishbaan, Westward beyond the desert. I came lately into Narnia with nine and twenty others under the command of Rishda Tarkaan. Now when I first heard that we should march upon Narnia, I rejoiced; for I had heard many things of your Land and desired greatly to meet you in battle. But when I found that we were to go in disguised as merchants (which is a shameful dress for a warrior and the son of a Tarkaan) and to work by lies and trickery, then my joy departed from me. And most of all when I found we must wait upon a monkey, and when it began to be said that Tash and Aslan were one, then the world became dark in my eyes. For always since I was a boy, I have served Tash and my great desire was to know more of him and, if it might be, to look upon his face. But the name of Aslan was hateful to me.

"And, as you have seen, we were called together outside the straw-roofed hovel, night after night, and the fire was kindled, and the Ape brought forth out of the hovel something upon four legs that I could not well see. And the people and the Beasts bowed down and did honour to it. But I thought, the Tarkaan is deceived by the Ape: for this thing that comes out of the stable is neither Tash nor any other god. But when I watched the Tarkaan's face, and marked every word that he said to the Monkey, then I changed my mind: for I saw that the Tarkaan did not believe in it himself. And then I understood that he did not believe in Tash at all: for if he had, how could he dare to mock him?

"When I understood this, a great rage fell upon me and I wondered that the true Tash did not strike down both the Monkey and the Tarkaan with fire from heaven. Nevertheless I hid my anger and held my tongue and waited to see how it would end. But last night, as some of you know, the Monkey brought forth not the yellow thing, but said that all who desired to look upon Tashlan — for so they mixed the two words to pretend that they were all one — must pass one by one into the hovel. And I said to myself, Doubtless this is some other deception. But when the Cat had gone in and

had come out again in a madness of terror, then I said to myself, ‘Surely the true Tash, whom they called on without knowledge or belief, has now come among us, and will avenge himself.’ And though my heart was turned into water inside me because of the greatness and terror of Tash, yet my desire was stronger than my fear, and I put force upon my knees to stay them from trembling, and on my teeth that they should not chatter, and resolved to look upon the face of Tash, though he should slay me. So I offered myself to go into the hovel; and the Tarkaan, though unwillingly, let me go.

“As soon as I had gone through the door, the first wonder was that I found myself in this great sunlight (as we all are now) though the inside of the hovel had looked dark from outside. But I had no time to marvel at this, for immediately I was forced to fight for my head against one of our own men. As soon as I saw him, I understood that the Monkey and the Tarkaan had set him there to slay any who came in if he were not in their secrets: so that this man also was a liar and a mocker and no true servant of Tash. I had the better will to fight him; and having slain the villain, I cast him out behind me through the door.

“Then I looked about me and saw the sky and the wide lands and smelled the sweetness. And I said, By the Gods, this is a pleasant place: it may be that I am come into the country of Tash. And I began to journey into the strange country and to seek him.

“So I went over much grass and many flowers and among all kinds of wholesome and delectable trees till lo! in a narrow place between two rocks there came to meet me a great Lion. The speed of him was like the ostrich, and his size was an elephant’s; his hair was like pure gold and the brightness of his eyes, like gold that is liquid in the furnace. He was more terrible than the Flaming Mountain of Lagour, and in beauty he surpassed all that is in the world, even as the rose in bloom surpasses the dust of the desert. Then I fell at his feet and thought, Surely this is the hour of death, for the Lion (who is worthy of all honour) will know that I have served Tash all my days and not him. Nevertheless, it is better to see the Lion and die than to be Tisroc of the world and live and not to have seen him. But the Glorious One bent down his golden head and touched my forehead with his tongue and said, Son, thou art welcome. But I said, Alas, Lord, I am no son of Thine but the servant of Tash. He answered, Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me. Then by reason of my great desire for wisdom and understanding, I overcame my fear and

questioned the Glorious One and said, Lord, is it then true, as the Ape said, that thou and Tash are one? The Lion growled so that the earth shook (but his wrath was not against me) and said, It is false. Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him, for I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath's sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted. Dost thou understand, Child? I said, Lord, thou knowest how much I understand. But I said also (for the truth constrained me), Yet I have been seeking Tash all my days. Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.

"Then he breathed upon me and took away the trembling from my limbs and caused me to stand upon my feet. And after that, he said not much but that we should meet again, and I must go further up and further in. Then he turned him about in a storm and flurry of gold and was gone suddenly.

"And since then, O Kings and Ladies, I have been wandering to find him and my happiness is so great that it even weakens me like a wound. And this is the marvel of marvels, that he called me, Beloved, me who am but as a dog — —"

"Eh? What's that?" said one of the Dogs.

"Sir," said Emeth. "It is but a fashion of speech which we have in Calormen."

"Well, I can't say it's one I like very much," said the Dog.

"He doesn't mean any harm," said an older Dog. "After all, *we* call our puppies, *Boys*, when they don't behave properly."

"So we do," said the first Dog. "Or, *girls*."

"S-s-sh!" said the Old Dog. "That's not a nice word to use. Remember where you are."

"Look!" said Jill suddenly. Someone was coming, rather timidly, to meet them; a graceful creature on four feet, all silvery-grey. And they stared at him for a whole ten seconds before five or six voices said all at once, "Why, it's old Puzzle!" They had never seen him by day light with the lionskin off, and it made an extraordinary difference. He was himself now: a beautiful

donkey with such a soft, grey coat and such a gentle, honest face that if you had seen him you would have done just what Jill and Lucy did — rushed forward and put your arms round his neck and kissed his nose and stroked his ears.

When they asked him where he had been, he said he had come in at the door along with all the other creatures but he had — well, to tell the truth, he had been keeping out of their way as much as he could; and out of Aslan's way. For the sight of the real Lion had made him so ashamed of all that nonsense about dressing up in a lionskin that he did not know how to look anyone in the face. But when he saw that all his friends were going away westward, and after he had had a mouthful or so of grass ("And I've never tasted such good grass in my life," said Puzzle), he plucked up his courage and followed. "But what I'll do if I really have to meet Aslan, I'm sure I don't know," he added.

"You'll find it will be all right when you really do," said Queen Lucy.

Then they all went forward together, always westward, for that seemed to be the direction Aslan had meant when he cried out "Further up and further in." Many other creatures were slowly moving the same way, but that grassy country was very wide and there was no crowding.

It still seemed to be early and the morning freshness was in the air. They kept on stopping to look round and to look behind them, partly because it was so beautiful but partly also because there was something about it which they could not understand.

"Peter," said Lucy, "where is this, do you suppose?"

"I don't know," said the High King. "It reminds me of somewhere but I can't give it a name. Could it be somewhere we once stayed for a holiday when we were very, very small?"

"It would have to have been a jolly good holiday," said Eustace. "I bet there isn't a country like this anywhere in our world. Look at the colours? You couldn't get a blue like the blue on those mountains in our world."

"Is it not Aslan's country?" said Tirian.

"Not like Aslan's country on top of that mountain beyond the eastern end of the world," said Jill. "I've been there."

"If you ask me," said Edmund, "Its like somewhere in the Narnian world. Look at those mountains ahead — and the big ice-mountains beyond them. Surely they're rather like the mountains we used to see from Narnia, the ones up Westward beyond the Waterfall?"

“Yes, so they are,” said Peter. “Only these are bigger.”

“I don’t think *those* ones are so very like anything in Narnia,” said Lucy. “But look there.” She pointed south ward to their left, and everyone stopped and turned to look. “Those hills,” said Lucy, “the nice woody ones and the blue ones behind — aren’t they very like the southern border of Narnia?”

“Like!” cried Edmund after a moment’s silence. “Why they’re exactly like. Look, there’s Mount Pire with his forked head, and there’s the pass into Archenland and everything!”

“And yet they’re not like,” said Lucy. “They’re different. They have more colours on them and they look further away than I remembered and they’re more ... more ... oh, I don’t know....”

“More like the real thing,” said the Lord Digory softly.

Suddenly Farsight the Eagle spread his wings, soared thirty or forty feet up into the air, circled round and then alighted on the ground.

“Kings and Queens,” he cried, “we have all been blind. We are only beginning to see where we are. From up there I have seen it all — Ettinsmuir, Beaversdam, the Great River, and Cair Paravel still shining on the edge of the Eastern Sea. Narnia is not dead. This is Narnia.”

“But how can it be?” said Peter. “For Aslan told us older ones that we should never return to Narnia, and here we are.”

“Yes,” said Eustace. “And we saw it all destroyed and the sun put out.”

“And it’s all so different,” said Lucy.

“The Eagle is right,” said the Lord Digory. “Listen, Peter. When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia, which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan’s real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream.” His voice stirred everyone like a trumpet as he spoke these words: but when he added under his breath “It’s all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what *do* they teach them at these schools!” the older ones laughed. It was so exactly like the sort of thing they had heard him say long ago in that other world where his beard was grey instead of golden. He knew why they were laughing and joined in the laugh himself. But very

quickly they all became grave again: for, as you know, there is a kind of happiness and wonder that makes you serious. It is too good to waste on jokes.

It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia, as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it, if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among mountains. And in the wall of that room opposite to the window there may have been a looking glass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley, all over again, in the looking glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real ones: yet at the same time they were somehow different — deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if you ever get there, you will know what I mean.

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed and then cried:

"I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. Bree-hee-hee! Come further up, come further in!"

He shook his mane and sprang forward into a great gallop — a Unicorn's gallop which, in our world, would have carried him out of sight in a few moments. But now a most strange thing happened. Everyone else began to run, and they found, to their astonishment, that they could keep up with him: not only the Dogs and the humans but even fat little Puzzle and short-legged Poggin the Dwarf. The air flew in their faces as if they were driving fast in a car without a windscreen. The country flew past as if they were seeing it from the windows of an express train. Faster and faster they raced, but no one got hot or tired or out of breath.

CHAPTER XVI

Farewell to Shadow-Lands

If one could run without getting tired, I don't think one would often want to do anything else. But there might be special reasons for stopping, and it was a special reason which made Eustace presently shout:

"I say! Steady! Look what we're coming to!"

And well he might. For now they saw before them Caldron Pool and beyond the Pool, the high unclimbable cliffs and, pouring down the cliffs, thousands of tons of water every second, flashing like diamonds in some places and dark, glassy green in others, the Great Waterfall; and already the thunder of it was in their ears.

"Don't stop! Further up and further in," called Farsight, tilting his flight a little upwards.

"It's all very well for him," said Eustace, but Jewel also cried out:

"Don't stop. Further up and further in! Take it in your stride."

His voice could only just be heard above the roar of the water but next moment everyone saw that he had plunged into the Pool. And helter-skelter behind him, with splash after splash, all the others did the same. The water was not bitingly cold as all of them (and especially Puzzle) expected, but of a delicious foamy coolness. They all found they were swimming straight for the Waterfall itself.

"This is absolutely crazy," said Eustace to Edmund.

"I know. And yet — —" said Edmund.

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Lucy. "Have you noticed one can't feel afraid, even if one wants to? Try it."

"By Jove, one can't," said Eustace after he had tried. Jewel reached the foot of the Waterfall first, but Tirian was only just behind him. Jill was last, so she could see the whole thing better than the others. She saw something white moving steadily up the face of the Waterfall. That white thing was the Unicorn. You couldn't tell whether he was swimming or climbing, but he moved on, higher and higher. The point of his horn divided the water just above his head, and it cascaded out in two rainbow-coloured streams all round his shoulders. Just behind him came King Tirian. He moved his legs

and arms as if he were swimming but he moved straight upwards: as if one could swim up a wall.

What looked funniest was the Dogs. During the gallop they had not been at all out of breath, but now, as they swarmed and wriggled upwards, there was plenty of spluttering and sneezing among them; that was because they would keep on barking, and every time they barked they got their mouths and noses full of water. But before Jill had time to notice all these things fully, she was going up the Waterfall herself. It was the sort of thing that would have been quite impossible in our world. Even if you hadn't been drowned, you would have been smashed to pieces by the terrible weight of water against the countless jags of rock. But in that world you could do it. You went on, up and up, with all kinds of reflected lights flashing at you from the water and all manner of coloured stones flashing through it, till it seemed as if you were climbing up light itself — and always higher and higher till the sense of height would have terrified you if you could be terrified, but here it was only gloriously exciting. And then at last one came to the lovely, smooth green curve in which the water poured over the top and found that one was out on the level river above the waterfall. The current was racing away behind you, but you were such a wonderful swimmer that you could make headway against it. Soon they were all on the bank, dripping but happy.

A long valley opened ahead and great snow-mountains, now much nearer, stood up against the sky.

"Further up and further in," cried Jewel and instantly they were off again.

They were out of Narnia now and up into the Western Wild which neither Tirian nor Peter nor even the Eagle had ever seen before. But the Lord Digory and the Lady Polly had. "Do you remember? Do you remember?" they said — and said it in steady voices too, without panting, though the whole party was now running faster than an arrow flies.

"What, Lord?" said Tirian. "Is it then true, as stories tell, that you two journeyed here on the very day the world was made?"

"Yes," said Digory, "and it seems to me as if it were only yesterday."

"And on a flying horse?" asked Tirian. "Is that part true?"

"Certainly," said Digory. But the Dogs barked, "Faster, faster!"

So they ran faster and faster till it was more like flying than running, and even the Eagle overhead was going no faster than they. And they went

through winding valley after winding valley and up the steep sides of hills and, faster than ever, down the other sides, following the river and sometimes crossing it and skimming across mountain-lakes as if they were living speedboats, till at last at the far end of one long lake, which looked as blue as a turquoise, they saw a smooth green hill. Its sides were as steep as the sides of a pyramid and round the very top of it ran a green wall: but above the wall rose the branches of trees, whose leaves looked like silver and their fruit like gold.

"Further up and further in!" roared the Unicorn, and no one held back. They charged straight at the foot of the hill and then found themselves running up it almost as water from a broken wave runs up a rock out at the point of some bay. Though the slope was nearly as steep as the roof of a house and the grass was smooth as a bowling green, no one slipped. Only when they had reached the very top did they slow up; that was because they found themselves facing great golden gates. And for a moment none of them was bold enough to try if the gates would open. They all felt just as they had felt about the fruit— "Dare we? Is it right? Can it be meant for us?"

But while they were standing thus a great horn, wonderfully loud and sweet, blew from somewhere inside that walled garden and the gates swung open.

Tirian stood holding his breath and wondering who would come out. And what came out was the last thing he had expected: a little, sleek, bright-eyed Talking Mouse with a red feather stuck in a circlet on its head and its left paw resting on a long sword. It bowed, a most beautiful bow, and said in its shrill voice:

"Welcome, in the Lion's name. Come further up and further in."

Then Tirian saw King Peter and King Edmund and Queen Lucy rush forward to kneel down and greet the Mouse and they all cried out, "Reepicheep!" And Tirian breathed fast with the sheer wonder of it, for now he knew that he was looking at one of the great heroes of Narnia, Reepicheep the Mouse, who had fought at the great Battle of Beruna and afterwards sailed to the World's end with King Caspian the Seafarer. But before he had had much time to think of this, he felt two strong arms thrown about him and felt a bearded kiss on his cheeks and heard a well-remembered voice saying:

"What, lad? Art thicker and taller since I last touched thee?"

It was his own father, the good King Erlian: but not as Tirian had seen him last when they brought him home pale and wounded from his fight with the giant, nor even as Tirian remembered him in his later years when he was a grey-headed warrior. This was his father young and merry as he could just remember him from very early days, when he himself had been a little boy playing games with his father in the castle garden at Cair Paravel, just before bedtime on summer evenings. The very smell of the bread-and-milk he used to have for supper came back to him.

Jewel thought to himself, “I will leave them to talk for a little and then I will go and greet the good King Erlian. Many a bright apple did he give me when I was but a colt.” But next moment he had something else to think of, for out of the gateway there came a horse so mighty and noble that even a Unicorn might feel shy in its presence: a great winged horse. It looked a moment at the Lord Digory and the Lady Polly and neighed out “What, cousins!” and they both shouted “Fledge! Good old Fledge!” and rushed to kiss it.

But by now the Mouse was again urging them to come in. So all of them passed in through the golden gates, into the delicious smell that blew towards them out of that garden and into the cool mixture of sunlight and shadow under the trees, walking on springy turf that was all dotted with white flowers. The very first thing which struck everyone was that the place was far larger than it had seemed from outside. But no one had time to think about that for people were coming up to meet the newcomers from every direction.

Everyone you had ever heard of (if you knew the history of those countries) seemed to be there. There was Glimfeather the Owl and Puddleglum the Marshwiggle, and King Rilian the Disenchanted, and his mother, the Star’s daughter, and his great father, Caspian himself. And close beside him were the Lord Drinian and the Lord Berne and Trumpkin the Dwarf and Trufflehunter, the Good Badger, with Glenstorm the Centaur and a hundred other heroes of the great War of Deliverance. And then from another side came Cor the King of Archenland with King Lune, his father, and his wife, Queen Aravis and the brave prince, Corin Thunder-Fist, his brother and Bree the Horse and Hwin the Mare. And then — which was a wonder beyond all wonders to Tirian — there came from further away in the past, the two good Beavers and Tumnus the Faun. And there was greeting and kissing and handshaking and old jokes revived, (you’ve no

idea how good an old joke sounds when you take it out again after a rest of five or six hundred years) and the whole company moved forward to the centre of the orchard where the Phoenix sat in a tree and looked down upon them all and at the foot of that tree were two thrones and in those two thrones, a King and Queen so great and beautiful that everyone bowed down before them. And well they might, for these two were King Frank and Queen Helen from whom all the most ancient Kings of Narnia and Archenland are descended. And Tirian felt as you would feel if you were brought before Adam and Eve in all their glory.

About half an hour later — or it might have been half a hundred years later, for time there is not like time here — Lucy stood with her dear friend, her oldest Narnian friend, the Faun Tumnus, looking down over the wall of that garden, and seeing all Narnia spread out below. But when you looked down you found that this hill was much higher than you had thought: it sank down with shining cliffs, thousands of feet below them and trees in that lower world looked no bigger than grains of green salt. Then she turned inward again and stood with her back to the wall and looked at the garden.

“I see,” she said at last, thoughtfully. “I see now. This garden is like the Stable. It is far bigger inside than it was outside.”

“Of course, Daughter of Eve,” said the Faun. “The further up and the further in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside.”

Lucy looked hard at the garden and saw that it was not really a garden at all but a whole world, with its own rivers and woods and sea and mountains. But they were not strange: she knew them all.

“I see,” she said. “This is still Narnia, and, more real and more beautiful than the Narnia down below, just as it was more real and more beautiful than the Narnia outside the Stable door! I see ... world within world, Narnia within Narnia....”

“Yes,” said Mr. Tumnus, “like an onion: except that as you continue to go in and in, each circle is larger than the last.”

And Lucy looked this way and that and soon found that a new and beautiful thing had happened to her. Whatever she looked at, however far away it might be, once she had fixed her eyes steadily on it, became quite clear and close as if she were looking through a telescope. She could see the whole southern desert and beyond it the great city of Tashbaan: to eastward she could see Cair Paravel on the edge of the sea and the very window of

the room that had once been her own. And far out to sea she could discover the islands, island after island to the end of the world, and, beyond the end, the huge mountain which they had called Aslan's country. But now she saw that it was part of a great chain of mountains which ringed round the whole world. In front of her it seemed to come quite close. Then she looked to her left and saw what she took to be a great bank of brightly-coloured cloud, cut off from them by a gap. But she looked harder and saw that it was not a cloud at all but a real land. And when she had fixed her eyes on one particular spot of it, she at once cried out, "Peter! Edmund! Come and look! Come quickly." And they came and looked, for their eyes also had become like hers.

"Why!" exclaimed Peter. "It's England. And that's the house itself — Professor Kirk's old home in the country where all our adventures began!"

"I thought that house had been destroyed," said Edmund.

"So it was," said the Faun. "But you are now looking at the England within England, the real England just as this is the real Narnia. And in that inner England no good thing is destroyed."

Suddenly they shifted their eyes to another spot, and then Peter and Edmund and Lucy gasped with amazement and shouted out and began waving: for there they saw their own father and mother, waving back at them across the great, deep valley. It was like when you see people waving at you from the deck of a big ship when you are waiting on the quay to meet them.

"How can we get at them?" said Lucy.

"That is easy," said Mr. Tumnus. "That country and this country — all the *real* countries — are only spurs jutting out from the great mountains of Aslan. We have only to walk along the ridge, upward and inward, till it joins on. And listen! There is King Frank's horn: we must all go up."

And soon they found themselves all walking together — and a great, bright procession it was — up towards mountains higher than you could see in this world even if they were there to be seen. But there was no snow on those mountains: there were forests and green slopes and sweet orchards and flashing waterfalls, one above the other, going up for ever. And the land they were walking on grew narrower all the time, with a deep valley on each side: and across that valley the land which was the real England grew nearer and nearer.

The light ahead was growing stronger. Lucy saw that a great series of many-coloured cliffs led up in front of them like a giant's staircase. And then she forgot everything else, because Aslan himself was coming, leaping down from cliff to cliff like a living cataract of power and beauty.

And the very first person whom Aslan called to him was Puzzle the Donkey. You never saw a donkey look feebler and sillier than Puzzle did as he walked up to Aslan; and he looked, beside Aslan, as small as a kitten looks beside a St. Bernard. The Lion bowed down his head and whispered something to Puzzle at which his long ears went down; but then he said something else at which the ears perked up again. The humans couldn't hear what he had said either time. Then Aslan turned to them and said:

"You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be."

Lucy said, "We're so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often."

"No fear of that," said Aslan. "Have you not guessed?"

Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.

"There *was* a real railway accident," said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are — as you used to call it in the Shadow-Lands — dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning."

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Other Fiction



In 1916, Lewis was awarded a scholarship at University College, Oxford. Within months of entering Oxford, the British Army shipped him to France to fight in the First World War.

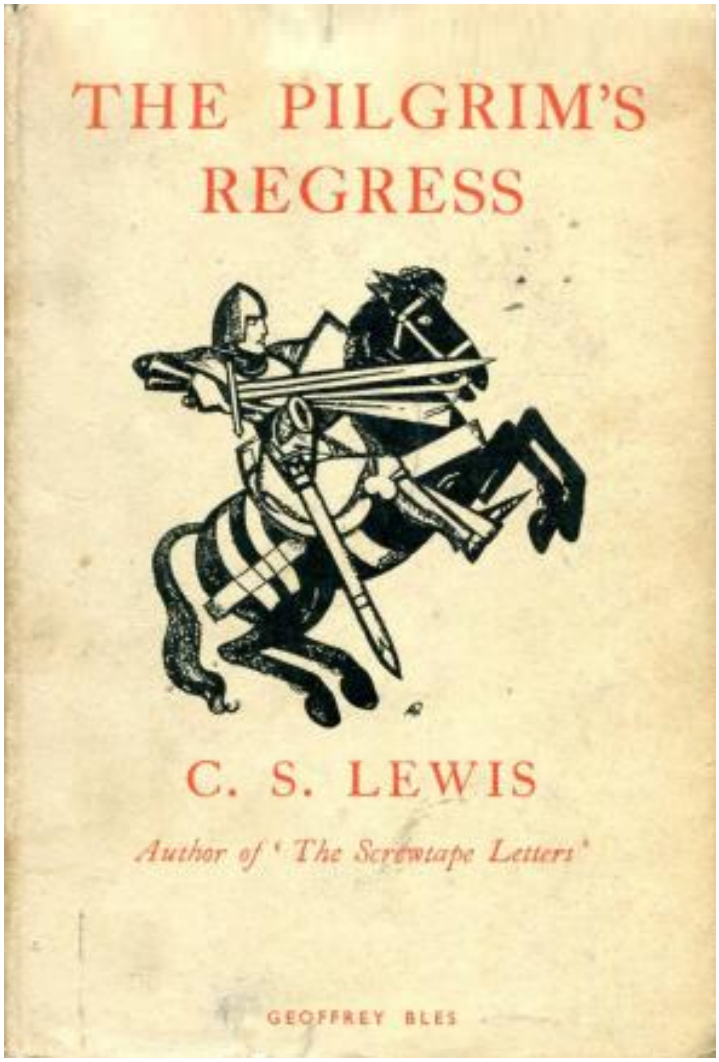
THE PILGRIM'S REGRESS (1933)



This 1933 allegorical novel was Lewis' first published work of prose fiction, charting the progress of a fictional character named John through a philosophical landscape in search of the 'Island of his desire'. Lewis described the novel to his publisher as "a kind of Bunyan up to date," in reference to John Bunyan's seventeenth century novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*, recast with the politics, ideologies, philosophy and aesthetic principles of the early twentieth century. As such, the character struggles with many modern issues, including the intellectual vacancy of the Christian church, Communism, Fascism and various philosophical and artistic movements.

In the narrative, John the pilgrim journeys much like Christian in Bunyan's famous work, in search of the Island of his desire, for which his longing is never quite forgotten even though he has received but a glimpse of it. Like the Pilgrim in Bunyan's allegory, John meets a fellow traveller, in this case called Vertue, and the two journey together. The land through which John travels is composed of shires with such names as Puritania (where he starts), Zeitgeistheim, Dialectica, Pagus. He also meets figures with names such as Mr. Enlightenment, Mr. Sensible, Drudge, Mr. Neo-Classical, Mr Humanist, Neo-Angular and Mother Kirk. The novel, though allegorical, deals for the most part with moral philosophy, and describes the quarrel in John's soul between The Rules (John's earlier instruction by the Steward) and The Pictures (his imagination and the Island), and his search to reconcile these. On his journey, he must avoid the false philosophical trails and the imitations of Sweet Desire.

The Pilgrim's Regress initially received mixed reviews and did not sell well. Subsequently, it was taken on by several different publishers. By the third edition, however, Lewis had recognised the difficulties which some of his readers were having and wrote a critical and explanatory preface to clarify some of the issues that resulted from unintentional obscurity and changes in the philosophical thought of the early twentieth century. This edition also introduced a running headline format as a concession to the book's difficulty — but with reluctance, as Lewis expressed concern that it could lead to a misunderstanding of the nature of allegory.



The first edition

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PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

On re-reading this book ten years after I wrote it, I find its chief faults to be those two which I myself least easily forgive in the books of other men: needless obscurity, and an uncharitable temper.

There were two causes, I now realise, for the obscurity. On the intellectual side my own progress had been from ‘popular realism’ to Philosophical Idealism; from Idealism to Pantheism; from Pantheism to Theism; and from Theism to Christianity. I still think this a very natural road, but I now know that it is a road very rarely trodden. In the early thirties I did not know this. If I had had any notion of my own isolation, I should either have kept silent about my journey or else endeavoured to describe it with more consideration for the reader’s difficulties. As things were, I committed the same sort of blunder as one who should narrate his travels through the Gobi Desert on the assumption that this route was as familiar to the British public as the line from Euston to Crewe. And this original blunder was soon aggravated by a profound change in the philosophical thought of our age. Idealism itself went out of fashion. The dynasty of Green, Bradley, and Bosanquet fell, and the world inhabited by philosophical students of my own generation became as alien to our successors as if not years but centuries had intervened.

The second cause of obscurity was the (unintentionally) ‘private’ meaning I then gave to the word ‘Romanticism’. I would not now use this word to describe the experience which is central in this book. I would not, indeed, use it to describe anything, for I now believe it to be a word of such varying senses that it has become useless and should be banished from our vocabulary. Even if we exclude the vulgar sense in which a ‘romance’ means simply ‘a love affair’ (Peer and Film Star Romance) I think we can distinguish at least seven kinds of things which are called ‘romantic’.

1. Stories about dangerous adventure — particularly, dangerous adventure in the past or in remote places — are ‘romantic’. In this sense Dumas is a typically ‘romantic’ author, and stories about sailing 6 ships, the Foreign Legion, and the rebellion of 1745, are usually ‘romantic’.

2. The marvellous is ‘romantic’, provided it does not make part of the believed religion. Thus magicians, ghosts, fairies, witches, dragons, nymphs, and dwarfs are ‘romantic’; angels, less so. Greek gods are

‘romantic’ in Mr. James Stephens or Mr. Maurice Hewlett; not so in Homer and Sophocles. In this sense Malory, Boiardo, Ariosto, Spenser, Tasso, Mrs. Radcliffe, Shelley, Coleridge, William Morris, and Mr. E. R. Eddison are ‘romantic’ authors.

3. The art dealing with ‘Titanic’ characters, emotions strained beyond the common pitch, and high-flown sentiments or codes of honour is ‘romantic’. (I welcome the growing use of the word ‘Romanesque’ to describe this type.) In this sense Rostand and Sidney are ‘romantic’, and so (though unsuccessfully) are Dryden’s Heroic Dramas, and there is a good deal of ‘romanticism’ in Corneille. I take it that Michelangelo is, in this sense, a ‘romantic’ artist.

4. ‘Romanticism’ can also mean the indulgence in abnormal, and finally in anti-natural, moods. The *macabre* is ‘romantic’, and so is an interest in torture, and a love of death. This, if I understand them, is what M. Mario Praz and M. D. de Rougemont would mean by the word. In this sense *Tristan* is Wagner’s most ‘romantic’ opera; Poe, Baudelaire, and Flaubert, are ‘romantic’ authors; Surrealism is ‘romantic’.

5. Egoism and Subjectivism are ‘romantic’. In this sense the typically ‘romantic’ books are *Werther* and Rousseau’s *Confessions*, and the works of Byron and Proust.

6. Every revolt against existing civilisation and conventions whether it look forward to revolution, or backward to the ‘primitive’ is called ‘romantic’ by some people. Thus pseudo-Ossian, Epstein, D. H. Lawrence, Walt Whitman, and Wagner are ‘romantic’.

7. Sensibility to natural objects, when solemn and enthusiastic, is ‘romantic’. In this sense *The Prelude* is the most ‘romantic’ poem in the world: and there is much ‘romanticism’ in Keats, Shelley, de Vigny, de Musset, and Goethe.

It will be seen, of course, that many writers are ‘romantic’ on more than one account. Thus Morris comes in my first class as well 7 as my second, Mr. Eddison in my second as well as my third, Rousseau in my sixth as well as my fifth, Shelley in my sixth and fifth, and so on. This may suggest some common root, whether historical or psychological, for all seven: but the real qualitative difference between them is shown by the fact that a liking for any one does not imply liking for the others. Though people who are ‘romantic’ in different senses may turn to the same books, they turn to them for different reasons, and one half of William Morris’s readers do not know

how the other half live. It makes all the difference in the world whether you like Shelley because he provides a mythology or because he promises a revolution. Thus I myself always loved the second kind of Romanticism and detested the fourth and fifth kinds; I liked the first very little and the third only after I was grown-up — as an acquired taste.

But what I meant by ‘Romanticism’ when I wrote the *Pilgrim’s Regress* — and what I would still be taken to mean on the title page of this book — was not exactly any one of these seven things. What I meant was a particular recurrent experience which dominated my childhood and adolescence and which I hastily called ‘Romantic’ because inanimate nature and marvellous literature were among the things that evoked it. I still believe that the experience is common, commonly misunderstood, and of immense importance: but I know now that in other minds it arises under other *stimuli* and is entangled with other irrelevancies and that to bring it into the forefront of consciousness is not so easy as I once supposed. I will now try to describe it sufficiently to make the following pages intelligible.

The experience is one of intense longing. It is distinguished from other longings by two things. In the first place, though the sense of want is acute and even painful, yet the mere wanting is felt to be somehow a delight. Other desires are felt as pleasures only if satisfaction is expected in the near future: hunger is pleasant only while we know (or believe) that we are soon going to eat. But this desire, even when there is no hope of possible satisfaction, continues to be prized, and even to be preferred to anything else in the world, by those who have once felt it. This hunger is better than any other fullness; this poverty better than all other wealth. And thus it comes about, that if the desire is long absent, it may itself be desired, and that new desiring becomes a new instance of the original desire, though the subject may not at once recognise the fact and thus cries out for his lost youth of soul at the very moment in which he is being rejuvenated. This sounds complicated, but it is simple when we live it. ‘Oh to feel as I did then!’ we cry; not noticing that even while we say the words the very feeling whose loss we lament is rising again in all its old bitter-sweetness. For this sweet Desire cuts across our ordinary distinctions between wanting and having. To have it is, by definition, a want: to want it, we find, is to have it.

In the second place, there is a peculiar mystery about the *object* of this Desire. Inexperienced people (and inattention leaves some inexperienced all

their lives) suppose, when they feel it, that they know what they are desiring. Thus if it comes to a child while he is looking at a far off hillside he at once thinks ‘if only I were there’; if it comes when he is remembering some event in the past, he thinks ‘if only I could go back to those days’. If it comes (a little later) while he is reading a ‘romantic’ tale or poem of ‘perilous seas and faerie lands forlorn’, he thinks he is wishing that such places really existed and that he could reach them. If it comes (later still) in a context with erotic suggestions he believes he is desiring the perfect beloved. If he falls upon literature (like Maeterlinck or the early Yeats) which treats of spirits and the like with some show of serious belief, he may think that he is hankering for real magic and occultism. When it darts out upon him from his studies in history or science, he may confuse it with the intellectual craving for knowledge.

But every one of these impressions is wrong. The sole merit I claim for this book is that it is written by one who has proved them all to be wrong. There is no room for vanity in the claim: I know them to be wrong not by intelligence but by experience, such experience as would not have come my way if my youth had been wiser, more virtuous, and less self-centred than it was. For I have myself been deluded by every one of these false answers in turn, and have contemplated each of them earnestly enough to discover the cheat. To have embraced so many false Florimels is no matter for boasting: it is fools, they say, who learn by experience. But since they do at last learn, let a fool bring his experience into the common stock that wiser men may profit by it.

Every one of these supposed *objects* for the Desire is inadequate to it. An easy experiment will show that by going to the far hillside you will get either nothing, or else a recurrence of the same desire which sent you thither. A rather more difficult, but still possible, study of your own memories, will prove that by returning to the past you could not find, as a possession, that ecstasy which some sudden reminder of the past now moves you to desire. Those remembered moments were either quite commonplace at the time (and owe all their enchantment to memory) or else were themselves moments of desiring. The same is true of the things described in the poets and marvellous romancers. The moment we endeavour to think out seriously what it would be like if they were actual, we discover this. When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle claimed to have photographed a fairy, I did not, in fact, believe it: but the mere making of

the claim — the approach of the fairy to within even that hailing distance of actuality — revealed to me at once that if the claim had succeeded it would have chilled rather than satisfied the desire which fairy literature had hitherto aroused. Once grant your fairy, your enchanted forest, your satyr, faun, wood-nymph and well of immortality *real*, and amidst all the scientific, social and practical interest which the discovery would awake, the Sweet Desire would have disappeared, would have shifted its ground, like the cuckoo's voice or the rainbow's end, and be now calling us from beyond a *further* hill. With Magic in the darker sense (as it has been and is actually practised) we should fare even worse. How if one had gone that way — had actually called for something and it had come? What would one feel? Terror, pride, guilt, tingling excitement . . . but what would all that have to do with our Sweet Desire? It is not at Black Mass or *séance* that the Blue Flower grows. As for the sexual answer, that I suppose to be the most obviously false Florimel of all. On whatever plane you take it, it is not what we were looking for. Lust can be gratified. Another personality can become to us 'our America, our New-found-land'. A happy marriage can be achieved. But what has any of the three, or any mixture of the three, to do with that unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of a bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, the title of *The Well at the World's End*, the opening lines of *Kubla Khan*, the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves?

It appeared to me therefore that if a man diligently followed this desire, pursuing the false objects until their falsity appeared and then resolutely abandoning them, he must come out at last into the clear knowledge that the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given — nay, cannot even be imagined as given — in our present mode of subjective and spatio-temporal experience. This Desire was, in the soul, as the Siege Perilous in Arthur's castle — the chair in which only one could sit. And if nature makes nothing in vain, the One who can sit in this chair must exist. I knew only too well how easily the longing accepts false objects and through what dark ways the pursuit of them leads us: but I also saw that the Desire itself contains the corrective of all these errors. The only fatal error was to pretend that you had passed from desire to fruition, when, in reality, you had found either nothing, or desire itself, or the satisfaction of some different desire. The dialectic of Desire, faithfully followed, would retrieve all mistakes, head you off from all false paths, and force you not to

propound, but to live through, a sort of ontological proof. This lived dialectic, and the merely argued dialectic of my philosophical progress, seemed to have converged on one goal; accordingly I tried to put them both into my allegory which thus became a defence of Romanticism (in my peculiar sense) as well as of Reason and Christianity.

After this explanation the reader will more easily understand (I do not ask him to condone) the bitterness of certain pages in this book. He will realise how the Post-War period must have looked to one who had followed such a road as mine. The different intellectual movements of that time were hostile to one another; but the one thing that seemed to unite them all was their common enmity to ‘immortal longings’. The direct attack carried out on them from below by those who followed Freud or D. H. Lawrence, I think I could have borne with some temper; what put me out of patience was the scorn which claimed to be from above, and which was voiced by the American ‘Humanists’, the Neo-Scholastics, and some who wrote for *The Criterion*. These people seemed to me to be condemning what they did not understand. When they called Romanticism ‘nostalgia’ I, who had rejected long ago the illusion that the desired object was in the past, felt that they had not even crossed the *Pons Asinorum*. In the end I lost my temper.

If I were now writing a book I could bring the question between those thinkers and myself to a much finer point. One of them described Romanticism as ‘spilled religion’. I accept the description. And I agree that he who has religion ought not to spill it. But does it follow that he who finds it spilled should avert his eyes? How if there is a man to whom those bright drops on the floor are the beginning of a trail which, duly followed, will lead him in the end to taste the cup itself? How if no other trail, humanly speaking, were possible? Seen in this light my ten years’ old quarrel both with the counter-Romantics on the one hand and with the sub-Romantics on the other (the apostles of instinct and even of gibberish) assumes, I trust, a certain permanent interest. Out of this double quarrel came the dominant image of my allegory — the barren, aching rocks of its ‘North’, the foetid swamps of its ‘South’, and between them the Road on which alone mankind can safely walk.

The things I have symbolised by North and South, which are to me equal and opposite evils, each continually strengthened and made plausible by its critique of the other, enter our experience on many different levels. In agriculture we have to fear both the barren soil and the soil which is

irresistibly fertile. In the animal kingdom, the crustacean and the jellyfish represent two low solutions of the problem of existence. In our eating, the palate revolts both from excessive bitter and excessive sweet. In art, we find on the one hand, purists and doctrinaires, who would rather (like Scaliger) lose a hundred beauties than admit a single fault, and who cannot believe anything to be good if the unlearned spontaneously enjoy it: on the other hand, we find the uncritical and slovenly artists who will spoil the whole work rather than deny themselves any indulgence of sentiment or humour or sensationalism. Everyone can pick out among his own acquaintance the Northern and Southern types — the high noses, compressed lips, pale complexions, dryness and taciturnity of the one, the open mouths, the facile laughter and tears, the garrulity and (so to speak) general greasiness of the others. The Northerners are the men of rigid systems whether sceptical or dogmatic, Aristocrats, Stoics, Pharisees, Rigorists, signed and sealed members of highly organised ‘Parties’. The Southerners are by their very nature less definable; boneless souls whose doors stand open day and night to almost every visitant, but always with readiest welcome for those, whether Maenad or Mystagogue, who offer some sort of intoxication. The delicious tang of the forbidden and the unknown draws them on with fatal attraction; the smudging of all frontiers, the relaxation of all resistances, dream, opium, darkness, death, and the return to the womb. Every feeling is justified by the mere fact that it is felt: for a Northerner, every feeling on the same ground is suspect. An arrogant and hasty selectiveness on some narrow *a priori* basis cuts him off from the sources of life. In Theology also there is a North and South. The one cries ‘Drive out the bondmaid’s son,’ and the other ‘Quench not the smoking flax’. The one exaggerates the distinctness between Grace and Nature into a sheer opposition and by vilifying the higher levels of Nature (the real *praeparatio evangelica* inherent in certain immediately sub-Christian experiences) makes the way hard for those who are at the point of coming in. The other blurs the distinction altogether, flatters mere kindliness into thinking it is charity and vague optimisms or pantheisms into thinking that they are Faith, and makes the way out fatally easy and imperceptible for the budding apostate. The two extremes do not coincide with Romanism (to the North) and Protestantism (to the South). Barth might well have been placed among my Pale Men, and Erasmus might have found himself at home with Mr. Broad.

I take our own age to be predominantly Northern — it is two great ‘Northern’ powers that are tearing each other to pieces on the Don while I write. But the matter is complicated, for the rigid and ruthless system of the Nazis has ‘Southern’ and swamp-like elements at its centre; and when our age is ‘Southern’ at all, it is excessively so. D. H. Lawrence and the Surrealists have perhaps reached a point further ‘South’ than humanity ever reached before. And this is what one would expect. Opposite evils, far from balancing, aggravate each other. ‘The heresies that men leave are hated most’; widespread drunkenness is the father of Prohibition and Prohibition of widespread drunkenness. Nature, outraged by one extreme, avenges herself by flying to the other. One can even meet adult males who are not ashamed to attribute their own philosophy to ‘Reaction’ and do not think the philosophy thereby discredited.

With both the ‘North’ and the ‘South’ a man has, I take it, only one concern — to avoid them and hold the Main Road. We must not ‘hearken to the over-wise *or* to the over-foolish giant’. We were made to be neither cerebral men nor visceral men, but Men. Not beasts nor angels but Men — things at once rational and animal.

The fact that, if I say anything in explanation of my North and South, I have to say so much, serves to underline a rather important truth about symbols. In the present edition I have tried to make the book easier by a running headline. But I do so with great reluctance. To supply a ‘key’ to an allegory may encourage that particular misunderstanding of allegory which, as a literary critic, I have elsewhere denounced. It may encourage people to suppose that allegory is a disguise, a way of saying obscurely what could have been said more clearly. But in fact all good allegory exists not to hide but to reveal; to make the inner world more palpable by giving it an (imagined) concrete embodiment. My headline is there only because my allegory failed — partly through my own fault (I am now heartily ashamed of the preposterous allegorical filigree on), and partly because modern readers are unfamiliar with the method. But it remains true that wherever the symbols are best, the key is least adequate. For when allegory is at its best, it approaches myth, which must be grasped with the imagination, not with the intellect. If, as I still sometimes hope, my North and South and my Mr. Sensible have some touch of mythical life, then no amount of ‘explanation’ will quite catch up with their meaning. It is the sort of thing you cannot learn from definition: you must rather get to know it as you get

to know a smell or a taste, the ‘atmosphere’ of a family or a country town, or the personality of an individual.

Three other cautions remain to be given. 1. The map on the end leaves has puzzled some readers because, as they say, ‘it marks all sorts of places not mentioned in the text’. But so do all maps in travel books. John’s route is marked with a dotted line: those who are not interested in the places off that route need not bother about them. They are a half whimsical attempt to fill in the ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ halves of the world with the spiritual phenomena appropriate to them. Most of the names explain themselves. *Wanhope* is Middle English for Despair; *Woodey* and *Lyssanesos* mean ‘Isle of Insanity’; *Behmenheim* is named, unfairly, after Jakob Boehme or Behmen; *Golnesshire* (Anglo-Saxon *Gál*) is the county of Lechery; in *Trine*-land one feels ‘in tune with the infinite’; and *Zeitgeistheim*, of course, is the habitat of the *Zeitgeist* or Spirit of the Age. *Naughtstow* is ‘a place that is no good at all’. The two military railways were meant to symbolise the double attack from Hell on the two sides of our nature. It was hoped that the roads spreading out from each of the enemy railheads would look rather like claws or tentacles reaching out into the country of Man’s Soul. If you like to put little black arrows pointing South on the seven Northern roads (in the fashion of the newspaper war maps) and others pointing North on the six Southern roads, you would get a clear picture of the Holy War as I see it. You might amuse yourself by deciding where to put them — a question that admits different answers. On the Northern front, for example, I should represent the enemy in occupation of Cruelsland and Superbia, and thus threatening the Pale Men with a pincer movement. But I don’t claim to know; and doubtless the position shifts every day. 2. The name *Mother Kirk* was chosen because ‘Christianity’ is not a very convincing name. Its defect was that it not unnaturally led the reader to attribute to me a much more definite *Ecclesiastical* position than I could really boast of. The book is concerned solely with Christianity as against unbelief. ‘Denominational’ questions do not come in. 3. In this preface the autobiographical element in John has had to be stressed because the source of the obscurities lay there. But you must not assume that everything in the book is autobiographical. I was attempting to generalise, not to tell people about my own life.

C. S. LEWIS

BOOK ONE. THE DATA

This every soul seeketh and for the sake of this doth all her actions, having an inkling that it is; but what it is she cannot sufficiently discern, and she knoweth not her way, and concerning this she hath no constant assurance as she hath of other things. — PLATO

Whose souls, albeit in a cloudy memory, yet seek back their good, but, like drunk men, know not the road home. — BOETHIUS

Somewhat it seeketh, and what that is directly it knoweth not, yet very intentive desire thereof doth so incite it, that all other known delights and pleasures are laid aside, they give place to the search of this but only suspected desire. — HOOKER

CHAPTER ONE. The Rules

Knowledge of broken law precedes all other religious experience

I dreamed of a boy who was born in the land of Puritania and his name was John. And I dreamed that when John was able to walk he ran out of his parents' garden on a fine morning on to the road. And on the other side of the road there was a deep wood, but not thick, full of primroses and soft green moss. When John set eyes on this he thought he had never seen anything so beautiful: and he ran across the road and into the wood, and was just about to go down on his hands and knees and to pull up the primroses by handfuls, when his mother came running out of the garden gate, and she also ran across the road, and caught John up, and smacked him soundly and told him he must never go into the wood again. And John cried, but he asked no questions, for he was not yet at the age for asking questions. Then a year went past. And then, another fine morning, John had a little sling and he went out into the garden and he saw a bird sitting on a branch. And John got his sling ready and was going to have a shot at the bird, when the cook came running out of the garden and caught John up and smacked him soundly and told him he must never kill any of the birds in the garden.

'Why?' said John.

'Because the Steward would be very angry,' said cook.

'Who is the Steward?' said John.

'He is the man who makes rules for all the country round here,' said cook.

'Why?' said John.

'Because the Landlord set him to do it.'

'Who is the Landlord?' said John.

'He owns all the country,' said the cook.

'Why?' said John.

John receives his first religious instruction

And when he asked this, the cook went and told his mother. And his mother sat down and talked to John about the Landlord all afternoon: but John took none of it in, for he was not yet at the age for taking it in. Then a year went past, and one dark, cold, wet morning John was made to put on new clothes. They were the ugliest clothes that had ever been put upon him,

which John did not mind at all, but they also caught him under the chin, and were tight under the arms, which he minded a great deal, and they made him itch all over. And his father and mother took him out along the road, one holding him by each hand (which was uncomfortable, too, and very unnecessary), and told him they were taking him to see the Steward. The Steward lived in a big dark house of stone on the side of the road. The father and mother went in to talk to the Steward first, and John was left sitting in the hall on a chair so high that his feet did not reach the floor. There were other chairs in the hall where he could have sat in comfort, but his father had told him that the Steward would be very angry if he did not sit absolutely still and be very good: and John was beginning to be afraid, so he sat still in the high chair with his feet dangling, and his clothes itching all over him, and his eyes starting out of his head. After a very long time his parents came back again, looking as if they had been with the doctor, very grave. Then they said that John must go in and see the Steward too. And when John came into the room, there was an old man with a red, round face, who was very kind and full of jokes, so that John quite got over his fears, and they had a good talk about fishing tackle and bicycles. But just when the talk was at its best, the Steward got up and cleared his throat. He then took down a mask from the wall with a long white beard attached to it and suddenly clapped it on his face, so that his appearance was awful. And he said, ‘Now I am going to talk to you about the Landlord. The Landlord owns all the country, and it is *very*, *very* kind of him to allow us to live on it at all — very, very kind.’ He went on repeating ‘very kind’ in a queer sing-song voice so long that John would have laughed, but that now he was beginning to be frightened again. The Steward then took down from a peg a big card with small print all over it, and said, ‘Here is a list of all the things the Landlord says you must not do. You’d better look at it.’

Did the instructors really mean it?

So John took the card: but half the rules seemed to forbid things he had never heard of, and the other half forbade things he was doing every day and could not imagine not doing: and the number of the rules was so enormous that he felt he could never remember them all. ‘I hope,’ said the Steward, ‘that you have not already broken any of the rules?’ John’s heart began to thump, and his eyes bulged more and more, and he was at his wit’s end when the Steward took the mask off and looked at John with his real face and said, ‘Better tell a lie, old chap, better tell a lie. Easiest for all

concerned,' and popped the mask on his face all in a flash. John gulped and said quickly, 'Oh, no, sir.' 'That is just as well,' said the Steward through the mask. 'Because, you know, if you did break any of them and the Landlord got to know of it, do you know what he'd do to you?' 'No, sir,' said John: and the Steward's eyes seemed to be twinkling dreadfully through the holes of the mask. 'He'd take you and shut you up for ever and ever in a black hole full of snakes and scorpions as large as lobsters — for ever and ever. And besides that, he is such a kind, good man, so very, very kind, that I am sure you would never *want* to displease him.' 'No, sir,' said John. 'But, please, sir . . .' 'Well,' said the Steward. 'Please, sir, supposing I did break one, one little one, just by accident, you know. Could nothing stop the snakes and lobsters?' 'Ah! . . .' said the Steward; and then he sat down and talked for a long time, but John could not understand a single syllable. However, it all ended with pointing out that the Landlord was quite extraordinarily kind and good to his tenants, and would certainly torture most of them to death the moment he had the slightest pretext. 'And you can't blame him,' said the Steward. 'For after all, it *is* his land, and it is so very good of him to let us live here at all — people like us, you know.' Then the Steward took off the mask and had a nice, sensible chat with John again, and gave him a cake and brought him out to his father and mother. But just as they were going he bent down and whispered in John's ear, 'I shouldn't bother about it all too much if I were you.' At the same time he slipped the card of the rules into John's hand and told him he could keep it for his own use.

CHAPTER TWO. The Island

He is more serious than they: and discovers the other Law in his members

Now the days and the weeks went on again, and I dreamed that John had little peace either by day or night for thinking of the rules and the black hole full of snakes. At first he tried very hard to keep them all, but when it came to bed-time he always found that he had broken far more than he had kept: and the thought of the horrible tortures to which the good, kind Landlord would put him became such a burden that next day he would become quite reckless and break as many as he possibly could; for oddly enough this eased his mind for the moment. But then after a few days the fear would return and this time it would be worse than before because of the dreadful number of rules that he had broken during the interval. But what puzzled him most at this time was a discovery which he made after the rules had been hanging in his bedroom for two or three nights: namely, that on the other side of the card, on the back, there was quite a different set of rules. There were so many that he never read them all through and he was always finding new ones. Some of them were very like the rules on the front of the card, but most of them were just the opposite. Thus whereas the front of the card said that you must be always examining yourself to see how many rules you had broken, the back of the card began like this:

Rule 1. — Put the whole thing out of your head
The moment you get into bed.

Or again, whereas the front said that you must always go and ask your elders what the rule about a certain thing was, if you were in the least doubt, the back said:

Rule 2. — Unless they saw you do it,
Keep quiet or else you'll rue it.

He awakes to Sweet Desire; and almost at once mixes his own fantasies with it

And so on. And now I dreamed that John went out one morning and tried to play in the road and to forget his troubles; but the rules kept coming back into his head so that he did not make much of it. However, he went on always a few yards further till suddenly he looked up and saw that he was so far away from home that he was in a part of the road he had never seen before. Then came the sound of a musical instrument, from behind it

seemed, very sweet and very short, as if it were one plucking of a string or one note of a bell, and after it a full, clear voice — and it sounded so high and strange that he thought it was very far away, further than a star. The voice said, Come. Then John saw that there was a stone wall beside the road in that part: but it had (what he had never seen in a garden wall before) a window. There was no glass in the window and no bars; it was just a square hole in the wall. Through it he saw a green wood full of primroses: and he remembered suddenly how he had gone into another wood to pull primroses, as a child, very long ago — so long that even in the moment of remembering the memory seemed still out of reach. While he strained to grasp it, there came to him from beyond the wood a sweetness and a pang so piercing that instantly he forgot his father's house, and his mother, and the fear of the Landlord, and the burden of the rules. All the furniture of his mind was taken away. A moment later he found that he was sobbing, and the sun had gone in: and what it was that had happened to him he could not quite remember, nor whether it had happened in this wood, or in the other wood when he was a child. It seemed to him that a mist which hung at the far end of the wood had parted for a moment, and through the rift he had seen a calm sea, and in the sea an island, where the smooth turf sloped down unbroken to the bays, and out of the thickets peeped the pale, small-breasted Oreads, wise like gods, unconscious of themselves like beasts, and tall enchanters, bearded to their feet, sat in green chairs among the forests. But even while he pictured these things he knew, with one part of his mind, that they were not like the things he had seen — nay, that what had befallen him was not seeing at all. But he was too young to heed the distinction: and too empty, now that the unbounded sweetness passed away, not to seize greedily whatever it had left behind. He had no inclination yet to go into the wood: and presently he went home, with a sad excitement upon him, repeating to himself a thousand times, 'I know now what I want.' The first time that he said it, he was aware that it was not entirely true: but before he went to bed he was believing it.

CHAPTER THREE. The Eastern Mountains

He hears of Death and what his elders pretend to believe about it

John had a disreputable old uncle who was the tenant of a poor little farm beside his father's. One day when John came in from the garden, he found a great hubbub in the house. His uncle was sitting there with his cheeks the colour of ashes. His mother was crying. His father was sitting very still with a solemn face. And there, in the midst of them, was the Steward with his mask on. John crept round to his mother and asked her what the matter was.

'Poor Uncle George has had notice to quit,' she said.

'Why?' said John.

'His lease is up. The Landlord has sent him notice to quit.'

'But didn't you know how long the lease was for?'

'Oh, no, indeed we did not. We thought it was for years and years more. I am sure the Landlord never gave us any idea he was going to turn him out at a moment's notice like this.'

'Ah, but it doesn't need any notice,' broke in the Steward, 'You know he always retains the right to turn anyone out whenever he chooses. It is very good of him to let any of us stay here at all.'

'To be sure, to be sure,' said the mother.

'That goes without saying,' said the father.

'I'm not complaining,' said Uncle George. 'But it seems cruelly hard.'

'Not at all,' said the Steward. 'You've only got to go to the Castle and knock at the gate and see the Landlord himself. You know that he's only turning you out of here to make you much more comfortable somewhere else. Don't you?'

Uncle George nodded. He did not seem able to get his voice.

Suddenly the father looked at his watch. Then he looked up at the Steward and said:

An uncomfortable funeral, lacking both Pagan fortitude and Christian hope

'Well?'

'Yes,' said the Steward.

Then John was sent up to his bedroom and told to put on the ugly and uncomfortable clothes; and when he came downstairs, itching all over, and

tight under the arms, he was given a little mask to put on, and his parents put masks on too. Then I thought in my dream that they wanted to put a mask on Uncle George, but he was trembling so that it would not stay on. So they had to see his face as it was; and his face became so dreadful that everyone looked in a different direction and pretended not to see it. They got Uncle George to his feet with much difficulty, and then they all came out on to the road. The sun was just setting at one end of the road, for the road ran east and west. They turned their backs on the dazzling western sky and there John saw ahead of them the night coming down over the eastern mountains. The country sloped down eastward to a brook, and all this side of the brook was green and cultivated: on the other side of the brook a great black moor sloped upward, and beyond that were the crags and chasms of the lower mountains, and high above them again the bigger mountains: and on top of the whole waste was one mountain so big and black that John was afraid of it. He was told that the Landlord had his castle up there.

They trudged on eastward, a long time, always descending, till they came to the brook. They were so low now that the sunset behind them was out of sight. Before them, all was growing darker every minute, and the cold east wind was blowing out of the darkness, right from the mountain tops. When they had stood for a little, Uncle George looked round on them all once or twice, and said, ‘Oh, dear! Oh, dear!’ in a funny small voice like a child’s. Then he stepped over the brook and began to walk away up the moor. It was now so dark and there were so many ups and downs in the moorland that they lost sight of him almost at once. Nobody ever saw him again.

‘Well,’ said the Steward, untying his mask as they turned homeward. ‘We’ve all got to go when our time comes.’

‘That’s true,’ said the father, who was lighting his pipe. When it was lit he turned to the Steward and said: ‘Some of those pigs of George’s have won prizes.’

Everyone except John cheers up on the way home

‘I’d keep ’em if I were you,’ said the Steward. ‘It’s no time for selling now.’

‘Perhaps you’re right,’ said the father.

John walked behind with his mother.

‘Mother.’

‘Well, dear?’

‘Could any of us be turned out without notice like that any day?’

‘Well, yes. But it is very unlikely.’

‘But we *might* be?’

‘You oughtn’t to be thinking of that sort of thing at your age.’

‘Why oughtn’t I?’

‘It’s not healthy. A boy like you.’

‘Mother.’

‘Yes?’

‘Can *we* break off the lease without notice too?’

‘How do you mean?’

‘Well, the Landlord can turn us out of the farm whenever he likes. Can we leave the farm whenever we like?’

‘No, certainly not.’

‘Why not?’

‘That’s in the lease. We must go when he likes, and stay as long as he likes.’

‘Why?’

‘I suppose because he makes the leases.’

‘What would happen if we did leave?’

‘He would be very angry.’

‘Would he put us in the black hole?’

‘Perhaps.’

‘Mother.’

‘Well, dear?’

‘Will the Landlord put Uncle George in the black hole?’

‘How dare you say such a thing about your poor uncle? Of course he won’t.’

‘But hasn’t Uncle George broken all the rules?’

‘Broken all the rules? Your Uncle George was a very good man.’

‘You never told me that before,’ said John.

CHAPTER FOUR. Leah for Rachel

Greed to recover Desire hides the real offer of its return

Then I turned over in my sleep and began to dream deeper still: and I dreamed that I saw John growing tall and lank till he ceased to be a child and became a boy. The chief pleasure of his life in these days was to go down the road and look through the window in the wall in the hope of seeing the beautiful Island. Some days he saw it well enough, especially at first, and heard the music and the voice. At first he would not look through the window into the wood unless he had heard the music. But after a time both the sight of the Island, and the sounds, became very rare. He would stand looking through the window for hours, and seeing the wood, but no sea or Island beyond it, and straining his ears but hearing nothing except the wind in the leaves. And the yearning for that sight of the Island and the sweet wind blowing over the water from it, though indeed these themselves had given him only yearning, became so terrible that John thought he would die if he did not have them again soon. He even said to himself, ‘I would break every rule on the card for them if I could only get them. I would go down into the black hole for ever if it had a window from which I could see the island.’ Then it came into his head that perhaps he ought to explore the wood and thus he might find his way down to the sea beyond it: so he determined that the next day, whatever he saw or heard at the window, he would go through and spend the whole day in the wood. When the morning came, it had been raining all night and a south wind had blown the clouds away at sunrise, and all was fresh and shining. As soon as he had had his breakfast John was out on the road. With the wind and the birds, and country carts passing, there were many noises about that morning, so that when John heard a strain of music long before he had reached the wall and the window — a strain like that which he desired, but coming from an unexpected quarter — he could not be absolutely certain that he had not imagined it. It made him stand still in the road for a minute, and in my dream I could hear him thinking — like this: ‘If I go after that sound — away off the road, up yonder — it is all luck whether I shall find anything at all. But if I go on to the window, there I *know* I shall reach the wood, and there I can have a good hunt for the shore and the Island. In fact, I shall

insist on finding it. I am determined to. But if I go a new way I shall not be able to insist: I shall just have to take what comes.'

He tries to force himself to feel it, but finds (and accepts) Lust instead

So he went on to the place he knew and climbed through the window into the wood. Up and down and to and fro among the trees he walked, looking this way and that: but he found no sea and no shore, and indeed no end to the wood in any direction. When it came to the middle of the day he was so hot that he sat down and fanned himself. Often, of late, when the sight of the Island had been withheld, he had felt sad and despairing: but what he felt now was more like anger. 'I must have it,' he kept on saying to himself, and then, 'I must have something.' Then it occurred to him that at least he had the wood, which he would once have loved, and that he had not given it a thought all morning. Very well, thought John, I will enjoy the wood: I *will* enjoy it. He set his teeth and wrinkled his forehead and sat still until the sweat rolled off him in an effort to enjoy the wood. But the more he tried the more he felt that there was nothing to enjoy. There was the grass and there were the trees: 'But what am I to *do* with them?' said John. Next it came into his head that he might perhaps get the old feeling — for what, he thought, had the Island ever given him but a *feeling*? — by imagining. He shut his eyes and set his teeth again and made a picture of the Island in his mind: but he could not keep his attention on the picture because he wanted all the time to watch some other part of his mind to see if the *feeling* were beginning. But no feeling began: and then, just as he was opening his eyes he heard a voice speaking to him. It was quite close at hand, and very sweet, and not at all like the old voice of the wood. When he looked round he saw what he had never expected, yet he was not surprised. There in the grass beside him sat a laughing brown girl of about his own age, and she had no clothes on.

'It was me you wanted,' said the brown girl. 'I am better than your silly Islands.'

And John rose and caught her, all in haste, and committed fornication with her in the wood.

CHAPTER FIVE. Ichabod

The deception does not last: but it leaves a habit of sin behind it

After that John was always going to the wood. He did not always have his pleasure of her in the body, though it often ended that way: sometimes he would talk to her about himself, telling her lies about his courage and his cleverness. All that he told her she remembered, so that on other days she could tell it over to him again. Sometimes, even, he would go with her through the wood looking for the sea and the Island, but not often. Meanwhile the year went on and the leaves began to fall in the wood and the skies were more often grey: until now, as I dreamed, John had slept in the wood, and he woke up in the wood. The sun was low and a blustering wind was stripping the leaves from the branches. The girl was still there and the appearance of her was hateful to John: and he saw that she knew this, and the more she knew it the more she stared at him, smiling. He looked round and saw how small the wood was after all — a beggarly strip of trees between the road and a field that he knew well. Nowhere in sight was there anything that he liked at all.

‘I shall not come back here,’ said John. ‘What I wanted is not here. It wasn’t you I wanted, you know.’

‘Wasn’t it?’ said the brown girl. ‘Then be off. But you must take your family with you.’

With that she put up her hands to her mouth and called. Instantly from behind every tree there slipped out a brown girl: each of them was just like herself: the little wood was full of them.

‘What are these?’

‘Our daughters,’ said she. ‘Did you not know you were a father? Did you think I was barren, you fool? And now, children,’ she added, turning to the mob, ‘go with your father.’

Suddenly John became very much afraid and leaped over the wall into the road. There he ran home as fast as he could.

CHAPTER SIX. Quem Quaeritis in Sepulchro? Non est Hic

Sin and the Law torment him, each aggravating the other

From that day forth until he left his home John was not happy. First of all the weight of all the rules that he had broken descended upon him: for while he was going daily to the wood he had almost forgotten the Landlord, and now suddenly the whole reckoning was to pay. In the second place, his last sight of the Island was now so long ago that he had forgotten how to wish for it even, and almost how to set about looking for it. At first he feared to go back to the window in the wall, lest he should meet the brown girl: but he soon found that her family were so constantly with him that place made no difference. Wherever he sat down to rest on a walk, there sooner or later, there would be a little brown girl beside him. When he sat of an evening with his father and mother, a brown girl, visible only to him, would sidle in and sit at his feet: and sometimes his mother would fix her eyes on him and even ask him what he was staring at. But most of all they plagued him whenever he had a fit of fright about the Landlord and the black hole. It was always the same. He would wake one morning full of fear, and take down his card and read it — the front of it — and determine that today he would really begin to keep the rules. And for that day he would, but the strain was intolerable. He used to comfort himself by saying, It will get more easy as I go on. To-morrow it will be easier. But to-morrow was always harder, and on the third day it was worst of all. And on that third day when he crept away to bed, tired to death and raw in his soul, always he would be sure to find a brown girl waiting for him there: and on such a night he had no spirit to resist her blandishments.

But when he perceived that no place was more, or less, haunted than another, then he came sidling back to the window in the wall. He had little hopes of it. He visited it more as a man visits a grave. It was full winter now, and the grove was naked and dark, the trees dripped in it, and the stream — he saw now that it was little more than a gutter — was full of dead leaves and mud. The wall, too, was broken where he had jumped over it. Yet John stood there a long time, many a winter evening, looking in. And he seemed to himself to have reached the bottom of misery.

Sweet Desire returns and he resolves to make it the object of his life

One night he was trudging home from it, when he began to weep. He thought of that first day when he had heard the music and seen the Island: and the longing, not now for the Island itself, but for that moment when he had so sweetly longed for it, began to swell up in a warm wave, sweeter, sweeter, till he thought he could bear no more, and then yet sweeter again, till on the top of it, unmistakably, there came the short sound of music, as if a string had been plucked or a bell struck once. At the same moment a coach had gone past him. He turned and looked after it, in time to see a head even then being withdrawn from the window: and he thought he heard a voice say, Come. And far beyond the coach, among the hills of the western horizon, he thought that he saw a shining sea, and a faint shape of an Island, not much more than a cloud. It was nothing compared with what he had seen the first time: it was so much further away. But his mind was made up. That night he waited till his parents were asleep, and then, putting some few needments together, he stole out by the back door and set his face to the West to seek for the Island.

BOOK TWO. THRILL

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in the heaven above. — EXODUS

The soul of man, therefore, desiring to learn what manner of things these are, casteth her eyes upon objects akin to herself, whereof none sufficeth. And then it is that she saith, With the Lord and with the things whereof I spoke, there is nothing in that likeness; what then is it like? This is the question, oh son of Dionysius, that is the cause of all evils — or rather the travail wherein the soul travaileth about it. — PLATO

Following false copies of the good, that no
Sincere fulfilment of their promise make.
— DANTE

In hand she boldly took
To make another like the former dame,
Another Florimell in shape and look
So lively and so like that many it mistook.
— SPENSER

CHAPTER ONE. Dixit Insipiens

He begins to think for himself and meets Nineteenth century Rationalism

Still I lay dreaming in bed, and looked, and I saw John go plodding along the road westward in the bitter black of a frosty night. He walked so long that the morning broke. Then presently John saw a little inn by the side of the road and a woman with a broom who had opened the door and was sweeping out the rubbish. So he turned in there and called for a breakfast, and while it was cooking he sat down in a hard chair by the newly-lit fire and fell asleep. When he woke the sun was shining in through the window and there was his breakfast laid. Another traveller was already eating: he was a big man with red hair and a red stubble on all his three chins, buttoned up very tight. When they had both finished the traveller rose and cleared his throat and stood with his back to the fire. Then he cleared his throat again and said:

‘A fine morning, young sir.’

‘Yes, sir,’ said John.

‘You are going West, perhaps, young man?’

‘I — I think so.’

‘It is possible that you don’t know me.’

‘I am a stranger here.’

‘No offence,’ said the stranger. ‘My name is Mr. Enlightenment, and I believe it is pretty generally known. I shall be happy to give you my assistance and protection as far as our ways lie together.’

John thanked him very much for this and when they went out from the inn there was a neat little trap waiting, with a fat little pony between the shafts: and its eyes were so bright and its harness was so well polished that it was difficult to say which was twinkling the keener in the morning sunshine. They both got into the trap and Mr. Enlightenment whipped up the fat little pony and they went bowling along the road as if nobody had a care in the world. Presently they began to talk.

‘And where might you come from, my fine lad?’ said Mr. Enlightenment.

Which can explain away religion by any number of methods

‘From Puritania, sir,’ said John.

‘A good place to leave, eh?’

‘I am so glad you think that,’ cried John. ‘I was afraid — —’

‘I hope I am a man of the world,’ said Mr. Enlightenment. ‘Any young fellow who is anxious to better himself may depend on finding sympathy and support in me. Puritania! Why, I suppose you have been brought up to be afraid of the Landlord.’

‘Well, I must admit I sometimes *do* feel rather nervous.’

‘You may make your mind easy, my boy. There is no such person.’

‘There is no Landlord?’

‘There is absolutely no such thing — I might even say no such *entity* — in existence. There never has been and never will be.’

‘And is this absolutely certain?’ cried John; for a great hope was rising in his heart.

‘Absolutely certain. Look at me, young man. I ask you — do I look as if I was easily taken in?’

‘Oh, no,’ said John hastily. ‘I was just wondering, though. I mean — how did they all come to think there was such a person?’

‘The Landlord is an invention of those Stewards. All made up to keep the rest of us under their thumb: and of course the Stewards are hand in glove with the police. They are a shrewd lot, those Stewards. They know which side their bread is buttered on, all right. Clever fellows. Damn me, I can’t help admiring them.’

‘But do you mean that the Stewards don’t believe it themselves?’

‘I dare say they do. It is just the sort of cock and bull story they would believe. They are simple old souls most of them — just like children. They have no knowledge of modern science and they would believe anything they were told.’

John was silent for a few minutes. Then he began again:

‘But how do you *know* there is no Landlord?’

‘Christopher Columbus, Galileo, the earth is round, invention of printing, gunpowder!!’ exclaimed Mr. Enlightenment in such a loud voice that the pony shied.

‘I beg your pardon,’ said John.

‘Eh?’ said Mr. Enlightenment.

‘I didn’t quite understand,’ said John.

‘Evolution’ and ‘Comparative Religion’

‘Why, it’s as plain as a pikestaff,’ said the other. ‘Your people in Puritania believe in the Landlord because they have not had the benefits of

a scientific training. For example, now, I dare say it would be news to you to hear that the earth was round — round as an orange, my lad!'

'Well, I don't know that it would,' said John, feeling a little disappointed. 'My father always said it was round.'

'No, no, my dear boy,' said Mr. Enlightenment, 'you must have misunderstood him. It is well known that everyone in Puritania thinks the earth flat. It is not likely that I should be mistaken on such a point. Indeed, it is out of the question. Then again, there is the palæontological evidence.'

'What's that?'

'Why, they tell you in Puritania that the Landlord made all these roads. But that is quite impossible for old people can remember the time when the roads were not nearly so good as they are now. And what is more, scientists have found all over the country the traces of *old* roads running in quite different directions. The inference is obvious.'

John said nothing.

'I said,' repeated Mr. Enlightenment, 'that the inference was obvious.'

'Oh, yes, yes, of course,' said John hastily, turning a little red.

'Then, again, there is anthropology.'

'I'm afraid I don't know — —'

'Bless me, of course you don't. They don't mean you to know. An anthropologist is a man who goes round your backward villages in these parts, collecting the odd stories that the country people tell about the Landlord. Why, there is one village where they think he has a trunk like an elephant. Now anyone can see that that couldn't be true.'

'It is very unlikely.'

'And what is better still, we know how the villagers came to think so. It all began by an elephant escaping from the local zoo; and then some old villager — he was probably drunk — saw it wandering about on the mountain one night, and so the story grew up that the Landlord had a trunk.'

'Did they catch the elephant again?'

And all the guess-work which masquerades as 'Science'

'Did who?'

'The anthropologists.'

'Oh, my dear boy, you are misunderstanding. This happened long before there were any anthropologists.'

'Then how do they know?'

‘Well, as to that . . . I see that you have a very crude notion of how science actually works. To put it simply — for, of course, you could not understand the *technical* explanation — to put it simply, they know that the escaped elephant must have been the source of the trunk story because they know that an escaped snake must have been the source of the snake story in the next village — and so on. This is called the inductive method. Hypothesis, my dear young friend, establishes itself by a cumulative process: or, to use popular language, if you make the same guess often enough it ceases to be a guess and becomes a Scientific Fact.’

After he had thought for a while, John said:

‘I think I see. Most of the stories about the Landlord are probably untrue; therefore the rest are probably untrue.’

‘Well, that is as near as a beginner can get to it, perhaps. But when you have had a scientific training you will find that you can be quite certain about all sorts of things which now seem to you only probable.’

By this time the fat little pony had carried them several miles, and they had come to a place where a by-road went off to the right. ‘If you are going West, we must part here,’ said Mr. Enlightenment, drawing up. ‘Unless perhaps you would care to come home with me. You see that magnificent city?’ John looked down by the by-road and saw in a flat plain without any trees a huge collection of corrugated iron huts, most of which seemed rather old and rusty.

‘That,’ said Mr. Enlightenment, ‘is the city of Claptrap. You will hardly believe me when I say that I can remember it as a miserable village. When I first came here it had only forty inhabitants: it now boasts a population of twelve million, four hundred thousand, three hundred and sixty-one souls, who include, I may add, the majority of our most influential publicists and scientific popularizers. In this unprecedented development I am proud to say that I have borne no small part: but it is no mock modesty to add that the invention of the printing press has been more important than any merely personal agency. If you would care to join us — —’

He abandons his religion with profound relief

‘Well, thank you,’ said John, ‘but I think I will keep to the main road a little longer.’

He got out of the trap and turned to bid good-bye to Mr. Enlightenment. Then a sudden thought came into his head, and he said:

‘I am not sure that I have really understood all your arguments, sir. Is it absolutely certain that there is no Landlord?’

‘Absolutely. I give you my word of honour.’

With these words they shook hands. Mr. Enlightenment turned the pony’s head up the by-road, gave it a touch with the whip, and in a few moments was out of sight.

CHAPTER TWO. The Hill

Then I saw John bounding forward on his road so lightly that before he knew it he had come to the top of a little hill. It was not because the hill had tired him that he stopped there, but because he was too happy to move. ‘There is no Landlord,’ he cried. Such a weight had been lifted from his mind that he felt he could fly. All round him the frost was gleaming like silver; the sky was like blue glass; a robin sat in the hedge beside him: a cock was crowing in the distance. ‘There is no Landlord.’ He laughed when he thought of the old card of rules hung over his bed in the bedroom, so low and dark, in his father’s house. ‘There is no Landlord. There is no black hole.’ He turned and looked back on the road he had come by: and when he did so he gasped with joy. For there in the East, under the morning light, he saw the mountains heaped up to the sky like clouds, green and violet and dark red; shadows were passing over the big rounded slopes, and water shone in the mountain pools, and up at the highest of all the sun was smiling steadily on the ultimate crags. These crags were indeed so shaped that you could easily take them for a castle: and now it came into John’s head that he had never looked at the mountains before, because, as long as he thought that the Landlord lived there, he had been afraid of them. But now that there was no Landlord he perceived that they were beautiful. For a moment he almost doubted whether the Island could be more beautiful, and whether he would not be wiser to go East, instead of West. But it did not seem to him to matter, for he said, ‘If the world has the mountains at one end and the Island at the other, then every road leads to beauty, and the world is a glory among glories.’

And forthwith has his first explicitly moral experience

At that moment he saw a man walking up the hill to meet him. Now I knew in my dream that this man’s name was Mr. Vertue, and he was about of an age with John, or a little older.

‘What is the name of this place?’ said John.

‘It is called Jehovah-Jirah,’ said Mr. Vertue.

Then they both turned and continued their journey to the West. After they had gone a little way Mr. Vertue stole a glance at John’s face and then he smiled a little.

‘Why do you smile?’ said John.

‘I was thinking that you looked very glad.’

‘So would you be if you had lived in the fear of a Landlord all your life and had just discovered that you were a free man.’

‘Oh, it’s that, is it?’

‘You don’t believe in the Landlord, do you!’

‘I know nothing about him — except by hearsay like the rest of us.’

‘You wouldn’t like to be under his thumb.’

‘Wouldn’t like? I wouldn’t *be* under anyone’s thumb.’

‘You might have to, if he had a black hole.’

‘I’d let him put me in the black hole sooner than take orders if the orders were not to my mind.’

‘Why, I think you are right. I can hardly believe it yet — that I need not obey the rules. There’s that robin again. To think that I could have a shot at it if I liked and no one would interfere with me!’

‘Do you want to?’

‘I’m not sure that I do,’ said John, fingering his sling. But when he looked round on the sunshine and remembered his great happiness and looked twice at the bird, he said, ‘No, I don’t. There is nothing I want less. Still — I could if I liked.’

The Moral Imperative does not fully understand itself

‘You mean you could if you chose.’

‘Where’s the difference?’

‘All the difference in the world.’

CHAPTER THREE. A Little Southward

I thought that John would have questioned him further, but now they came in sight of a woman who was walking slower than they so that presently they came up with her and wished her good-day. When she turned, they saw that she was young and comely, though a little dark of complexion. She was friendly and frank, but not wanton like the brown girls, and the whole world became pleasanter to the young men because they were travelling the same way with her. But first they told her their names, and she told them hers, which was Media Halfways.

‘And where are you travelling to, Mr. Vertue?’ she asked.

‘To travel hopefully is better than to arrive,’ said Vertue.

‘Do you mean you are just out for a walk, just for exercise?’

‘Certainly not,’ said Vertue, who was becoming a little confused. ‘I am on a pilgrimage. I must admit, now that you press me, I have not a very clear idea of the end. But that is not the important question. These speculations don’t make one a better walker. The great thing is to do one’s thirty miles a day.’

‘Why?’

‘Because that is the rule.’

‘Ho-ho!’ said John. ‘So you *do* believe in the Landlord after all.’

‘Not at all. I didn’t say it was the Landlord’s rule.’

‘Whose is it then?’

‘It is my own rule. I made it myself.’

‘But why?’

‘Well, that again is a speculative question. I have made the best rules I can. If I find any better ones I shall adopt them. In the meantime, the great thing is to have rules of some sort and to keep them.’

John decides that Aesthetic Experience is the thing to pursue

‘And where are *you* going?’ said Media, turning to John.

Then John began to tell his companions about the Island, and how he had first seen it, and was determined to give up everything for the hope of finding it.

‘Then you had better come and see my father,’ said she. ‘He lives in the city of Thrill, and at the bottom of this hill there is a turn to the left which will bring us there in half an hour.’

‘Has your father been to the Island? Does he know the way?’

‘He often talks about something very like it.’

‘You had better come with us, Vertue,’ said John, ‘since you do not know where you are going and there can be no place better to go than the Island.’

‘Certainly not,’ said Vertue. ‘We must keep to the road. We must keep on.’

‘I don’t see why,’ said John.

‘I dare say you don’t,’ said Vertue.

All this time they were going down the hill, and now they came to a little grassy lane on the left which went off through a wood. Then I thought that John had a little hesitation: but partly because the sun was now hot and the hard metal of the road was becoming sore to his feet, and partly because he felt a little angry with Vertue, and most of all because Media was going that way, he decided to turn down the lane. They said good-bye to Vertue, and he went on his way stumping up the next hill without ever looking back.

CHAPTER FOUR. Soft Going

When they were in the lane they walked more gently. The grass was soft under their feet, and the afternoon sun beating down on the sheltered place made it warm. And presently they heard a sound of sweet and melancholy chimes.

‘Those are the bells of the city,’ said Media.

‘Romantic’ poetry professes to give *what hitherto he has only* desired

As they went out they walked closer together, and soon they were walking arm in arm. Then they kissed each other: and after that they went on their way kissing and talking in slow voices, of sad and beautiful things. And the shadow of the wood and the sweetness of the girl and the sleepy sound of the bells reminded John a little bit of the Island, and a little bit of the brown girls.

‘This is what I have been looking for all my life,’ said John. ‘The brown girls were too gross and the Island was too fine. This is the real thing.’

‘This is Love,’ said Media with a deep sigh. ‘This is the way to the *real* Island.’

Then I dreamed that they came in sight of the city, very old, and full of spires and turrets, all covered with ivy, where it lay in a little grassy valley, built on both sides of a lazy, winding river. And they passed the gate in the ruinous old city wall and came and knocked at a certain door and were let in. Then Media brought him in to a darkish room with a vaulted roof and windows of stained glass, and exquisite food was brought to them. With the food came old Mr. Halfways. He was a gliding gentleman with soft, silver hair and a soft, silver voice, dressed in flowing robes: and he was so solemn, with his long beard, that John was reminded of the Steward with his mask on. ‘But it is much better than the Steward,’ thought John, ‘because there is nothing to be afraid of. Also, he doesn’t need a mask: his face is really like that.’

CHAPTER FIVE. Leah for Rachel

As they ate John told him about the Island.

‘You will find your Island here,’ said Mr. Halfways, looking into John’s eyes.

‘But how can it be here in the middle of the city?’

‘It needs no place. It is everywhere and nowhere. It refuses entry to none who asks. It is an Island of the Soul,’ said the old gentleman. ‘Surely even in Puritania they told you that the Landlord’s castle was within you?’

For a moment it seems to have kept its promise

‘But I don’t want the castle,’ said John. ‘And I don’t believe in the Landlord.’

‘What is truth?’ said the old man. ‘They were mistaken when they told you of the Landlord: and yet they were not mistaken. What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth, whether it existed before or not. The Landlord they dreamed to find, we find in our hearts: the Island you seek for, you already inhabit. The children of that country are never far from their fatherland.’

When the meal was ended the old gentleman took a harp, and at the first sweep of his hand across the strings John began to think of the music that he had heard by the window in the wall. Then came the voice: and it was no longer merely silver sweet and melancholy like Mr. Halfways’ speaking voice, but strong and noble and full of strange over-tones, the noise of the sea, and of all birds, and sometimes of wind and thunder. And John began to see a picture of the Island with his eyes open: but it was more than a picture, for he sniffed the spicy smell and the sharp brine of the sea mixed with it. He seemed to be in the water, only a few yards from the sand of the Island. He could see more than he had ever seen before. But just as he had put down his feet and touched a sandy bottom and was beginning to wade ashore, the song ceased. The whole vision went away. John found himself back in the dusky room, seated on a low divan, with Media by his side.

‘Now I shall sing you something else,’ said Mr. Halfways.

‘Oh, no,’ cried John, who was sobbing. ‘Sing the same again. Please sing it again.’

‘You had better not hear it twice in the same evening. I have plenty of other songs.’

‘I would die to hear the first one again,’ said John.

‘Well, well,’ said Mr. Halfways, ‘perhaps you know best. Indeed, what does it matter? It is as short to the Island one way as another.’ Then he smiled indulgently and shook his head, and John could not help thinking that his talking voice and talking manner were almost silly after the singing. But as soon as the great deep wail of the music began again it swept everything else from his mind. It seemed to him that this time he got more pleasure from the first few notes, and even noticed delicious passages which had escaped him at the first hearing; and he said to himself, ‘This is going to be even better than the other. I shall keep my head this time and sip all the pleasure at my ease.’ I saw that he settled himself more comfortably to listen and Media slipped her hand into his. It pleased him to think that they were going to the Island together. Now came the vision of the Island again: but this time it was changed, for John scarcely noticed the Island because of a lady with a crown on her head who stood waiting for him on the shore. She was fair, divinely fair. ‘At last,’ said John, ‘a girl with no trace of brown.’ And he began again to wade ashore holding out his arms to embrace that queen: and his love for her appeared to him so great and so pure, and they had been parted for so long, that his pity for himself and her almost overwhelmed him. And as he was about to embrace her the song stopped.

The rapture does not last but dwindles into technical appreciation and sentiment

‘Sing it again, sing it again,’ cried John, ‘I liked it better the second time.’

‘Well, if you insist,’ said Mr. Halfways with a shrug. ‘It is nice to have a really appreciative audience.’ So he sang it the third time. This time John noticed yet more about the music. He began to see how several of the effects were produced and that some parts were better than others. He wondered if it were not a trifle too long. The vision of the Island was a little shadowy this time, and he did not take much notice of it. He put his arm round Media and they lay cheek to cheek. He began to wonder if Mr. Halfways would never end: and when at last the final passage closed, with a sobbing break in the singer’s voice, the old gentleman looked up and saw how the young people lay in one another’s arms. Then he rose and said:

‘You have found your Island — you have found it in one another’s hearts.’

Then he tiptoed from the room, wiping his eyes.

CHAPTER SIX. Ichabod

And would finally turn into Lust, but that in the nick of time

‘Media, I love you,’ said John.

‘We have come to the *real* Island,’ said Media.

‘But oh, alas!’ said he, ‘so long our bodies why do we forbear?’

‘Else a great prince in prison lies,’ sighed she.

‘No one else can understand the mystery of our love,’ said he.

At that moment a brisk, hobnailed step was heard and a tall young man strode into the room carrying a light in his hand. He had coal-black hair and a straight mouth like the slit in a pillar-box, and he was dressed in various kinds of metal wire. As soon as he saw them he burst into a great guffaw. The lovers instantly sprang up and apart.

‘Well, Brownie,’ said he, ‘at your tricks again?’

‘Don’t call me that name,’ said Media, stamping her foot. ‘I have told you before not to call me that.’

The young man made an obscene gesture at her, and then turned to John, ‘I see that old fool of a father of mine has been at you?’

‘You have no right to speak that way of father,’ said Media. Then, turning to John, her cheeks flaming, her breast heaving, she said, ‘All is over. Our dream — is shattered. Our mystery — is profaned. I would have taught you all the secrets of love, and now you are lost to me for ever. We must part. I shall go and kill myself,’ and with that she rushed from the room.

CHAPTER SEVEN. Non est Hic

‘Don’t bother about her,’ said the young man. ‘She has threatened that a hundred times. She is only a brown girl, though she doesn’t know it.’

The ‘modern’ literary movement offers to ‘debunk’ it

‘A brown girl!’ cried John. ‘And your father . . .’

‘My father has been in the pay of the Brownies all his life. He doesn’t know it, the old chuckle-head. Calls them the Muses, or the Spirit, or some rot. In actual fact, he is by profession a pimp.’

‘And the Island?’ said John.

‘We’ll talk about it in the morning. Ain’t the kind of Island you’re thinking of. Tell you what. I don’t live with my father and my precious sister. I live in Eschropolis and I am going back to-morrow. I’ll take you down to the laboratory and show you some *real* poetry. Not fantasies. The real thing.’

‘Thank you very much,’ said John.

Then young Mr. Halfways found his room for him and the whole of that household went to bed.

CHAPTER EIGHT. Great Promises

Gus Halfways was the name of Mr. Halfways' son. As soon as he rose in the morning he called John down to breakfast with him so that they might start on their journey. There was no one to hinder them, for old Halfways was still asleep and Media always had breakfast in bed. When they had eaten, Gus brought him into a shed beside his father's house and showed him a machine on wheels.

'What is this?' said John.

'My old bus,' said young Halfways. Then he stood back with his head on one side and gazed at it for a bit: but presently he began to speak in a changed and reverent voice.

'She is a poem. She is the daughter of the spirit of the age. What was the speed of Atalanta to her speed? The beauty of Apollo to her beauty?'

Now beauty to John meant nothing save glimpses of his Island, and the machine did not remind him of his Island at all: so he held his tongue.

The poetry of the Machine Age is so very pure

'Don't you see?' said Gus. 'Our fathers made images of what they called gods and goddesses; but they were really only brown girls and brown boys whitewashed — as anyone found out by looking at them too long. All self-deception and phallic sentiment. But here you have the real art. Nothing erotic about *her*, eh?'

'Certainly not,' said John, looking at the cog-wheels and coils of wire, 'it is certainly not at all like a brown girl.' It was, in fact, more like a nest of hedgehogs and serpents.

'I should say not,' said Gus. 'Sheer power, eh? Speed, ruthlessness, austerity, significant form, eh! Also' (and here he dropped his voice) 'very expensive indeed.'

Then he made John sit in the machine and he himself sat beside him. Then he began pulling the levers about and for a long time nothing happened: but at last there came a flash and a roar and the machine bounded into the air and then dashed forward. Before John had got his breath they had flashed across a broad thoroughfare which he recognized as the main road, and were racing through the country to the north of it — a flat country of square stony fields divided by barbed wire fences. A moment later they were standing still in a city where all the houses were built of steel.

BOOK THREE. THROUGH DARKEST ZEITGEISTHEIM

And every shrewd turn was exalted among men . . . and simple goodness, wherein nobility doth ever most participate, was mocked away and clean vanished. — THUCYDIDES

Now live the lesser, as lords of the world,
The busy troublers. Banished is our glory,
The earth's excellence grows old and sere.
— ANON

The more ignorant men are, the more convinced are they that their little parish and their little chapel is an apex to which civilization and philosophy has painfully struggled up. — SHAW

CHAPTER ONE. Eschropolis

The poetry of the Silly Twenties

Then I dreamed that he led John into a big room rather like a bathroom: it was full of steel and glass and the walls were nearly all window, and there was a crowd of people there, drinking what looked like medicine and talking at the tops of their voices. They were all either young, or dressed up to look as if they were young. The girls had short hair and flat breasts and flat buttocks so that they looked like boys: but the boys had pale, egg-shaped faces and slender waists and big hips so that they looked like girls — except for a few of them who had long hair and beards.

‘What are they so angry about?’ whispered John.

‘They are not angry,’ said Gus; ‘they are talking about Art.’

Then he brought John into the middle of the room and said:

‘Say! Here’s a guy who has been taken in by my father and wants some real hundred per cent music to clean him out. We had better begin with something neo-romantic to make the transition.’

Then all the Clevers consulted together and presently they all agreed that Victoriana had better sing first. When Victoriana rose John at first thought that she was a schoolgirl: but after he had looked at her again he perceived that she was in fact about fifty. Before she began to sing she put on a dress which was a sort of exaggerated copy of Mr. Halfways’ robes, and a mask which was like the Steward’s mask except that the nose had been painted bright red and one of the eyes had been closed in a permanent wink.

‘Priceless!’ exclaimed one half of the Clevers, ‘too Puritanian.’

But the other half, which included all the bearded men, held their noses in the air and looked very stiff. Then Victoriana took a little toy harp and began. The noises of the toy harp were so strange that John could not think of them as music at all. Then, when she sang, he had a picture in his mind which was a little like the Island, but he saw at once that it was not the Island. And presently he saw people who looked rather like his father, and the Steward and old Mr. Halfways, dressed up as clowns and doing a stiff sort of dance. Then there was a columbine, and some sort of love-story. But suddenly the whole Island turned into an aspidistra in a pot and the song was over.

The ‘Courage’ and mutual loyalty of Artists

‘Priceless,’ said the Clevers.

‘I hope you liked it,’ said Gus to John.

‘Well,’ began John doubtfully, for he hardly knew what to say: but he got no further, for at that moment he had a very great surprise. Victoriana had thrown her mask away and walked up to him and slapped him in the face twice, as hard as she could.

‘That’s right,’ said the Clevers, ‘Victoriana has *courage*. We may not all agree with you, Vikky dear, but we admire your courage.’

‘You may persecute me as much as you like,’ said Victoriana to John. ‘No doubt to see me thus with my back to the wall, wakes the hunting lust in you. You will always follow the cry of the majority. But I will fight to the end. So there,’ and she began to cry.

‘I am extremely sorry,’ said John. ‘But — —’

‘And I *know* it was a good song,’ sobbed Victoriana, ‘because all great singers are persecuted in their lifetime — and I’m per-persecuted — and therefore I *must* be a great singer.’

‘She has you there,’ said the Clevers, as Victoriana left the laboratory.

‘You mustn’t mind her being a little bitter,’ said Gus. ‘She is so temperamental and sensitive, and she has suffered a great deal.’

‘Well, I must admit,’ said one of the Clevers, ‘now that she has gone, that I think that stuff of hers rather *vieux jeu*.’

‘Can’t stand it myself,’ said another.

‘I think it was *her* face that needed slapping,’ said a third.

‘She’s been spoiled and flattered all her life,’ said a fourth. ‘That’s what’s the matter with her.’

‘Quite,’ said the rest in chorus.

CHAPTER TWO. A South Wind

The swamp-literature of the Dirty Twenties

‘Perhaps,’ said Gus, ‘someone else would give us a song.’

‘I will,’ cried thirty voices all together: but one cried much louder than the others and its owner had stepped into the middle of the room before anyone could do anything about it. He was one of the bearded men and wore nothing but a red shirt and a cod-piece made of the skins of crocodiles: and suddenly he began to beat on an African tom-tom and to croon with his voice, swaying his lean, half-clad body to and fro and staring at them all, out of eyes which were like burning coals. This time John saw no picture of an Island at all. He seemed to be in a dark green place full of tangled roots and hairy vegetable tubes: and all at once he saw in it shapes moving and writhing that were not vegetable but human. And the dark green grew darker, and a fierce heat came out of it: and suddenly all the shapes that were moving in the darkness came together to make a single obscene image which dominated the whole room. And the song was over.

‘Priceless,’ said the Clevers. ‘Too stark! Too virile.’

John blinked and looked round; and when he saw all the Clevers as cool as cucumbers, smoking their cigarettes and drinking the drinks that looked like medicines, all as if nothing remarkable had happened, he was troubled in his mind; for he thought that the song must have meant something different to them, and ‘If so,’ he argued, ‘what very pure-minded people they must be.’ Feeling himself among his betters, he became ashamed.

‘You like it, *hein*?’ said the bearded singer.

‘I — I don’t think I understood it,’ said John.

‘I make you like it, *hein*,’ said the singer, snatching up his tom-tom again. ‘It was what you *really* wanted all the time.’

‘No, no,’ cried John. ‘I know you are wrong there. I grant you, that — that sort of thing — is what I always *get* if I think too long about the Island. But it can’t be what I *want*.’

It was a low-brow blunder to mention the most obvious thing about it

‘No? Why not?’

‘If it is what I wanted, why am I so disappointed when I get it? If what a man really wanted was food, how could he be disappointed when the food arrived? As well, I don’t understand — —’

‘What you not understand? I explain to you.’

‘Well, it’s like this. I thought that you objected to Mr. Halfways’ singing because it led to brown girls in the end.’

‘So we do.’

‘Well, why is it better to lead to black girls in the beginning?’

A low whistle ran round the whole laboratory. John knew he had made a horrible blunder.

‘Look here,’ said the bearded singer in a new voice, ‘what do you mean? You are not suggesting that there is anything of that kind about my singing, are you?’

‘I — I suppose — perhaps it was my fault,’ stammered John.

‘In other words,’ said the singer, ‘you are not yet able to distinguish between art and pornography!’ and advancing towards John very deliberately, he spat in his face and turned to walk out of the room.

‘That’s right, Phally,’ cried the Clevers, ‘serve him right.’

‘Filthy-minded little beast,’ said one.

‘Yah! Puritanian!’ said a girl.

‘I expect he’s impotent,’ whispered another.

‘You mustn’t be too hard on him,’ said Gus. ‘He is full of inhibitions and everything he says is only a rationalization of them. Perhaps he would get on better with something more formal. Why don’t you sing, Glugly?’

CHAPTER THREE. Freedom of Thought

Glugly instantly rose. She was very tall and as lean as a post: and her mouth was not quite straight in her face. When she was in the middle of the room, and silence had been obtained, she began to make gestures. First of all she set her arms a-kimbo and cleverly turned her hands the wrong way so that it looked as if her wrists were sprained. Then she waddled to and fro with her toes pointing in. After that she twisted herself to make it look as if her hip bone was out of joint. Finally she made some grunts, and said:

The gibberish-literature of the Lunatic Twenties

‘Globol obol oogle ogle globol gloogle gloo,’ and ended by pursing up her lips and making a vulgar noise such as children make in their nurseries. Then she went back to her place and sat down.

‘Thank you very much,’ said John politely.

But Glugly made no reply, for Glugly could not talk, owing to an accident in infancy.

‘I hoped you liked it,’ said young Halfways.

‘I didn’t understand her.’

‘Ah,’ said a woman in spectacles who seemed to be Glugly’s nurse or keeper, ‘that is because you are looking for beauty. You are still thinking of your Island. You have got to realize that satire is the moving force in modern music.’

‘It is the expression of a savage disillusionment,’ said someone else.

‘Reality has broken down,’ said a fat boy who had drunk a great deal of the medicine and was lying flat on his back, smiling happily.

‘Our art *must* be brutal,’ said Glugly’s nurse.

‘We lost our ideals when there was a war in this country,’ said a very young Clever, ‘they were ground out of us in the mud and the flood and the blood. That is why we have to be so stark and brutal.’

‘But, look here,’ cried John, ‘that war was years ago. It was your fathers who were in it: and they are all settled down and living ordinary lives.’

‘Puritanian! Bourgeois!’ cried the Clevers. Everyone seemed to have risen.

‘Hold your tongue,’ whispered Gus in John’s ear. But already someone had struck John on the head, and as he bowed under the blow someone else hit him from behind.

‘It was the mud and the blood,’ hissed the girls all round him.

‘Well,’ said John, ducking to avoid a retort that had been flung at him, ‘if you are really old enough to remember that war, why do you pretend to be so young?’

‘We are young,’ they howled; ‘we are the new movement; we are the revolt.’

He abandons ‘the Movement’, though a little damaged by it

‘We have got over humanitarianism,’ bellowed one of the bearded men, kicking John on the kneecap.

‘And prudery,’ said a thin little old maid trying to wrench his clothes off from the neck. And at the same moment six girls leaped at his face with their nails, and he was kicked in the back and the belly, and tripped up so that he fell on his face, and hit again as he rose, and all the glass in the world seemed breaking round his head as he fled for his life from the laboratory. And all the dogs of Eschropolis joined in the chase as he ran along the street, and all the people followed pelting him with ordure, and crying:

‘Puritanian! Bourgeois! Prurient!’

CHAPTER FOUR. The Man Behind the Gun

When John could run no further he sat down. The noise of the pursuers had died away and, looking back, he could see no sign of Eschropolis. He was covered with filth and blood, and his breathing hurt him. There seemed to be something wrong with one of his wrists. As he was too tired to walk he sat still and thought for a while. And first he thought that he would like to go back to Mr. Halfways. ‘It is true,’ he said, ‘that if you listened to him too long it would lead you to Media — and she *had* a trace of brown in her. But then you had a glimpse of the Island first. Now the Clevers took you straight to brown girls — or worse — without even a glimpse of the Island. I wonder would it be possible to keep always at the Island stage with Mr. Halfways? Must it always end like that?’ Then it came into his head that after all he did not want Mr. Halfways’ songs, but the Island itself: and that this was the only thing he wanted in the world. And when he remembered this he rose very painfully to continue his journey, looking round for the West. He was still in the flat country, but there seemed to be mountains ahead, and above them the sun was setting. A road ran towards them: so he began to limp along it. Soon the sunset disappeared and the sky was clouded over and a cold rain began.

What did the Revolutionary Intellectuals live on?

When he had limped about a mile he passed a man who was mending the fence of his field and smoking a big cigar. John stopped and asked him if he knew the way to the sea.

‘Nope,’ said the man without looking up.

‘Do you know of any place in this country where I could get a night’s lodging?’

‘Nope,’ said the man.

‘Could you give me a piece of bread?’ said John.

‘Certainly not,’ said Mr. Mammon, ‘it would be contrary to all economic laws. It would pauperize you.’ Then, when John lingered, he added, ‘Move on. I don’t want any loiterers about here.’

John limped on for about ten minutes. Suddenly he heard Mr. Mammon calling out to him. He stopped and turned round.

‘What do you want?’ shouted John.

‘Come back,’ said Mr. Mammon.

John was so tired and hungry that he humbled himself to walk back (and the way seemed long) in the hope that Mammon had relented. When he came again to the place where they had talked before, the man finished his work without speaking and then said:

‘Where did you get your clothes torn?’

‘I had a quarrel with the Clevers in Eschropolis.’

‘Clevers?’

‘Don’t you know them?’

‘Never heard of them.’

‘You know Eschropolis?’

‘Know it? I *own* Eschropolis.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘What do you suppose they live on?’

‘I never thought of that.’

‘Every man of them earns his living by writing for me or having shares in my land. I suppose the “Clevers” is some nonsense they do in their spare time — when they’re not beating up tramps,’ and he glanced at John. Then he resumed his work.

‘You needn’t wait,’ he said presently.

CHAPTER FIVE. Under Arrest

He is hindered from pursuing his quest by the intellectual climate of the Age

Then I turned round and immediately began to dream again and I saw John plodding westward in the dark and the rain, in great distress, because he was too tired to go on and too cold to stop. And after a time there came a north wind that drove the rain away and skinned the puddles with ice and set the bare boughs clashing in the trees. And the moon came out. Now John looked up with his teeth chattering and saw that he was entering into a long valley of rocks with high cliffs on the right and the left. And the far end of the valley was barred with a high cliff all across except for one narrow pass in the middle. The moonlight lay white on this cliff and right amidst it was a huge shadow like a man's head. John glanced over his shoulder and saw that the shadow was thrown by a mountain behind him, which he had passed in the darkness.

It was far too cold for a man to stay still in the wind, and I dreamed of John going stumblingly forward up the valley till now he had come to the rock-wall and was about to enter the pass. But just as he rounded a great boulder and came full in sight of the pass he saw some armed men sitting in it by a brazier; and immediately they sprang up and barred his way.

'You can't pass here,' said their leader.

'Where can I pass?' said John.

'Where are you going to?'

'I am going to find the sea in order to set sail for an Island that I have seen in the West.'

'Then you cannot pass.'

'By whose orders?'

'Do you not know that all this country belongs to the Spirit of the Age?'

'I am sorry,' said John, 'I didn't know. I have no wish to trespass. I will go round some other way. I will not go through his country at all.'

Specially Freudianism

'You fool,' said the captain, 'you are in his country *now*. This pass is the way out of it, not the way into it. He welcomes strangers. His quarrel is with runaways.' Then he called to one of his men and said, 'Here, Enlightenment, take this fugitive to our Master.'

A young man stepped out and clapped fetters upon John’s hands: then putting the length of chain over his own shoulder and giving it a jerk he began to walk down the valley dragging John after him.

CHAPTER SIX. Poisoning the Wells

Then I saw them going down the valley, the way John had come up, with the moon full in their faces: and up against the moon was the mountain which had cast the shadow, and now it looked more like a man than before.

‘Mr. Enlightenment,’ said John at last. ‘Is it really you?’

‘Why should it not be?’ said the guard.

‘You looked so different when I met you before.’

‘We have never met before.’

‘What? Did you not meet me at the inn on the borders of Puritania and drive me five miles in your pony trap?’

‘Oh, *that*?’ said the other. ‘That must have been my father, old Mr. Enlightenment. He is a vain and ignorant old man, almost a Puritanian, and we never mention him in the family. I am Sigismund Enlightenment and I have long since quarrelled with my father.’

They went on in silence for a bit. Then Sigismund spoke again.

‘It may save trouble if I tell you at once the best reason for not trying to escape: namely, that there is nowhere to escape to.’

‘How do you know there is no such place as my Island?’

‘Do you wish very much that there was?’

‘I do.’

‘Have you never before imagined anything to be true because you greatly wished for it?’

John thought for a little, and then he said ‘Yes.’

All is only Wish-Fulfilment

‘And your Island is *like* an imagination — isn’t it?’

‘I suppose so.’

‘It is just the sort of thing you *would* imagine merely through wanting it — the whole thing is very suspicious. But answer me another question. Have you ever — ever once yet — had a vision of the Island that did not end in brown girls?’

‘I don’t know that I have. But they weren’t what I wanted.’

‘No. What you wanted was to have them, and with them, the satisfaction of feeling that you were good. Hence the Island.’

‘You mean — —’

‘The Island was the pretence that you put up to conceal your own lusts from yourself.’

‘All the same — I was disappointed when it ended like that.’

‘Yes. You were disappointed at finding that you could not have it both ways. But you lost no time in having it the way you could: you did not reject the brown girls.’

They went on in silence for a time and always the mountain with its odd shape grew bigger in front of them; and now they were in its shadow. Then John spoke again, half in his sleep, for he was very tired.

‘After all, it isn’t only my Island. I might go back — back East and try the mountains.’

‘The mountains do not exist.’

‘How do you know?’

‘Have you ever been there? Have you ever seen them except at night or in a blaze of sunrise?’

‘No.’

‘And your ancestors must have enjoyed thinking that when their leases were out they would go up to the mountains and live in the Landlord’s castle — It is a more cheerful prospect than going — nowhere.’

‘I suppose so.’

‘It is clearly one more of the things people *wish* to believe.’

‘But do we never do anything else? Are all the things I see at this moment there, only because I wish to see them?’

A doctrine which leads to the giant’s prison

‘Most of them,’ said Sigismund. ‘For example — you would like that thing in front of us to be a mountain; that is why you think it is a mountain.’

‘Why?’ cried John. ‘What is it?’

And then in my nightmare I thought John became like a terrified child and put his hands over his eyes not to see the giant; but young Mr. Enlightenment tore his hands away and forced his face round and made him see the Spirit of the Age where it sat like one of the stone giants, the size of a mountain, with its eyes shut. Then Mr. Enlightenment opened a little door among the rocks and flung John into a pit made in the side of a hill, just opposite the giant, so that the giant could look into it through its gratings.

‘He will open his eyes presently,’ said Mr. Enlightenment. Then he locked the door and left John in prison.

CHAPTER SEVEN. Facing the Facts

He sees all humanity as bundles of complexes

John lay in his fetters all night in the cold and stench of the dungeon. And when morning came there was a little light at the grating, and, looking round, John saw that he had many fellow prisoners, of all sexes and ages. But instead of speaking to him, they all huddled away from the light and drew as far back into the pit, away from the grating, as they could. But John thought that if he could breathe a little fresh air he would be better, and he crawled up to the grating. But as soon as he looked out and saw the giant, it crushed the heart out of him: and even as he looked, the giant began to open his eyes and John, without knowing why he did it, shrank from the grating. Now I dreamed that the giant's eyes had this property, that whatever they looked on became transparent. Consequently, when John looked round into the dungeon, he retreated from his fellow prisoners in terror, for the place seemed to be thronged with demons. A woman was seated near him, but he did not know it was a woman, because, through the face, he saw the skull and through that the brains and the passages of the nose, and the larynx, and the saliva moving in the glands and the blood in the veins: and lower down the lungs panting like sponges, and the liver, and the intestines like a coil of snakes. And when he averted his eyes from her they fell on an old man, and this was worse for the old man had a cancer. And when John sat down and drooped his head, not to see the horrors, he saw only the working of his own inwards. Then I dreamed of all these creatures living in that hole under the giant's eye for many days and nights. And John looked round on it all and suddenly he fell on his face and thrust his hands into his eyes and cried out, 'It is the black hole. There may be no Landlord, but it is true about the black hole. I am mad. I am dead. I am in hell for ever.'

CHAPTER EIGHT. Parrot Disease

Every day a jailor brought the prisoners their food, and as he laid down the dishes he would say a word to them. If their meal was flesh he would remind them that they were eating corpses, or give them some account of the slaughtering: or, if it was the inwards of some beast, he would read them a lecture in anatomy and show the likeness of the mess to the same parts in themselves — which was the more easily done because the giant's eyes were always staring into the dungeon at dinner time. Or if the meal were eggs he would recall to them that they were eating the menstruum of a verminous fowl, and crack a few jokes with the female prisoners. So he went on day by day. Then I dreamed that one day there was nothing but milk for them, and the jailor said as he put down the pipkin:

'Our relations with the cow are not delicate — as you can easily see if you imagine eating any of her other secretions.'

Now John had been in the pit a shorter time than any of the others: and at these words something seemed to snap in his head and he gave a great sigh and suddenly spoke out in a loud, clear voice:

'Thank heaven! Now at last I know that you are talking nonsense.'

'What do you mean?' said the jailor, wheeling round upon him.

Until at last his commonsense revolts

'You are trying to pretend that unlike things are like. You are trying to make us think that milk is the same sort of thing as sweat or dung.'

'And pray, what difference is there except by custom?'

'Are you a liar or only a fool, that you see no difference between that which Nature casts out as refuse and that which she stores up as food?'

'So Nature is a person, then, with purposes and consciousness,' said the jailor with a sneer. 'In fact, a Landlady. No doubt it comforts you to imagine you can believe that sort of thing;' and he turned to leave the prison with his nose in the air.

'I know nothing about that,' shouted John after him. 'I am talking of what happens. Milk does feed calves and dung does not.'

'Look here,' cried the jailor, coming back, 'we have had enough of this. It is high treason and I shall bring you before the Master.' Then he jerked John up by his chain and began to drag him towards the door; but John as he was being dragged, cried out to the others, 'Can't you see it's all a

cheat?’ Then the jailor struck him in the teeth so hard that his mouth was filled with blood and he became unable to speak: and while he was silent the jailor addressed the prisoners and said:

‘You see he is trying to argue. Now tell me, someone, what is argument?’

There was a confused murmur.

‘Come, come,’ said the jailor. ‘You must know your catechisms by now. You, there’ (and he pointed to a prisoner little older than a boy whose name was Master Parrot), ‘what is argument?’

‘Argument,’ said Master Parrot, ‘is the attempted rationalization of the arguer’s desires.’

‘Very good,’ replied the jailor, ‘but you should turn out your toes and put your hands behind your back. That is better. Now: what is the proper answer to an argument proving the existence of the Landlord?’

‘The proper answer is, “You say that because you are a Steward.”’

‘Good boy. But hold your head up. That’s right. And what is the answer to an argument proving that Mr. Phally’s songs are just as brown as Mr. Halfways’?’

‘There are two only generally necessary to damnation,’ said Master Parrot. ‘The first is, “You say that because you are a Puritanian,” and the second is, “You say that because you are a sensualist.”’

The spell begins to break

‘Good. Now just one more. What is the answer to an argument turning on the belief that two and two make four?’

‘The answer is, “You say that because you are a mathematician.”’

‘You are a very good boy,’ said the jailor. ‘And when I come back I shall bring you something nice. And now for *you*,’ he added, giving John a kick and opening the grating.

CHAPTER NINE. The Giant Slayer

When they came out into the air John blinked a little, but not much, for they were still only in a half-light under the shadow of the giant, who was very angry, with smoke coming from his mouth, so that he looked more like a volcano than an ordinary mountain. And now John gave himself up for lost, but just as the jailor had dragged him up to the giant's feet, and had cleared his throat, and begun 'The case against this prisoner—' there was a commotion and a sound of horse's hoofs. The jailor looked round, and even the giant took his terrible eyes off John and looked round: and last of all, John himself looked round too. They saw some of the guard coming towards them leading a great black stallion, and in it was seated a figure wound in a cloak of blue which was hooded over the head and came down concealing the face.

'Another prisoner, Lord,' said the leader of the guards.

Then very slowly the giant raised his great, heavy finger and pointed to the mouth of the dungeon.

'Not yet,' said the hooded figure. Then suddenly it stretched out its hands with the fetters on them and made a quick movement of the wrists. There was a tinkling sound as the fragments of the broken chain fell on the rock at the horse's feet: and the guardsmen let go the bridle and fell back, watching. Then the rider threw back the cloak and a flash of steel smote light into John's eyes and on the giant's face. John saw that it was a woman in the flower of her age: she was so tall that she seemed to him a Titaness, a sun-bright virgin clad in complete steel, with a sword naked in her hand. The giant bent forward in his chair and looked at her.

Once rational argument is allowed a hearing the giant is lost

'Who are you?' he said.

'My name is Reason,' said the virgin.

'Make out her passport quickly,' said the giant in a low voice. 'And let her go through our dominions and be off with all the speed she wishes.'

'Not yet,' said Reason. 'I will ask you three riddles before I go, for a wager.'

'What is the pledge?' said the giant.

'Your head,' said Reason.

There was silence for a time among the mountains.

‘Well,’ said the giant at last, ‘what must be, must be. Ask on.’

‘This is my first riddle,’ said Reason. ‘What is the colour of things in dark places, of fish in the depth of the sea, or of the entrails in the body of man?’

‘I cannot say,’ said the giant.

‘Well,’ said Reason. ‘Now hear my second riddle. There was a certain man who was going to his own house and his enemy went with him. And his house was beyond a river too swift to swim and too deep to wade. And he could go no faster than his enemy. While he was on his journey his wife sent to him and said, You know that there is only one bridge across the river: tell me, shall I destroy it that the enemy may not cross; or shall I leave it standing that you may cross? What should this man do?’

‘It is too hard for me,’ said the giant.

‘Well,’ said Reason. ‘Try now to answer my third riddle. By what rule do you tell a copy from an original?’

The giant muttered and mumbled and could not answer, and Reason set spurs in her stallion and it leaped up on to the giant’s mossy knees and galloped up his foreleg, till she plunged her sword into his heart. Then there was a noise and a crumbling like a landslide and the huge carcass settled down: and the Spirit of the Age became what he had seemed to be at first, a sprawling hummock of rock.

BOOK FOUR. BACK TO THE ROAD

Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like: but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things: full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves? — BACON

CHAPTER ONE. Let Grill be Grill

But those who have been Freudianised too long are incurable

The guards had fled. Reason dismounted from her horse and wiped her sword clean on the moss of the foot hills which had been the giant's knees. Then she turned to the door of the pit and struck it so that it broke and she could look into the darkness of the pit and smell the filth.

'You can all come out,' she said.

But there was no movement from within: only, John could hear the prisoners wailing together and saying:

'It is one more wish-fulfilment dream: it is one more wish-fulfillment dream. Don't be taken in again.'

But presently Master Parrot came to the mouth of the pit and said, 'There is no good trying to fool us. Once bit twice shy.' Then he put out his tongue and retired.

'This psittacosis is a very obstinate disorder,' said Reason. And she turned to mount the black horse.

'May I come with you, lady?' said John.

'You may come until you are tired,' said Reason.

CHAPTER TWO. Archtype and Ectype

In my dream I saw them set off together, John walking by the lady's stirrup: and I saw them go up the rocky valley where John had gone on the night of his capture. They found the pass unguarded and it gave back an echo to the horse's hoofs and then in a moment they were out of the mountain country and going down a grassy slope into the land beyond. There were few trees and bare, and it was cold: but presently John looked aside and saw a crocus in the grass. For the first time for many days the old sweetness pierced through John's heart: and the next moment he was trying to call back the sound of the birds wheeling over the Island and the green of the waves breaking on its sand — for they had all flashed about him but so quickly that they were gone before he knew. His eyes were wet.

A question-begging argument exposed

He turned to Reason and spoke.

'You can tell me, lady. Is there such a place as the Island in the West, or is it only a feeling of my own mind?'

'I cannot tell you,' said she, 'because you do not know.'

'But you know.'

'But I can tell you only what *you* know. I can bring things out of the dark part of your mind into the light part of it. But now you ask me what is not even in the dark part of your mind.'

'Even if it were only a feeling in my own mind, would it be a bad feeling?'

'I have nothing to tell you of good and bad.'

'I mean this,' said John. 'And this you can tell me. Is it true that it must always end in brown girls, or rather, that it really *begins* from brown girls? They say it is all a pretence, all a disguise for lust.'

'And what do you think of that saying?'

'It is very like that,' said John. 'Both are sweet. Both are full of longing. The one runs into the other. They *are* very alike.'

'Indeed they are,' said the lady. 'But do you not remember my third riddle?'

'About the copy and the original? I could not understand it.'

'Well, now you shall. The people in the country we have just left have seen that your love for the Island is very like your love for the brown girls.

Therefore they say that one is a copy of the other. They would also say that you have followed me because I am like your mother, and that your trust in me is a copy of your love for your mother. And then they would say again that your love for your mother is a copy of your love for the brown girls; and so they would come full circle.'

'And what should I answer them?'

'You would say, perhaps one is a copy of the other. But which is the copy of which?'

'I never thought of that.'

The sciences bring *to the 'facts' the philosophy they claim to* derive from *them*

'You are not yet of an age to have thought much,' said Reason. 'But you must see that if two things are alike, then it is a further question whether the first is copied from the second, or the second from the first, or both from a third.'

'What would the third be?'

'Some have thought that all these loves were copies of our love for the Landlord.'

'But surely they have considered that and rejected it. Their sciences have disproved it.'

'They could not have, for their sciences are not concerned at all with the general relations of this country to anything that may lie East of it or West of it. They indeed will tell you that their researches have proved that if two things are similar, the fair one is always the copy of the foul one. But their only reason to say so is that they have already decided that the fairest things of all — that is the Landlord, and, if you like, the mountains and the Island — are a mere copy of *this* country. They pretend that their researches lead to that doctrine: but in fact they assume that doctrine first and interpret their researches by it.'

'But they have reasons for assuming it.'

'They have none, for they have ceased to listen to the only people who can tell them anything about it.'

'Who are they?'

'They are younger sisters of mine, and their names are Philosophy and Theology.'

'Sisters! Who is your father?'

'You will know sooner than you wish.'

And now the evening was falling and they were near a little farm, so they turned in there and asked a night’s lodging of the farmer, which was readily given them.

CHAPTER THREE. Esse is Percipi

Next morning they continued their journey together. In my dream I saw them go through a country of little hills where the road was always winding to conform to the lie of the valleys: and John walked at the lady's stirrup. The fetter of his hands had broken at the moment when she killed the giant, but the handcuffs were still on his wrists. One half of the broken chain hung down from each hand. There was a greater mildness in the air this day and the buds were fully formed in the hedges.

The Reason's duty not (even for life's sake) to decide without evidence

'I have been thinking, lady,' said John, 'of what you said yesterday and I think I understand that though the Island is very like the place where I first met the brown girl, yet she might be the shadow and the Island the reality. But there is one thing that troubles me.'

'What is that?' said Reason.

'I cannot forget what I have seen in the giant's prison. If we are really like that inside, whatever we imagine must be abominable however innocent it looks. It may be true in general that the foul thing is not always the original and the fair thing not always the copy. But when we have to do with human imaginations, with things that come out of *us*, surely then the giant is right? There at least it is much more likely that whatever seems good is only a veil for the bad — only a part of our skin that has so far escaped the giant's eyes and not yet become transparent.'

'There are two things to be said about that,' replied the lady, 'and the first is this. Who told you that the Island was an imagination of yours?'

'Well, you would not assure me that it was anything real.'

'Nor that it was not.'

'But I must think it is one or the other.'

'By my father's soul, you must *not* — until you have some evidence. Can you not remain in doubt?'

'I don't know that I have ever tried.'

'You must learn to, if you are to come far with me. It is not hard to do it. In Eschropolis, indeed, it is impossible, for the people who live there have to give an opinion once a week or once a day, or else Mr. Mammon would soon cut off their food. But out here in the country you can walk all day and

all the next day with an unanswered question in your head: you need never speak until you have made up your mind.’

Why all accounts of the Unconscious are misleading

‘But if a man wanted to know so badly that he would die unless the question was decided — and no more evidence turned up.’

‘Then he would die, that would be all.’

They went on in silence for a while.

‘You said there were two things to say,’ said John. ‘What was the second?’

‘The second was this. Did you think that the things you saw in the dungeon were *real*: that we really are like that?’

‘Of course I did. It is only our skin that hides them.’

‘Then I must ask you the same question that I asked the giant. ‘What is the colour of things in the dark?’

‘I suppose, no colour at all.’

‘And what of their shape? Have you any notion of it save as what could be seen or touched, or what you could collect from many seeings and touchings?’

‘I don’t know that I have.’

‘Then do you not see how the giant has deceived you?’

‘Not quite clearly.’

‘He showed you by a trick what our inwards *would* look like if they were visible. That is, he showed you something that is not, but something that would be if the world were made all other than it is. But in the real world our inwards are invisible. They are not coloured shapes at all, they are feelings. The warmth in your limbs at this moment, the sweetness of your breath as you draw it in, the comfort in your belly because we breakfasted well, and your hunger for the next meal — these are the reality: all the sponges and tubes that you saw in the dungeon are the lie.’

‘But if I cut a man open I should see them in him.’

‘A man cut open is, so far, not a man: and if you did not sew him up speedily you would be seeing not organs, but death. I am not denying that death is ugly: but the giant made you believe that life is ugly.’

‘I cannot forget the man with the cancer.’

‘What you saw was unreality. The ugly lump was the giant’s trick: the reality was pain, which has no colour or shape.’

‘Is that much better?’

Though they also have their use

‘That depends on the man.’

‘I think I begin to see.’

‘Is it surprising that things should look strange if you see them as they are not? If you take an organ out of a man’s body — or a longing out of the dark part of a man’s mind — and give to the one the shape and colour, and to the other the self-consciousness, which they never have in reality, would you expect them to be other than monstrous?’

‘Is there, then, no truth at all in what I saw under the giant’s eyes?’

‘Such pictures are useful to physicians.’

‘Then I really am clean,’ said John. ‘I am not — like those.’

Reason smiled. ‘There, too,’ she said, ‘there is truth mixed up with the giant’s conjuring tricks. It will do you no harm to remember from time to time the ugly sights inside. You come of a race that cannot afford to be proud.’

As she spoke John looked up, in doubt of her meaning: and for the first time since he came into her company he felt afraid. But the impression lasted only for a moment. ‘Look,’ said John, ‘here is a little inn. Is it not time that we rested and ate something?’

CHAPTER FOUR. Escape

In the warmth of the afternoon they went on again, and it came into John's mind to ask the lady the meaning of her second riddle.

'It has two meanings,' said she, 'and in the first the bridge signifies Reasoning. The Spirit of the Age wishes to allow argument and not to allow argument.'

'How is that?'

'You heard what they said. If anyone argues with them they say that he is rationalizing his own desires, and therefore need not be answered. But if anyone listens to them they will then argue themselves to show that their own doctrines are true.'

'I see. And what is the cure for this?'

If Religion is a Wish-Fulfilment dream, whose wishes does it fulfil?

'You must ask them whether any reasoning is valid or not. If they say no, then their own doctrines, being reached by reasoning, fall to the ground. If they say yes, then they will have to examine your arguments and refute them on their merits: for if some reasoning is valid, for all they know, your bit of reasoning may be one of the valid bits.'

'I see,' said John. 'But what was the second interpretation?'

'In the second,' said Reason, 'the bridge signifies the giant's own favourite doctrine of the wish-fulfilment dream. For this also he wishes to use and not to use.'

'I don't see how he wishes *not* to use it.'

'Does he not keep on telling people that the Landlord is a wish-fulfilment dream?'

'Yes; surely that is true — the only true thing he did say.'

'Now think. Is it really true that the giant and Sigismund, and the people in Eschropolis, and Mr. Halfways, are going about filled with a longing that there should be a Landlord, and cards of rules, and a mountain land beyond the brook, with a possibility of a black hole?'

Then John stood still on the road to think. And first he gave a shake of his shoulders, and then he put his hands to his sides, and then he began to laugh till he was almost shaken to pieces. And when he had nearly finished, the vastness and impudence and simplicity of the fraud which had been practised came over him all again, and he laughed harder. And just when he

had nearly recovered and was beginning to get his breath again, suddenly he had a picture in his mind of Victoriana and Glugly and Gus Halfways and how they would look if a rumour reached them that there *was* a Landlord and he was coming to Eschropolis. This was too much for him, and he laughed so hard that the broken chains of the Spirit of the Age fell off his wrists altogether. But all the while Reason sat and watched him.

'You had better hear the rest of the argument,' she said at last. 'It may not be such a laughing matter as you suppose.'

'Oh, yes — the argument,' said John, wiping his eyes.

'You see now the direction in which the giant does *not* want the wish-fulfilment theory used?'

'I'm not sure that I do,' said John.

'Don't you see what follows if you adopt his own rules?'

Certainly not John's!

'No,' said John, very loudly: for a terrible apprehension was stealing over him.

'But you must see,' said Reason, 'that for him and all his subjects *disbelief* in the Landlord is a wish-fulfilment dream.'

'I shall not adopt his rules.'

'You would be foolish not to have profited *at all* by your stay in his country,' said Reason. 'There is some force in the wish-fulfilment doctrine.'

'Some, perhaps, but very little.'

'I only wanted to make it clear that whatever force it had was in favour of the Landlord's existence, not against it — specially in your case.'

'Why specially in mine?' said John sulkily.

'Because the Landlord is the thing you have been most afraid of all your life. I do not say that any theory should be accepted because it is disagreeable, but if any should, then belief in the Landlord should be accepted first.'

As Reason said these words they had reached the top of a little hill, and John begged for a halt, being out of breath. He looked back and saw beyond the green, rolling country the dark line of mountains which was the frontier of the giant's land: but behind them, and far bigger, rose the old mountains of the East; picked out in the rays of the declining sun against a dark sky. They seemed no smaller than when John had looked at them long ago from Puritania.

‘I do not know where you are leading me,’ he said at last, ‘and among all these winding roads I have lost my sense of direction. As well, I find the pace of your horse fatiguing. If you will excuse me, I think I will henceforth pursue my journey alone.’

‘As you wish,’ said Reason. ‘But I would strongly advise you to take this turn to the left.’

‘Where does it go to?’ asked John suspiciously.

‘It takes you back to the main road,’ said Reason.

‘That will do well enough,’ said John, ‘And now, lady, give me your blessing before I go.’

‘I have no blessing to give,’ said the Virgin. ‘I do not deal in blessings and cursings.’

He decides to stop reasoning at this point

Then John bade her good-bye and took the road she had pointed out to him. As soon as she was out of sight, I dreamed that he put down his head and ran; for the silly fellow supposed that she might follow him. And he continued running until he found that he was going up a hill — a hill so steep that it left him no breath for running — and at the very top his road cut into another which ran left and right along the ridge. Then John looked one way along it to the East and the other way along it to the West, and saw that it was indeed the main road. He stayed for a minute to mop his brow. Then he turned to the right, with his face towards the setting sun, and resumed his journey.

BOOK FIVE. THE GRAND CANYON

Not by road and foot nor by sail and ocean
Shalt thou find any course that reaches
The world beyond the North.
— PINDAR
The ephemerals have no help to give. Behold them;
They are deedless and cripple, like to
A dream. The kind of mortals
Is bound with a chain and their eyes are in darkness.
— AESCHYLUS
Alas, what can they teach and not mislead,
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
And how the world began, and how man fell.
— MILTON

CHAPTER ONE. The Grand Canyon

He decides to live virtuously but at once meets an obstacle

The main road soon began to ascend and after a short climb John found himself on a bleak tableland which continued to rise before him, but at a gentler angle. After he had walked a mile or so he saw the figure of a man ahead, outlined against the setting sun. At first the figure stood still: then it took a few paces to the left and to the right as if in indecision. Then it turned about to face him, and to his surprise hailed him as an old acquaintance. Because of the light in his face John could not at first see who it was, and they had joined hands before he knew that it was Vertue.

‘What can have delayed you?’ cried John, ‘I thought by your pace when I left you that you would have been a week’s journey ahead of me by now.’

‘If you think that,’ said Vertue, ‘your way must have been easier than mine. Have you not crossed mountains?’

‘I came through a pass,’ said John.

‘The main road took them without a bend,’ said Vertue. ‘And I often made scarcely ten miles a day. But that does not signify: I have learned something of climbing and sweated off a good deal of soft flesh. What has really delayed me is this — I have been here for several days.’

With that he motioned John to proceed and they went forward together to the brow of the slope. Then I saw John start back a pace or so with a cry, for he had found that he stood on the edge of a precipice. Then presently he re-approached it with caution and looked.

He saw that the road ran up without warning to the edge of a great gorge or chasm and ended in the air, as if it had been broken off. The chasm might be seven miles wide and as for its length, it stretched southward on his left and northward on his right as far as he could see. The sun shining in his face cast all the further side into shadow, so that he could not see much of it clearly. It seemed to him, however, a rich country from the verdure and the size of the trees.

Conscience tells him he can and must pass it by his own efforts

‘I have been exploring the cliffs,’ said Vertue. ‘And I think we could get half-way down. Come a little nearer. You see that ledge?’

‘I have a very poor head for heights,’ said John.

‘That one,’ said Vertue, pointing to a narrow strip of greenery a thousand feet below them.

‘I could never reach it.’

‘Oh, you could reach *that* easily enough. The difficulty is to know what happens beyond it. I am inclined to think that it overhangs: and though we could get down to it, I am not sure that we could get back if the rest of the descent was impracticable.’

‘Then it would be madness to trust ourselves so far.’

‘I don’t know about that. It would be in accordance with the rule.’

‘What rule?’

‘The rule is,’ said Vertue, ‘that if we have one chance out of a hundred of surviving, we must attempt it: but if we have none, absolutely none, then it would be self-destruction, and we need not.’

‘It is no rule of mine,’ said John.

‘But it is. We all have the same set of rules, really, you know.’

‘If it is a rule of mine, it is one that I cannot obey.’

‘I don’t think I understand you,’ said Vertue. ‘But of course you may be such a bad climber that *you* wouldn’t have even one chance. . . that would make a difference, I allow.’

Then a third voice spoke.

‘You have neither of you any chance at all unless I carry you down.’

Both the young men turned at the sound. An old woman was seated in a kind of rocky chair at the very edge of the precipice.

‘Oh, it’s you, Mother Kirk, is it?’ said Vertue, and added in an undertone to John, ‘I have seen her about the cliffs more than once. Some of the country people say she is second-sighted, and some that she is crazy.’

‘I shouldn’t trust her,’ said John in the same tone. ‘She looks to me much more like a witch.’ Then he turned to the old woman and said aloud: ‘And how could you carry us down, mother? We would be more fit to carry you.’

‘I could do it, though,’ said Mother Kirk, ‘by the power that the Landlord has given me.’

Traditional Christianity says he cannot

‘So you believe in the Landlord, too?’ said John.

‘How can I not, dear,’ said she, ‘when I am his own daughter-in-law?’

‘He does not give you very fine clothes,’ said John, glancing at the old woman’s country cloak.

‘They’ll last my time,’ said the old woman placidly.

‘We ought to try her,’ whispered Vertue to John. ‘As long as there is any chance we are not allowed to neglect it.’ But John frowned at him to be silent and addressed the old woman again.

‘Do you not think this Landlord of yours is a very strange one?’ he said.

‘How so?’ said she.

‘Why does he make a road like this running up to the very edge of a precipice — unless it is to encourage travellers to break their necks in the dark?’

‘Oh, bless you, he never left it like that,’ said the old woman. ‘It was a good road all round the world when it was new, and all this gorge is far later than the road.’

‘You mean,’ said Vertue, ‘that there has been some sort of catastrophe.’

‘Well,’ said Mother Kirk, ‘I see there will be no getting you down to-night, so I may as well tell you the story. Come and sit down by me. You are neither of you so wise that you need be ashamed of listening to an old wives’ tale.’

CHAPTER TWO. Mother Kirk’s Story

When they were seated, the old woman told the following story: —

The Sin of Adam

‘You must know that once upon a time there were no tenants in this country at all, for the Landlord used to farm it himself. There were only the animals and the Landlord used to look after them, he and his sons and daughters. Every morning they used to come down from the mountains and milk the cows and lead out the sheep to pasture. And they needed less watching, for all the animals were tamer then; and there were no fences needed, for if a wolf got in among the flocks he would do them no harm. And one day the Landlord was going home from his day’s work when he looked round on the country, and the beasts, and saw how the crops were springing, and it came into his head that the whole thing was too good to keep to himself. So he decided to let the country to tenants, and his first tenant was a young married man. But first the Landlord made a farm in the very centre of the land where the soil was the best and the air most wholesome, and that was the very spot where you are sitting now. They were to have the whole land, but that was too much for them to keep under cultivation. The Landlord’s idea was that they could work the farm and leave the rest as a park for the time being: but later they could divide the park up into holdings for their children. For you must know that he drew up a very different lease from the kind you have nowadays. It was a lease in perpetuity on his side, for he promised never to turn them out; but on their side, they could leave when they chose, as long as one of their sons was there, to take the farm on, and then they could go up to live with him in the mountains. He thought that would be a good thing because it would broaden the minds of his own mountain children to mix with strangers. And they thought so too. But before he put the tenants in possession there was one thing he had to do. Up to this time the country had been full of a certain fruit which the Landlord had planted for the refreshment of himself and his children, if they were thirsty during the day as they worked down here. It was a very good fruit and up in the mountains they say it is even more plentiful: but it is very strong and only those who are mountain-bred ought to eat it, for only they can digest it properly. Hitherto, while there were only beasts in the land, it had done no harm for these mountain-apples to be

growing in every thicket; for you know that an animal will eat nothing but what it is good for it. But now that there were to be men in the land, the Landlord was afraid that they might do themselves an injury; yet it was not to be thought of that he should dig up every sapling of that tree and make the country into a desert. So he decided that it was best to be frank with the young people, and when he found a great big mountain-apple tree growing in the very centre of the farm he said, “So much the better. If they are to learn sense, they may as well learn it from the beginning: and if they will not, there’s no help for it. For if they did not find mountain-apples on the farm, they would soon find them somewhere else.” So he left the apple tree standing, and put the man and his wife into their farm: but before he left them he explained the whole affair to them — as much of it could be explained — and warned them on no account to eat any of the apples. Then he went home. And for a time the young man and his wife behaved very well, tending the animals and managing their farm, and abstaining from the mountain-apples; and for all I know they might never have done otherwise if the wife had not somehow made a new acquaintance. This new acquaintance was a landowner himself. He had been born in the mountains and was one of our Landlord’s own children, but he had quarrelled with his father and set up on his own, and now had built up a very considerable estate in another country. His estate marches, however, with this country: and as he was a great land-grabber he always wanted to take this bit in — and he has very nearly succeeded.’

Because of it all his posterity find a chasm across their road

‘I’ve never met any tenants of his,’ said John.

‘Not tenants in chief, my dear,’ said the old woman. ‘And so you didn’t know them. But you may have met the Clevers, who are tenants of Mr. Mammon: and he is a tenant of the Spirit of the Age: who holds directly of the Enemy.’

‘I am sure the Clevers would be very surprised,’ said John, ‘to hear that they had a Landlord at all. They would think this enemy, as you call him, no less a superstition than *your* Landlord.’

‘But that is how business is managed,’ said Mother Kirk. ‘The little people do not know the big people to whom they belong. The big people do not intend that they should. No important transference of property could be carried out if all the small people at the bottom knew what was really happening. But this is not part of my story. As I was saying, the enemy got

to know the farmer's wife: and, however he did it, or whatever he said to her, it wasn't long before he persuaded her that the one thing she needed was a nice mountain-apple. And she took one and ate it. And then — you know how it is with husbands — she made the farmer come round to her mind. And at the moment he put out his hand and plucked the fruit there was an earthquake, and the country cracked open all the way across from North to South: and ever since, instead of the farm, there has been this gorge, which the country people call the Grand Canyon. But in my language its name it *Peccatum Adae*.'

CHAPTER THREE. The Self-Sufficiency of Vertue

Fear is too suspicious, and the natural conscience too proud, to accept help

‘And I suppose,’ said John sourly, ‘the Landlord was so annoyed that it was he who invented the rules and the black hole?’

‘The story is not quite so simple as that,’ said the old woman, ‘so many things happened after the eating of the apple. For one thing, the taste created such a craving in the man and the woman that they thought they could never eat enough of it; and they were not content with all the wild apple trees, but planted more and more, and grafted mountain-apple on to every other kind of tree so that every fruit should have a dash of that taste in it. They succeeded so well that the whole vegetable system of the country is now infected: and there is hardly a fruit or a root in the land — certainly none this side of the canyon — that has not a little mountain-apple in it. You have never tasted anything that was quite free from it.’

‘And what has that got to do with the card of rules?’ said John.

‘Everything,’ said Mother Kirk. ‘In a country where all the food is more or less poisoned — but some of it very much less than more — you need very complicated rules indeed to keep healthy.’

‘Meanwhile,’ said Vertue, ‘we are not getting on with our journey.’

‘I will carry you down in the morning, if you like,’ said Mother Kirk. ‘Only mind you, it is a dangerous place, and you must do exactly as I tell you.’

‘If the place is so dangerous — —’ began John, when Vertue, who had been struck by the woman’s last words, suddenly broke in:

‘I am afraid it is no use, mother,’ he said; ‘I cannot put myself under anyone’s orders. I must be the captain of my soul and the master of my fate. But thank you for your offer.’

Rejecting Christianity, John turns to cultured Worldliness

‘You are right,’ said John hastily, and added in a whisper, ‘The old creature is clearly insane. Our real business is to explore this chasm North and South until we find some place where the descent *is* practicable.’

Vertue had risen.

‘We are thinking, mother,’ he said, ‘that we should like to make sure for ourselves that there is no place where we cannot get down without being

carried. You see my own legs have served me so far — and I should not like to start being carried now.'

'It will do you no harm to try,' answered Mother Kirk. 'And I should not wonder if you find a way down. Getting up the other side is another question, to be sure; but perhaps we shall meet again when it comes to that.'

By this time it was quite dark. The two young men bade good night to the woman and drew back along the main road to discuss their plans. Two by-roads branched off from it about a quarter of a mile from the precipice: and as that which went to the north seemed rather the better, and also pointed a little backward and away from the cliffs (which John was anxious not to skirt in the darkness), they turned north-ward. It was a fine starlit night and grew colder as they proceeded.

CHAPTER FOUR. Mr. Sensible

When they had walked rather more than a mile John drew Vertue's attention to a light a little back from the road: and I saw them follow it till they came to a gateway and after that to a door, and there they knocked.

'Whose house is this?' said Vertue when the servant opened to them.

'This is Mr. Sensible's house,' said the servant. 'And if you are benighted travellers he will receive you gladly.'

Then he brought them into a room where a lamp was burning clearly, but not very brightly, and an old gentleman was seated by a blazing wood fire with his dog at his feet and his book on his knees and a jig-saw puzzle at one side of him spread out on a wooden frame, and on the other a chessboard with the pieces set for a problem. He rose to greet them very cordially but not hastily.

Its pretentiousness and cold frivolity

'You are very welcome, gentlemen,' said Mr. Sensible. 'Pray come and warm yourselves. Drudge' (and here he called to the servant) 'make some supper ready for three: the usual supper, Drudge. I shall not be able to offer you luxury, gentlemen. The wine of my own country, cowslip wine, shall be your drink. It will be rough to your palates, but to mine the draught that I owe to my own garden and my own kitchen will always have a flavour beyond Hippocrene. The radishes, also of my own growing, I think I may venture to praise. But I see by your looks that I have already betrayed my foible. I confess that my garden is my pride. But what then? We are all children, and I reckon him the wisest among us that can make most sport out of the toys suitable to that condition, without seeking to go beyond it. *Regum æquabit opes animis.* Contentment, my friends, contentment is the best riches. Do not let the dog tease you, sir. He has mange. Down, Rover! Alas, Rover! thou little knowest that sentence is passed upon thee.'

'You are surely not going to destroy him, sir?' said John.

'He begins to ail,' said Mr. Sensible. 'And it would be foolish to keep him longer. What would you? *Omnes eodem cogimur.* He has lain in the sun and hunted fleas enough, and now, poor fellow, he must go *quo dives Tullus et Ancus*. We must take life on the terms it is given us.'

'You will miss your old companion.'

‘Why, as to that you know, the great art of life is to moderate our passions. Objects of affection are like other belongings. We must love them enough to enrich our lives while we have them — not enough to impoverish our lives when they are gone. You see this puzzle here. While I am engaged on it it seems to me of sovereign importance to fit the pieces together: when it is done I think of it no more: and if I should fail to do it, why I would not break my heart. Confound that Drudge. Hi! whoreson, are we to wait all night for our supper?’

‘Coming, sir,’ said Drudge from the kitchen.

Far from attacking the spiritual life, the cultured World patronises it

‘I think the fellow goes to sleep over his pots and pans,’ said Mr. Sensible, ‘but let us occupy the time by continuing our conversation. Good conversation I reckon among the finer sweets of life. But I would not include diatribe or lecturing or persistent discussion under that head. Your doctrinaire is the bane of all talk. As I sit here listening to your opinions — *nullius addictus* — and following the ball wherever it rolls, I defy system. I love to explore your minds *en deshabille*. Nothing comes amiss — *j’aime le jeu, l’amour, les livres, la musique, la ville et la champagne — enfin tout*! Chance is, after all, our best guide — need I call a better witness than the fortunate cast of the dice which has brought you beneath my roof to-night?’

‘It wasn’t exactly chance,’ said Vertue, who had been restlessly waiting to speak. ‘We are on a journey and we are looking for a way to cross the Grand Canyon.’

‘*Haud equidem invideo,*’ said the old gentleman. ‘You do not insist on my accompanying you?’

‘We hadn’t thought of it,’ said John.

‘Why then I am very willing that you should go!’ cried Mr. Sensible with a burst of melodious laughter. ‘And yet to what end? I often amuse myself with speculating on that curious restlessness in the mind which drives us, specially in youth, to climb up a mountain merely in order that we may then climb down, or to cross the seas in order that we may pay an inn-keeper for setting before us worse cheer than we might eat in our own house. *Caelum non animum mutamus.* Not that I would repress the impulse, you understand, any more than I would starve any other part of my nature. Here again, the secret of happiness lies in knowing where to stop. A moderate allowance of travelling — enough to quiet, without satiating, a liberal curiosity — is very well. One brings back a few rarities to store in one’s

inner cabinet against a dull day. But the Grand Canyon — surely a modest tour along the cliffs on *this* side of it would give you much the same sort of scenery, and save your necks.'

'It wasn't scenery we were looking for,' said John. 'I am trying to find the Island in the West.'

'*The philosophy of all sensible men*'

'You refer, no doubt, to some æsthetic experience. There again — I would not urge a young man to shut his eyes to that sort of thing. Who has not felt immortal longings at the lengthening of the shadow or the turning of the leaf? Who has not stretched out his hands for the ulterior shore? *Et ego in Arcadia!* We have all been fools once — aye, and are glad to have been fools too. But our imaginations, like our appetites, need discipline: not, heaven help us, in the interest of any transcendental ethic, but in the interests of our own solid good. That wild impulse must be tasted, not obeyed. The bees have stings, but we rob them of their honey. To hold all that urgent sweetness to our lips in the cup of one perfect moment, missing no faintest ingredient in the flavour of its μονόχρονος ἡδονή, yet ourselves, in a sense, unmoved — this is the true art. This tames in the service of the reasonable life even those pleasures whose loss might seem to be the heaviest, yet necessary, price we paid for rationality. Is it an audacity to hint that for the corrected palate the taste of the draught even owes its last sweetness to the knowledge that we have wrested it from an unwilling source? To cut off pleasures from the consequences and conditions which they have by nature, detaching, as it were, the precious phrase from its irrelevant context, is what distinguishes the man from the brute and the citizen from the savage. I cannot join with those moralists who inveigh against the Roman emetics in their banquets: still less with those who would forbid the even more beneficent contraceptive devices of our later times. That man who can eat as taste, not nature, prompts him and yet fear no aching belly, or who can indulge in Venus and fear no impertinent bastard, is a civilized man. In him I recognize Urbanity — the note of the centre.'

'Do you know of any way across the canyon?' said Vertue abruptly.

'I do not,' said their host, 'for I have never made inquiries. The proper study of mankind is man, and I have always left useless speculations alone. Suppose that there were a way across, to what purpose should I use it? Why should I scramble down this side and up the other to find after my labours the same soil still beneath me and the same heaven above? It would be

laughable to suppose that the country beyond the gorge can be any different from the country on this side of it. *Eadem sunt omnia semper.* Nature had already done all she can for our comfort and amusement, and the man who does not find content at home will seek it vainly abroad. Confound that fellow! Drudge!! Will you bring us our supper or do you prefer to have every bone in your body broken?'

'Coming, sir,' said Drudge from the kitchen.

Its hatred of all systematic reasoning

'There might be different *people* on the other side of the canyon,' suggested John in the momentary pause that followed.

'That is even less likely,' said Mr. Sensible. 'Human nature is always the same. The dress and the manners may vary, but I detect the unchanging heart beneath the shifting disguises. If there are men beyond the canyon, rest assured that we know them already. They are born and they die: and in the interval between they are the same lovable rascals that we know at home.'

'Still,' said John, 'you can't really be certain that there is no such place as my Island. Reason left it an open question.'

'Reason!' exclaimed Mr. Sensible. 'Do you mean the mad woman who goes riding about the country dressed up in armour? I trust that when I spoke of the reasonable life you did not think that I meant anything under *her* auspices? There is a strange confusion in our language here, for the reasonableness which I commend has no more dangerous enemy than Reason. Perhaps I should drop the use of the name altogether, and say that my deity is not reason but *le bon sens*.'

'What is the difference?' said Vertue.

'Sense is easy, Reason is hard. Sense knows where to stop with gracious inconsistency, while Reason slavishly follows an abstract logic whither she knows not. The one seeks comfort and finds it, the other seeks truth and is still seeking. *Le bon sens* is the father of a flourishing family: Reason is barren and a virgin. If I had my way I should clap this Reason of yours in the bridewell to pursue her meditations in the straw. The baggage has a pretty face, I allow: but she leads us from our true aim — joy, pleasure, ease, content, whate'er the name! She is a fanatic who has never learned from my master to pursue the golden mean, and, being a mortal, to think mortal thoughts. *Auream quisquis* — —'

‘It is very odd that you should say that,’ interrupted Vertue, ‘for I also was brought up on Aristotle. But I think my text must have differed from yours. In mine, the doctrine of the Mean does not bear the sense you have given it at all. He specially says that there is no excess of goodness. You cannot go too far in the right direction. The line that we should follow may start from a middle point in the base of a triangle: but the further off the apex is, the better. In that dimension — —’

Its ignorant and dilettante scepticism

‘*Do manus!*’ broke out Mr. Sensible. ‘Spare us the rest, young man. We are not at a lecture, and I readily admit that your scholarship is more recent than mine. Philosophy should be our mistress, not our master: and the pursuit of a pedantic accuracy amidst the freedom of our social pleasures is as unwelcome as — —’

‘And the bit about thinking mortal thoughts,’ continued Vertue, whose social experience, as I dreamed, was not extensive, ‘the bit about mortal thoughts was quoted by Aristotle to say that he disagreed with it. He held that the end of mortal life was to put on immortality as much as might be. And he also said that the most useless of studies was the noblest.’

‘I see you are letter-perfect, young man,’ said Mr. Sensible, with a rather chilly smile, ‘and I am sure these pieces of information, if repeated to your teachers, would win the applause they deserve. Here, if you will forgive me, they are a little out of place. A gentleman’s knowledge of the ancient authors is not that of a pedant: and I think you have misunderstood the place which philosophy ought to hold in the reasonable life. We do not memorize *systems*. What system can stand? What system does not leave us with the old refrain — *que sais-je*? It is in her power to remind us of the strangeness of things — in the brown charm of her secluded meditations — above all, in her decorative function — that philosophy becomes instrumental to the good life. We go to the Porch and the Academy to be spectators, not partisans. Drudge!!’

‘Dinner is served, sir,’ said Drudge, appearing at the door.

Then I dreamed that they went into the dining-room and so to table.

CHAPTER FIVE. Table Talk

The cowslip wine came with the oysters. It was a little rough, as the old gentleman had prophesied, and the glasses were so very small that Vertue drained his at once. John was afraid that there might be no more to come and therefore dallied over his, partly because he feared that he might put his host out of countenance and partly because he disliked the taste. But his precautions were needless, for with the soup came sherry.

Its unacknowledged dependences

‘*Dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis!*’ said Mr. Sensible. ‘I hope that this wild garden vintage is not unpleasing to an unspoiled palate.’

‘You don’t mean to say that you have vines?’ exclaimed John.

‘I was referring to the cowslip wine,’ said Mr. Sensible. ‘I hope to have some good vines soon, but at present I still rely a little on my neighbours. *Is* this our own sherry, Drudge?’

‘No, sir,’ said Drudge. ‘This is that lot that Mr. Broad sent.’

‘Halibut!’ said John. ‘You surely don’t — —’

‘No,’ said Mr. Sensible. ‘Sea fish, I confess, I must get from my friends on the coast.’

As the meal went on, John’s good manners forbade him to make further inquiries, and when a salad came with one or two very small radishes in it he was positively relieved that his host should be able to claim them as his own produce (‘His humble sauce a radish or an egg,’ said Mr. Sensible). But in my dream I was privileged to know the sources of the whole meal. The cowslip wine and the radishes were home-grown; the joint had been a present from Mr. Mammon: the entrées and savouries came from Eschropolis: the champagne and ices from old Mr. Halfways. Some of the food was part of the stores which Mr. Sensible had taken over when he came to live there, from his predecessors who had occupied this house before him: for on that tableland, and especially to the North of the main road, the air is so light and cold that things keep for a long time. The bread, the salt, and the apples had been left by Epicurus who was the builder of the house and its first inhabitant. Some very fine hock had belonged to Horace. The claret and also (as I remember) most of the silver, were Montaigne’s. But the port, which was one in a thousand and the best thing on that table, had once belonged to Rabelais, who in his turn had it as a present from old

Mother Kirk when they were friends. Then I dreamed that after dinner old Mr. Sensible stood up and made a little speech in Latin thanking the Landlord for all they had received.

‘What?’ said John. ‘Do *you* believe in the Landlord?’

‘*The religion of all sensible men*’

‘No part of our nature is to be suppressed,’ said Mr. Sensible. ‘Least of all a part that has enshrined itself in beautiful traditions. The Landlord has his function like everything else as one element in the good life.’

Then presently Mr. Sensible, who was turning very red, fixed his eyes intently on John and repeated.

‘As one element. As one element.’

‘I see,’ said John, and there was a long silence.

‘As well,’ began Mr. Sensible with great energy some ten minutes later, ‘it is part of good manners. Ἀθανάτους μὲν πρῶτα θεούς νόμῳ ὡς διάκειται — Τίμα. My dear Mr. Vertue, my dear young friend, your glass is quite empty. I mean absolutely empty. *Cras ingens iterabimus.*’

There was another and longer pause. John began to wonder whether Mr. Sensible were not asleep, when suddenly Mr. Sensible said with great conviction:

‘*Pellite cras ingens tum-tum* νόμῳ ὡς διάκειται.’

Then he smiled at them and finally went to sleep. And presently Drudge came in looking old and thin and dirty in the pale morning light — for I thought that the dawn was just then beginning to show through the chinks of the shutters — to carry his master to bed. Then I saw him come back and lead the guests to their beds. And then the third time I saw him come back into the dining-room and pour out the remains of the claret into a glass and drink it off. Then he stood for a moment or so blinking his red eyes and rubbing his bony, stubbly chin. At last he yawned and set about tidying the room for breakfast.

CHAPTER SIX. Drudge

I dreamed that John awoke feeling cold. The chamber in which he lay was luxuriously furnished and all the house was silent, so that John thought it would be useless to rise, and he piled all his clothes on him and tried to sleep again. But he only grew colder. Then he said to himself, ‘Even if there is no chance of breakfast, I may save myself from freezing by walking about:’ so he rose and huddled on all his clothes and went down into the house, but the fires were not yet lit. Finding the back door open he went out. It was full morning of a grey, sunless day. There were dark clouds, fairly low, and as John came out one snowflake fell at his feet, but no more. He found that he was in Mr. Sensible’s garden, but it was more of a yard than a garden. A high wall ran all about it and all within the wall was dry, brown earth, with a few stony paths. Dibbling the earth with his foot, John found that the soil was only half an inch deep: under it was solid rock. A little way from the house he found Drudge down on his hands and knees scraping together what seemed to be a little pile of dust, but it was in fact the soil of the garden. The little pile had been got together at the cost of leaving the rock uncovered for a big circle — like a bald patch — all round Drudge.

These ‘sensible’ men are parasitic

‘Good morning, Drudge,’ said John. ‘What are you making?’

‘Radish beds, sir.’

‘Your master is a great gardener.’

‘Talks about it, sir.’

‘Does he not work in the garden himself?’

‘No, sir.’

‘It is a poor soil here. Does he manage to feed himself on his own produce in a good year?’

‘Feeds me on it, sir.’

‘What does the garden grow — besides radishes?’

‘Nothing, sir.’

John passed on to the end of the garden and looked over the wall, which was lower here. He drew back with a little start for he found that he was looking down an abyss: the garden was perched on the edge of the Grand Canyon. Below John’s feet, at the bottom of the gorge, lay the forest, and on the opposite side he saw a mixture of wood and cliff. The cliffs were all

shaggy with trailing and hanging greenery and streams, rendered immovable to sight by their distance, came down from the land beyond. Even on that cold morning the farther side looked richer and warmer than his own.

‘We must get out of this,’ said John. At that moment Drudge called to him.

Their culture is precarious

‘I shouldn’t lean on that wall, sir,’ he said. ‘There’s frequent landslides.’

‘Landslides?’

‘Yes, sir. I’ve rebuilt that wall a dozen times. The house used to be right out there — half-way across the gorge.’

‘The canyon is getting wider, then?’

‘At this point, sir. In Mr. Epicurus’ time — —’

‘You have been employed here under other masters, then?’

‘Yes, sir. I’ve seen a good many of them. Whoever has lived here has always needed me. Choregia they used to call me in the old days, but now they just call me Drudge.’

‘Tell me about your old masters,’ said John.

‘Mr. Epicurus was the first. Mental case he was, poor gentleman: he had a chronic fear of the black hole. Something dreadful. I never had a better employer, though. Nice, kind, quiet-spoken sort of a man. I was very sorry when he went down the cliff — —’

‘Goodness me!’ exclaimed John. ‘Do you mean that some of your masters have lost their lives in these landslides?’

‘Most of them, sir.’

At that moment a leonine roar came from one of the upper windows of the house.

‘Drudge! Son of a bitch! Hot water.’

‘Coming, sir,’ said Drudge, rising very deliberately from his knees and giving a finishing pat to his heap of dust. ‘I shall be leaving here soon,’ he continued to John. ‘I am thinking of going further North.’

‘Further North?’

‘Yes, sir. There are openings with Mr. Savage up in the mountains. I was wondering if you and Mr. Vertue were going that way — —’

‘Drudge!!’ bellowed Mr. Sensible’s voice from the house.

‘Coming, sir,’ said Drudge, beginning to untie two pieces of string with which he had confined his trousers beneath his knees. ‘So you see, Mr.

John, I should be greatly obliged if you would allow me to travel with you.’

‘Drudge! Am I to call you again?’ shouted Mr. Sensible.

‘Coming, sir. If you was to agree I would give Mr. Sensible notice this morning.’

Take away its power of commanding labour

‘We are certainly going North for a bit,’ said John. ‘And I should have no objection, provided Mr. Vertue agrees.’

‘Very kind of you, I am sure, sir,’ said Drudge. Then he turned and walked slowly into the house.

CHAPTER SEVEN. The Gaucherie of Vertue

Mr. Sensible was not in good humour when they met at breakfast. ‘That ungrateful blockhead of a servant of mine is leaving me in the lurch,’ he said, ‘and for the next few days we must shift for ourselves. I fear I am a wretched cook. Perhaps, Vertue, you would indulge me so far as to take the cooking on yourself until I get a new man? I dare say you could enable the three of us to live a very tolerable sort of picnic life for three days?’

The two young men informed him that they were continuing their journey after breakfast.

‘This,’ said Mr. Sensible, ‘is getting really serious. Do you mean to say that you are going to desert me? I am to be reduced to absolute solitude — deprived of the common decencies of life — compelled to spend my day in menial offices? Very well, sir. I am unacquainted with modern manners: no doubt this is the way in which young men now return hospitality.’

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said Vertue. ‘I had not seen it in that light. I will certainly act as your servant for a day or so if you wish it. I had not understood that it would be such a burden to you to cook for yourself. I don’t remember that you said anything about servants when you were outlining the good life last night.’

‘Why, sir,’ said Mr. Sensible. ‘When I outline the principles of the steam engine I do not explicitly state that I expect fire to burn or the laws of gravity to operate. There are certain things that one always takes for granted. When I speak of the art of life I presuppose the ordinary conditions of life which that art utilizes.’

‘Such as wealth,’ said Vertue.

And the whole thing collapses

‘A competence, a competence,’ said Mr. Sensible.

‘And health, too?’ said Vertue.

‘Moderate health,’ said Mr. Sensible.

‘Your art, then,’ said Vertue, ‘seems to teach men that the best way of being happy is to enjoy unbroken good fortune in every respect. They would not all find the advice helpful. And now, if Drudge will show me his scullery, I will wash up the breakfast things.’

‘You may save yourself the trouble, sir,’ said Mr. Sensible drily. ‘I cannot pretend to your intensity, and I do not choose to be lectured at the

breakfast table. When you have mixed more with the world you will learn not to turn the social board into a schoolroom. In the meantime, forgive me if I feel that I should find your continued society a little fatiguing. Conversation should be like the bee which darts to the next flower before the last has ceased swaying from its airy visit: you make it more like a wood beetle eating its way through a table.'

'As you wish,' said Vertue, 'but how will you do?'

'I shall shut up the house,' said Mr. Sensible, 'and practise αὐτάρκεια in a hotel until I have fitted this place up with such mechanical devices as will henceforth render me wholly independent. I see that I have let myself get behind the times. I should have listened more to certain good friends of mine in the city of Claptrap who have kept abreast of modern invention. They assure me that machinery will soon put the good life beyond the reach of chance: and if mechanism alone will not do it, I know a eugenist who promises to breed us a race of peons who will be psychologically incapable of playing me a trick like this of Drudge's.'

So it fell out that all four left the house together. Mr. Sensible was astonished to find that Drudge (who parted from his employer very civilly) was accompanying the young men. He only shrugged his shoulders, however, and said, '*Vive la bagatelle!* You have stayed in my house which is called Thelema, and its motto is *Do what you will*. So many men, so many minds. I hope I can tolerate anything except intolerance.' Then he went his way and they saw him no more.

BOOK SIX. NORTHWARD ALONG THE CANYON

For being unlike the magnanimous man, they yet ape him; and that in such particulars as they can. — ARISTOTLE

Much of the soul they talk, but all awry,
And in themselves seek virtue.
— MILTON

I do not admire the excess of some one virtue unless I am shewn at the same time the excess of the opposite virtue. A man does not prove his greatness by standing at an extremity, but by touching both extremities at once and filling all that lies between them. — PASCAL

Contempt is a well-recognized defensive reaction. — I. A. RICHARDS

CHAPTER ONE. First Steps to the North

Accompanied by poverty and virtue

‘It is of no use keeping to the road,’ said Vertue. ‘We must explore the cliff-edge as we go along and make trial descents from point to point.’

‘Begging your pardon, sir,’ said Drudge, ‘I know these parts very well and there is no way down, at least within thirty miles. You’ll miss nothing by keeping to the road for to-day at any rate.’

‘How do you know?’ asked Vertue. ‘Have you ever tried?’

‘Oh, bless you, yes,’ said Drudge. ‘I’ve often tried to get across the canyon when I was a youngster.’

‘Clearly we had better follow the road,’ said John.

‘I do not feel quite satisfied,’ said Vertue. ‘But we can always take the cliffs on the way back. I have an idea that if there is a way down it will be at the extreme north where this gorge opens on the sea: or failing everything, we might manipulate the mouth of the gorge by boat. In the meantime I dare say we might do worse than press on by road.’

‘I quite agree,’ said John.

Then I saw the three set forward on a more desolate march than I had yet beheld. On every side of them the tableland seemed perfectly flat, but their muscles and lungs soon told them that there was a slight but continuous rise. There was little vegetation — here a shrub, and there some grass: but the most of it was brown earth and moss and rock, and the road beneath them was stone. The grey sky was never broken and I do not remember that they saw a single bird: and it was so bleak that if they stopped at any time to rest, the sweat grew cold on them instantly.

Vertue never abated his pace and Drudge kept even with him though always a respectful yard behind: but I saw that John grew footsore and began to lag. For some hours he was always inventing pretexts to stop and finally he said, ‘Friends, it is no use, I can go no further.’

‘But you must,’ said Vertue.

‘The young gentleman is soft, sir, very soft,’ said Drudge. ‘He is not used to this sort of thing. We’ll have to help him along.’

John travels into sterner regions of the mind

So they took him, one by each arm, and helped him along for a few hours. They found nothing to eat or drink in the waste. Towards evening

they heard a desolate voice crying ‘Maiwi-maiwi’, and looked up, and there was a seagull hanging in the currents of the wind as though it sauntered an invisible stair towards the low rain-clouds.

‘Good!’ cried Vertue. ‘We are nearing the coast.’

‘It’s a good step yet, sir,’ said Drudge. ‘These gulls come forty miles inland and more in bad weather.’

Then they plodded on for many more miles. And the sky began to turn from sunless grey to starless black. And they looked and saw a little shanty by the roadside and there they knocked on the door.

CHAPTER TWO. Three Pale Men

When they were let in they found three young men, all very thin and pale, seated by a stove under the low roof of the hut. There was some sacking on a bench along one wall and little comfort else.

‘You will fare badly here,’ said one of the three men. ‘But I am a Steward and it is my duty according to my office to share my supper with you. You may come in.’ His name was Mr. Neo-Angular.

‘I am sorry that my convictions do not allow me to repeat my friend’s offer,’ said one of the others. ‘But I have had to abandon the humanitarian and egalitarian fallacies.’ His name was Mr. Neo-Classical.

‘I hope,’ said the third, ‘that your wanderings in lonely places do not mean that you have any of the romantic virus still in your blood.’ His name was Mr. Humanist.

John was too tired and Drudge too respectful to reply: but Vertue said to Mr. Neo-Angular, ‘You are very kind. You are saving our lives.’

‘I am not kind at all,’ said Mr. Neo-Angular with some warmth. ‘I am doing my duty. My ethics are based on dogma, not on feeling.’

‘I understand you very well,’ said Vertue. ‘May I shake hands with you?’

Counter-romanticism makes strange bedfellows

‘Can it be,’ said the other, ‘that you are one of us? You are a Catholic? A scholastic?’

‘I know nothing about that,’ said Vertue, ‘but I know that the rule is to be obeyed because it is a rule and not because it appeals to my feelings at the moment.’

‘I see you are not one of us,’ said Angular, ‘and you are undoubtedly damned. *Virtutes paganorum splendida vitia.* Now let us eat.’

Then I dreamed that the three pale men produced three tins of bully beef and six biscuits, and Angular shared his with the guests. There was very little for each and I thought that the best share fell to John and Drudge, for Vertue and the young Steward entered into a kind of rivalry who should leave most for the others.

‘Our fare is simple,’ said Mr. Neo-Classical. ‘And perhaps unwelcome to palates that have been reared on the kickshaws of lower countries. But you see the perfection of form. This beef is a perfect cube: this biscuit a true square.’

‘You will admit,’ said Mr. Humanist, ‘that, at least, our meal is quite free from any lingering flavour of the old romantic sauces.’

‘Quite free,’ said John, staring at the empty tin.

‘It’s better than radishes, sir,’ said Drudge.

‘Do you *live* here, gentlemen?’ said Vertue when the empty tins had been removed.

‘We do,’ said Mr. Humanist. ‘We are founding a new community. At present we suffer the hardships of pioneers and have to import our food: but when we have brought the country under cultivation we shall have plenty — as much plenty as is needed for the practice of temperance.’

‘You interest me exceedingly,’ said Vertue. ‘What are the principles of this community?’

‘Catholicism, Humanism, Classicism,’ said all three.

‘Catholicism! Then you are all Stewards?’

‘Certainly not,’ said Classical and Humanist.

‘At least you all believe in the Landlord?’

‘I have no interest in the question,’ said Classical.

‘And I,’ said Humanist, ‘know perfectly well that the Landlord is a fable.’

Modern thought begets Freudianism on baser, Negativism on finer, souls

‘And I,’ said Angular, ‘know perfectly well that he is a fact.’

‘This is very surprising,’ said Vertue. ‘I do not see how you have come together, or what your common principles can possibly be.’

‘We are united by a common antagonism to a common enemy,’ said Humanist. ‘You must understand that we are three brothers, the sons of old Mr. Enlightenment of the town of Claptrap.’

‘I know him,’ said John.

‘Our father was married twice,’ continued Humanist. ‘Once to a lady named Epichaerecacia, and afterwards to Euphuia. By his first wife he had a son called Sigmund who is thus our step-brother.’

‘I know him too,’ said John.

‘We are the children of his second marriage,’ said Humanist.

‘Then,’ cried Vertue, ‘we are related — if you care to acknowledge the kinship. You have probably heard that Euphuia had a child before she married your father. I was that child — though I confess that I never discovered who my father was and enemies have hinted that I am a bastard.’

‘You have said quite sufficient,’ replied Angular. ‘You can hardly expect that the subject should be agreeable to us. I might add that my office, if there were nothing else, sets me apart even from my legitimate relations.’

‘And what about the common antagonism?’ said John.

‘We were all brought up,’ said Humanist, ‘by our step-brother in the university at Eschropolis, and we learned there to see that whoever stays with Mr. Halfways must either come on to Eschropolis or else remain at Thrill as the perpetual minion of his brown daughter.’

‘You had not been with Mr. Halfways yourselves, then?’ asked John.

‘Certainly not. We learned to hate him from watching the effect which his music had on other people. Hatred of him is the first thing that unites us. Next, we discovered how residence in Eschropolis inevitably leads to the giant’s dungeon.’

‘I know all about that too,’ said John.

‘Our common hatred therefore links us together against the giant, against Eschropolis, and against Mr. Halfways.’

‘But specially against the latter,’ said Classical.

These men are interested in everything not for what it is but for what it is not and talk as if they had ‘seen through’ things they have not even seen and boast of rejecting what was never in fact within their reach

‘I should rather say,’ remarked Angular, ‘against half-measures and compromises of all sorts — against any pretence that there is any kind of goodness or decency, any even tolerable temporary resting-place, on this side of the Grand Canyon.’

‘And that,’ said Classical, ‘is why Angular is for me, in one sense, *the* enemy, but, in another, *the* friend. I cannot agree with his notions about the other side of the canyon: but just because he relegates his delusions to the *other* side, he is free to agree with me about this side and to be an implacable exposer (like myself) of all attempts to foist upon us any transcendental, romantical, optimistic trash.’

‘My own feeling,’ said Humanist, ‘is rather that Angular is with me in guarding against any confusion of the *levels* of experience. He *canalizes* all the mystical nonsense — the *sehnsuht* and *Wanderlust* and Nympholepsy — and transfers them to the far side: that prevents their drifting about on this side and hindering our real function. It leaves us free to establish a really tolerable and even comfortable civilization here on the plateau; a culture based alike on those truths which Mr. Sensible acknowledges and on those

which the giant reveals, but throwing over both alike a graceful veil of illusion. And that way we shall remain human: we shall not become beasts with the giant nor abortive angels with Mr. Halfways.'

'The young gentleman is asleep, sir,' said Drudge: and indeed John had sunk down some time ago.

'You must excuse him,' said Vertue. 'He found the road long to-day.'

Then I saw that all six men lay down together in the sacking. The night was far colder than the night they passed in Mr. Sensible's house: but as there was here no pretence of comfort and they lay huddled together in the narrow hut, John slept warmer here than at Thelema.

CHAPTER THREE. Neo-Angular

When they rose in the morning John was so footsore and his limbs ached so that he knew not how to continue his journey. Drudge assured them that the coast could not now be very far. He thought that Vertue could reach it and return in a day and that John might await him in the hut. As for John himself, he was loth to burden hosts who lived in such apparent poverty: but Mr. Angular constrained him to stay, when he had explained that the secular virtue of hospitality was worthless, and care for the afflicted a sin if it proceeded from humanitarian sentiment, but that he was obliged to act as he did by the rules of his order. So, in my dream, I saw Drudge and Vertue set out northwards alone, while John remained with the three pale men.

In the forenoon he had a conversation with Angular.

‘You believe, then,’ said John, ‘that there is a way across the canyon?’

‘I know there is. If you will let me take you to Mother Kirk she will carry you over in a moment.’

‘And yet, I am not sure that I am not sailing under false colours. When I set out from home, crossing the canyon was never in my thoughts — still less was Mother Kirk.’

‘It does not matter in the least what was in your thoughts.’

‘It does, to me. You see, my only motive for crossing, is the hope that something I am looking for may be on the other side.’

‘That is a dangerous, subjective motive. What is this something?’

‘I saw an Island — —’

‘Then you must forget it as soon as you can. Islands are the Halfways’ concern. I assure you, you must eradicate every trace of that nonsense from your mind before I can help you.’

‘But how can you help me after removing the only thing that I want to be helped to? What is the use of telling a hungry man that you will grant him his desires, provided there is no question of eating?’

‘If you do not *want* to cross the canyon, there is no more to be said. But, then, you must realize where you are. Go on with your Island, if you like, but do not pretend that it is anything but a part of the land of destruction this side of the canyon. If you are a sinner, for heaven’s sake have the grace to be a cynic too.’

‘But how can you say that the Island is all bad, when it is longing for the Island, and nothing else, that has brought me this far?’

‘It makes no difference. All on this side of the canyon is much of a muchness. If you confine yourself to this side, then the Spirit of the Age is right.’

‘But this is not what Mother Kirk said. She particularly insisted that some of the food was much less poisonous than the rest.’

‘So you have met Mother Kirk? No wonder that you are confused. You had no business to talk to her except through a qualified Steward. Depend upon it, you have misunderstood every word she said.’

‘Then there was Reason, too. She refused to say that the Island was an illusion. But perhaps, like Mr. Sensible, you have quarrelled with Reason.’

‘Reason is divine. But how should you understand her? You are a beginner. For you, the only safe commerce with Reason is to learn from your superiors the dogmata in which her deliverances have been codified for general use.’

‘Look here,’ said John. ‘Have you ever seen my Island?’

‘God forbid.’

‘And you have never heard Mr. Halfways either.’

‘Never. And I never will. Do you take me for an escapist?’

‘Then there is at least one object in the world of which I know more than you. I have *tasted* what you call romantic trash; you have only talked about it. You need not tell me that there is a danger in it and an element of evil. Do you suppose that I have not felt that danger and that evil a thousand times more than you? But I know also that the evil in it is not what I went to it to find, and that I should have sought nothing and found nothing without it. I know this by experience as I know a dozen things about it of which you betray your ignorance as often as you speak. Forgive me if I am rude: but how is it possible that you can advise me in this matter? Would you recommend a eunuch as confessor to a man whose difficulties lay in the realm of chastity? Would a man born blind be my best guide against the lust of the eye? But I am getting angry. And you have shared your biscuit with me. I ask your pardon.’

‘It is part of my office to bear insults with patience,’ said Mr. Angular.

CHAPTER FOUR. Humanist

In the afternoon Mr. Humanist took John out to show him the garden, by whose produce, in time, the new culture was to become self-supporting. As there was no human, or indeed animal, habitation within sight, no wall or fence had been deemed necessary, but the area of the garden had been marked out by a line of stones and sea-shells alternately arranged: and this was necessary as the garden would else have been indistinguishable from the waste. A few paths, also marked by stones and shells, were arranged in a geometrical pattern.

‘You see,’ said Mr. Humanist, ‘we have quite abandoned the ideas of the old romantic landscape gardeners. You notice a certain severity. A landscape gardener would have had a nodding grove over there on the right, and a mound on the left, and winding paths, and a pond, and flower-beds. He would have filled the obscurer parts with the means of sensuality — the formless potato and the romantically irregular cabbage. You see, there is nothing of the sort here.’

‘Nothing at all,’ said John.

‘At present, of course, it is not very fruitful. But we are pioneers.’

‘Do you ever try *digging* it?’ suggested John.

‘Why, no,’ said Mr. Humanist, ‘you see, it is pure rock an inch below the surface, so we do not disturb the soil. That would remove the graceful veil of illusion which is so necessary to the *human* point of view.’

CHAPTER FIVE. Food from the North

Late that evening the door of the hut opened and Vertue staggered in and dropped to a sitting position by the stove. He was very exhausted and it was long before he had his breath to talk. When he had, his first words were:

This region has no strength to resist philosophies more inhuman than its own

‘You must leave this place, gentlemen. It is in danger.’

‘Where is Drudge?’ said John.

‘He stayed there.’

‘And what is this danger?’ asked Mr. Humanist.

‘I’m going to tell you. By the by, there’s no way over the gorge northward.’

‘We have been on a fool’s errand, then,’ said John, ‘ever since we left the main road.’

‘Except that now we know,’ replied Vertue. ‘But I must eat before I can tell my story. To-night I am able to return our friends’ hospitality,’ and with that he produced from various parts of his clothing the remains of a handsome cold pie, two bottles of strong beer and a little flask of rum. For some time there was silence in the hut, and when the meal was finished and a little water had been boiled so that each had a glass of hot grog, Vertue began his story.

CHAPTER SIX. Furthest North

‘It is all like this as far as the mountains — about fifteen miles — and there is nothing to tell of our journey except rock and moss and a few gulls. The mountains are frightful as you approach them, but the road runs up to a pass and we had not much difficulty. Beyond the pass you get into a little rocky valley and it was here that we first found any signs of habitation. The valley is a regular warren of caves inhabited by dwarfs. There are several species of them, I gather, though I only distinguished two — a black kind with black shirts and a red kind who call themselves Marxomanni. They are all very fierce and apparently quarrel a good deal but they all acknowledge some kind of vassalage to this man Savage. At least they made no difficulty in letting me through when they heard that I wanted to see him — beyond insisting on giving me a guard. It was there I lost Drudge. He said he had come to join the red dwarfs and would I mind going on alone. He was just the same up to the end — civil as ever — but he was down one of their burrows and apparently quite at home before I could get in a word. Then my dwarfs took me on. I didn’t care for the arrangements much. They were not men, you know, not dwarf men, but real dwarfs — trolls. They could talk, and they walk on two legs, but the structure must be quite different from ours. I felt all the time that if they killed me it wouldn’t be murder, any more than if a crocodile or a gorilla killed me. It *is* a different species — however it came there. Different faces.

The revolutionary sub-men, whether of the Left or the Right

‘Well, they kept taking me up and up. It was all rocky zig-zags, round and round. Fortunately, I do not get giddy. My chief danger was the wind whenever we got on a ridge — for of course my guides, being only some three feet high, did not offer it the same target. I had one or two narrow escapes. Savage’s nest is a terrifying place. It is a long hall like a barn and when I first caught sight of it — half-way up the sky from where they were leading me — I thought to myself that wherever else we were going it could not be *there*; it looked so inaccessible. But on we went.

‘One thing you must get into your heads is that there are caves all the way up, all inhabited. The whole mountain must be honeycombed. I saw thousands of the dwarfs. Like an ant-hill — and not a man in the place except me.

‘From Savage’s nest you look straight down to the sea. I should think it is the biggest sheer drop on any coast. It was from there that I saw the mouth of the gorge. The mouth is only a lowering of the cliff: from the lowest part of the opening it is still thousands of feet to the sea. There is no conceivable landing. It is no use to anyone but sea-gulls.

‘But you want to hear about Savage. He sat on a high chair at the end of his barn — a very big man, almost a giant. When I say that I don’t mean his height: I had the same feeling about him that I had about the dwarfs. That doubt about the *species*. He was dressed in skins and had an iron helmet on his head with horns stuck in it.

‘He had a woman there, too, a great big woman with yellow hair and high cheek-bones. Grimhild her name is. And the funny thing is that she is the sister of an old friend of yours, John. She is Mr. Halfways’ elder daughter. Apparently Savage came down to Thrill and carried her off: and what is stranger still, both the girl and the old gentleman were rather pleased about it than otherwise.

Who are all alike vassals of cruelty

‘As soon as the dwarfs brought me in, Savage rapped on the table and bellowed out, “Lay the board for us men,” and she set about laying it. He didn’t say anything to me for a long time. He just sat and looked and sang. He had only one song and he was singing it off and on all the time I was there. I remember bits of it.

‘Wind age, wolf age,
Ere the world crumbles:
Shard age, spear age,
Shields are broken. . . .
‘Then there was another bit began;
‘East sits the Old ‘Un
In Iron-forest;
Feeds amidst it
Fenris’ children. . . .

I sat down after a bit, for I did not want him to think I was afraid of him. When the food was on the table he asked me to have some, so I had it. He offered me a sweet drink, very strong, in a horn, so I drank it. Then he shouted and drank himself and said that mead in a horn was all he could offer me at present: “But soon,” he said, “I shall drink the blood of men from skulls.” There was a lot of this sort of stuff. We ate roast pork, with

our fingers. He kept on singing his song and shouting. It was only after dinner that he began to talk connectedly. I wish I could remember it all. This is the important part of my story.

‘It is hard to understand it without being a biologist. These dwarfs *are* a different species and an older species than ours. But, then, the specific variation is always liable to reappear in human children. They revert to the dwarf. Consequently, they are multiplying very fast; they are being increased both by ordinary breeding among themselves and also from without by those hardbacks or changelings. He spoke of lots of sub-species besides the Marxomanni — Mussolimini, Swastici, Gangomanni. . . . I can’t remember them all. For a long time I couldn’t see where he himself came in.

Heroic Nihilism laughs at the less thoroughgoing forms of Tough-Mindedness and they have no answer to it

‘At last he told me. He is breeding and training them for a descent on this country. When I tried to find out why, for a long time he would only stare at me and sing his song. Finally — as near as I could get it — his theory seemed to be that fighting was an end in itself.

‘Mind you, he was not drunk. He said that he could understand old-fashioned people who believed in the Landlord and kept the rules and hoped to go up and live in the Landlord’s castle when they had to leave this country. “They have something to live for,” he said. “And if their belief was true, their behaviour would be perfectly sensible. But as their belief is not true, there remains only one way of life fit for a man.” This other way of life was something he called Heroism, or Master-Morality, or Violence. “All the other people in between,” he said, “are ploughing the sand.” He went on railing at the people in Claptrap for ages, and also at Mr. Sensible. “These are the dregs of man,” he said. “They are always thinking of happiness. They are scraping together and storing up and trying to *build*. Can they not see that the law of the world is against them? Where will any of them be a hundred years hence?” I said they might be building for posterity. “And who will posterity build for?” he asked. “Can’t you see that it is all bound to come to nothing in the end? And the end may come to-morrow: and however late it comes, to those who look back all their ‘happiness’ will seem but a moment that has slipped away and left nothing behind. You can’t gather happiness. Do you go to bed with any more in hand on the day you have had a thousand pleasures?” I asked if his “Heroism” left anything

behind it either: but he said it did. “The excellent deed,” he said, “is eternal. The hero alone has this privilege, that death for him is not defeat, and the lamenting over him and the memory is part of the good he aimed for; and the moment of battle fears nothing from the future because it has already cast security away.”

‘He talked a lot like that. I asked him what he thought of the Eschropolitans and he roared with laughter and said: “When the Cruels meet the Clevers there will not be even the ghost of a tug of war.” Then I asked him if he knew you three and he laughed louder still. He said that Angular might turn out an enemy worth fighting when he grew up. “But I don’t know,” he said. “Likely enough he is only an Eschropolitan turned inside-out — poacher turned game-keeper. As for the other pair, they are the last even of the last men.” I asked him what he meant. “The men of Claptrap,” he said, “may have some excuse for their folly, for they at least still believe that your country is a place where Happiness is possible. But your two friends are madmen without qualification. They claim to have reached rock-bottom, they talk of being disillusioned. They think that they have reached the furthest North — as if I were not here to the North of them. They live on a rock that will never feed man, between a chasm that they cannot cross and the home of a giant to whom they dare not return: and still they maunder of a culture and a security. If all men who try to build are but polishing the brasses on a sinking ship, then your pale friends are the supreme fools who polish with the rest though they know and admit that the ship is sinking. Their Humanism and what not is but the old dream with a new name. The rot in the world is too deep and the leak in the world is too wide. They may patch and tinker as they please, they will not save it. Better give in. Better cut the wood with the grain. If I am to live in a world of destruction let me be its agent and not its patient.”

‘In the end he said: “I will make this concession to your friends. They do live further North than anyone but me. They are more like men than any of their race. They shall have this honour when I lead the dwarfs to war, that Humanist’s skull shall be the first from which I drink the blood of a man: and Grimhild here shall have Classical’s.”

‘That was about all he said. He made me go out on the cliffs with him. It was all I could do to keep my footing. He said, “This wind blows straight from the pole; it will make a man of you.” I think he was trying to frighten me. In the end I got away. He loaded me with food for myself and you.

“Feed them up,” he said. “There is not enough blood in them at present to quench the thirst of a dwarfish sword.” Then I came away. And I am very tired.’

CHAPTER SEVEN. Fools’ Paradise

‘I should like to meet this Savage,’ said Angular. ‘He seems to be a very clear-headed man.’

‘I don’t know about that,’ said Humanist. ‘He and his dwarfs seem to me to be just the thing I am fighting against — the logical conclusion of Eschropolis against which I raise the banner of Humanism. All the wild atavistic emotions which old Halfways sets free under false pretences — I am not at all surprised that he likes a valkyrie for a daughter — and which young Halfways unmasks, but cherishes when he has unmasked them; where can they end but in a complete abandonment of the *human*? I am glad to hear of him. He shows how necessary I am.’

‘I agree,’ said John in great excitement, ‘But how are you going to fight? Where are your troops? Where is your base of supplies? You can’t feed an army on a garden of stones and sea-shells.’

‘It is intelligence that counts,’ said Humanist.

‘It moves nothing,’ said John. ‘You see that Savage is scalding hot and you are cold. You must get heat to rival his heat. Do you think you can rout a million armed dwarfs by being “not romantic”?’

‘If Mr. Vertue will not be offended,’ said Classical, ‘I would suggest that he dreamed the whole thing. Mr. Vertue is romantic: he is paying for his wish-fulfilment dreams as he will always pay — with a fear-fulfilment dream. It is well-known that nobody lives further North than we.’ But Vertue was too tired to defend his story and soon all the occupants of the hut were asleep.

BOOK SEVEN. SOUTHWARD ALONG THE CANYON

Now is the seventh winter since Troy fell, and we
Still search beneath unfriendly stars, through every sea
And desert isle, for Italy's retreating strand.
But here is kinsman's country and Acestes' land;
What hinders here to build a city and remain?
Oh fatherland, oh household spirits preserved in vain
From the enemy, shall no new Troy arise? Shall no
New Simois there, re-named for Hector's memory, flow!
Rather, come! — burn with me the boats that work us harm!
— VIRGIL

Through this and through no other fault we fell,
Nor, being fallen, bear other pain than this,
— Always without hope in desire to dwell.
— DANTE

Some also have wished that the next way to their Father's house were here that they might be troubled no more with either Hills or Mountains to go over; but the way is the way, and there's an end. — BUNYAN

CHAPTER ONE. Vertue is Sick

In the presence of these thoughts traditional morality falters

I saw the two travellers get up from their sacking and bid good-bye to their hosts, and set out southwards. The weather had not changed, nor did I ever see any other weather over that part of the country than clouds and wind without rain. Vertue himself was out of sorts and made haste without the spirit of haste. Then at last he opened his mind to his companion and said, ‘John, I do not know what is coming over me. Long ago you asked me — or was it Media asked me — where I was going and why: and I remember that I brushed the question aside. At that time it seemed to me so much more important to keep my rules and do my thirty miles a day. But I am beginning to find that it will not do. In the old days it was always a question of doing what I chose instead of what I wanted: but now I am beginning to be uncertain what it is I choose.’

‘How has this come about?’ said John.

‘Do you know that I nearly decided to stay with Savage?’

‘With Savage?’

‘It sounds like raving, but think it over. Supposing there is no Landlord, no mountains in the East, no Island in the West, nothing but this country. A few weeks ago I would have said that all those things made no difference. But now — I don’t know. It is quite clear that all the ordinary ways of living in this country lead to something which I certainly do *not* choose. I know that, even if I don’t know what I *do* choose. I know that I don’t want to be a Halfways, or a Clever, or a Sensible. Then there is the life I have been leading myself — marching on I don’t know where. I can’t see that there is any other good in it except the mere fact of imposing my will on my inclinations. And that seems to be good *training*, but training for what? Suppose after all it was training for battle? Is it so absurd to think that that might be the thing we were born for? A fight in a narrow place, life or death; — that must be the final act of will — the conquest of the deepest inclination of all.’

Without Desire it finds no motive: with Desire, no morality

‘I think my heart will break,’ said John after they had gone many paces in silence. ‘I came out to find my Island. I am not high-minded like you, Vertue: it was never anything but sweet desire that led me. I have not

smelled the air from that Island since — since — it is so long that I cannot remember. I saw more of it at home. And now my only friend talks of selling himself to the dwarfs.'

'I am sorry for you,' said Vertue, 'and I am sorry for myself. I am sorry for every blade of grass and for this barren rock we are treading and the very sky above us. But I have no help to give you.'

'Perhaps,' said John, 'there are things East and West of this country after all.'

'Do you still understand me so little as that!' cried Vertue, turning on him. 'Things East and West! Don't you see that that is the other fatal possibility! Don't you see that I am caught either way?'

'Why?' said John: and then, 'Let us sit down. I am tired and we have nowhere to hurry to — not now.'

Vertue sat down as one not noticing that he did it.

'Don't you see?' he said. 'Suppose there is anything East and West. How can that give me a motive for going on? Because there is something pleasant ahead? That is a bribe. Because there is something dreadful behind? That is a threat. I meant to be a free man. I meant to choose things because I chose to choose them — not because I was paid for it. Do you think I am a child to be scared with rods and baited with sugar plums? It was for this reason that I never even inquired whether the stories about the Landlord were true; I saw that his castle and his black hole were there to corrupt my will and kill my freedom. If it was true it was a truth an honest man must not know.'

Evening darkened on the tableland and they sat for a long time, immovable.

'I believe that I am mad,' said Vertue presently. 'The world cannot be as it seems to me. If there is something to go to, it is a bribe, and I cannot go to it: if I can go, then there is nothing to go to.'

'Vertue,' said John, 'give in. For once yield to desire. Have done with your choosing. *Want* something.'

'I cannot,' said Vertue. 'I must choose because I choose because I choose: and it goes on for ever, and in the whole world I cannot find a reason for rising from this stone.'

Hence conscience can guide John no longer

'Is it not reason enough that the cold will presently kill us here?'

It had grown quite dark, and Vertue made no reply.

‘Vertue!’ said John, and then suddenly again in a louder voice, frightened, ‘Vertue!!’ But there was no answer. He groped for his friend in the dark and touched the cold dust of the tableland. He rose on his hands and knees and groped all about, calling. But he was confused and could not even find again the place whence he had risen himself. He could not tell how often he might have groped over the same ground or whether he was getting further and further from their resting-place. He could not be still; it was too cold. So all that night he rummaged to and fro in the dark, calling out Vertue’s name: and often it came into his head that Vertue had been all along one of the phantoms of a dream and that he had followed a shade.

CHAPTER TWO. John Leading

I dreamed that morning broke over the plateau, and I saw John rise up, white and dirty, in the new twilight. He looked all round him and saw nothing but the heath. Then he walked this way and that, still looking, and so for a long time. And at last he sat down and wept: that also for a long time. And when he had wept enough he rose like a man determined and resumed his journey southward.

He had hardly gone twenty paces when he stopped with a cry, for there lay Vertue at his feet. I understood in my dream that during his groping in the darkness he had unwittingly gone further and further from the place where they had first sat down.

In a moment John was on his knees and feeling for Vertue's heart. It beat still. He laid his face to Vertue's lips. They breathed still. He caught him by the shoulder and shook him.

'Wake up,' he cried, 'the morning is here.'

Then Vertue opened his eyes and smiled at John, a little foolishly.

'Are you well?' said John. 'Are you fit to travel?'

'*Sick, wearied out with contrarieties, he yields up moral questions in despair*'

But Vertue only smiled. He was dumb. Then John held out his hands and pulled Vertue to his feet: and Vertue stood up uncertainly, but as soon as he made a stride he stumbled and fell, for he was blind. It was long before John understood. Then at last I saw him take Vertue by the hand and, leading him, resume their journey to the South. And there fell upon John that last loneliness which comes when the comforter himself needs comforting, and the guide is to be guided.

CHAPTER THREE. The Main Road Again

They found Mr. Sensible's house empty, as John had expected, with the shutters up and the chimneys smokeless. John decided to push on to the main road and then, if the worst came to the worst, they could go to Mother Kirk: but he hoped it would not come to that.

All their journey South had been a descent, from the northern mountains to Mr. Sensible's: but after his house it began to rise again a little to the main road, which ran along a low ridge, so that, when they had gained the road, the country South of it was suddenly all opened before them. At the same moment there came a gleam of sunshine, the first for many days. The road was unfenced to the heath on its northern side, but in its southern side there was a hedge with a gate in it: and the first thing John saw through the gate was a long low mound of earth. He had not been a farmer's son for nothing. Having led Vertue to the bank of the road and seated him, he lost no time in climbing the gate and digging with both hands into the earthern mound. It contained, as he had expected, turnips; and in a minute he was seated by Vertue, cutting a fine root into chunks, feeding the blind man and teaching him how to feed himself. The sun grew warmer every moment. The spring seemed further on in this place, and the hedge behind them was already more green than brown. Among many notes of birds John thought he could distinguish a lark. They had breakfasted well, and as the warmth increased pleasantly over their aching limbs, they fell asleep.

CHAPTER FOUR. Going South

He looks longingly towards less comfortless modes of thought and meets Broad Church, modernising, ‘religion’

When John awoke his first look was towards Vertue, but Vertue was still sleeping. John stretched himself and rose: he was warm and well, but a little thirsty. It was a four-cross-road where they had been sitting, for the northern road, at which John looked with a shudder, was but the continuation of a road from the South. He stood and looked down the latter. To his eyes, long now accustomed to the dusty flats of the northern plateau, the country southward was as a rich counterpane. The sun had passed noon by an hour or so, and the slanting light freckled with rounded shadows a green land, that fell ever away before him, opening as it sank into valleys, and beyond them into deeper valleys again, so that places on the same level where now he stood, yonder were mountain tops. Nearer hand were fields and hedgerows, ruddy ploughland, winding woods, and frequent farm-houses white among their trees. He went back and raised Vertue and was about to show it all to him when he remembered his blindness. Then, sighing, he took him by the hand and went down the new road.

Before they had gone far he heard a bubbling sound by the roadside, and found a little spring pouring itself into a stream that ran henceforth with the road, now at the left, now at the right, and often crossed their way. He filled his hat with water and gave Vertue to drink. Then he drank himself and they went on, always downhill. The road nestled deeper each half-mile between banks of grass. There were primroses, first one or two, then clustered, then innumerable. From many turns of the road John caught sight of the deeper valleys to which they were descending, blue with distance and rounded with the weight of trees: but often a little wood cut off all remoter prospect.

The first house they came to was a red house, old and ivied, and well back front the road, and John thought it had the look of a Steward’s house: as they came nearer, there was the Steward himself, without his mask, pottering about at some light gardening labour on the sunny side of the hedge. John leaned over the gate and asked for hospitality, explaining at the same time his friend’s condition.

‘Come in, come in,’ said the Steward. ‘It will be a great pleasure.’

Now I dreamed that this Steward was the same Mr. Broad who had sent a case of sherry to Mr. Sensible. He was about sixty years of age.

CHAPTER FIVE. Tea on the Lawn

‘It is almost warm enough to have tea on the lawn,’ said Mr. Broad. ‘Martha, I think we will have tea on the lawn.’

Chairs were set and all three sat down. On the smooth lawn, surrounded by laurels and laburnum, it was even warmer than in the road, and suddenly a sweet bird-note shot out from the thickets.

‘Listen!’ said Mr. Broad, ‘it is a thrush. I really believe it is a thrush.’

Maidservants in snowy aprons opened the long windows of the library and came over the grass carrying tables and trays, the silver teapot and the stand of cakes. There was honey for tea. Mr. Broad asked John some questions about his travels.

‘Dear me,’ he said, when he heard of Mr. Savage, ‘dear me! I ought to go and see him. And such a clever man, too, by your account . . . it is very sad.’

John went on to describe the three pale men.

‘Ah, to be sure,’ said Mr. Broad. ‘I knew their father very well. A very able man. I owed a good deal to him at one time. Indeed, as a young man, he formed my mind. I suppose I ought to go and see his boys. Young Angular I *have* met. He is a dear, good fellow — a little narrow; I would venture to say, even a little old-fashioned, though of course I wouldn’t for the world — the two brothers are doing splendidly I have no doubt. I really *ought* to go and see them. But I am getting on, and I confess it never suits me up there.’

‘It is a very different climate from this,’ said John.

It is friends with the World and goes on no pilgrimage;

‘I always think it is possible for a place to be *too* bracing. They call it the land of the Tough-minded — tough-skinned would be a better name. If one has a tendency to lumbago — But, dear me, if you have come from there you must have met my old friend Sensible?’

‘You know him too?’

‘Know him! He is my oldest friend. He is a kind of connection of mine, and then, you know, we are quite near neighbours. He is only a mile north of the road and I am about a mile south of it. I should think I did know him. I have passed many, many happy hours in his house. The dear old man.

Poor Sensible, he is ageing fast. I don't think he has ever quite forgiven me for having kept most of my hair!'

'I should have thought his views differed from yours a good deal.'

'Ah, to be sure, to be sure! He is not very orthodox, perhaps, but as I grow older I am inclined to set less and less store by mere orthodoxy. So often the orthodox view means the lifeless view, the barren formula. I am coming to look more and more at the language of the heart. Logic and definition divide us: it is those things which draw us together that I now value most — our common affections, our common delight in this slow pageant of the countryside, our common struggle towards the light. Sensible's heart is in the right place.'

'I wonder,' said John, 'if he treats that servant of his very well.'

'His language is a little bit rough, I suppose. One must be charitable. You young people are so hard. Dear me, I remember when I was a boy myself. . . . And then a man of Sensible's age suffers a good deal. We are none of us perfect. Will you not have a little more tea?'

'Thank you,' said John, 'but if you can give me some directions I think I would like to continue my journey, I am trying to find an Island in the West — —'

'That is a beautiful idea,' said Mr. Broad. 'And if you will trust an older traveller, the seeking is the finding. How many happy days you have before you!'

'And I want to know,' continued John, 'whether it is really necessary to cross the canyon.'

'To be sure you do. I wouldn't for the world hold you back. At the same time, my dear boy, I think there is a very real danger at your age of trying to make these things too definite. That has been the great error of my profession in past ages. We have tried to enclose everything in formulæ, to turn poetry into logic, and metaphor into dogma; and now that we are beginning to realize our mistake we find ourselves shackled by the formulæ of dead men. I don't say that they were not adequate once: but they have ceased to be adequate for us with our wider knowledge. When I became a man, I put away childish things. These great truths need re-interpretation in every age.'

It is fond of wildflowers

'I am not sure that I quite understand,' said John. 'Do you mean that I must cross the canyon or that I must not?'

‘I see you want to pin me down,’ said Mr. Broad, with a smile, ‘and I love to see it. I was like that myself once. But one loses faith in abstract logic as one grows older. Do you never feel that the truth is so great and so simple that no mere words can contain it? The heaven and the heaven of heavens . . . how much less this house that I have builded.’

‘Well, anyway,’ said John, deciding to try a new question. ‘Supposing a man *did* have to cross the canyon. Is it true that he would have to rely on Mother Kirk?’

‘Ah, Mother Kirk! I love and honour her from the bottom of my heart, but I trust that loving her does not mean being blind to her faults. We are none of us infallible. If I sometimes feel that I must differ from her at present, it is because I honour all the more the *idea* that she stands for, the thing she may yet become. For the moment, there is no denying that she has let herself get a little out of date. Surely, for many of our generation, there is a truer, a more acceptable, message in all this beautiful world around us? I don’t know whether you are anything of a botanist. If you would care — —’

‘I want my Island,’ said John. ‘Can you tell me how to reach it? I am afraid I am not specially interested in botany.’

‘It would open a new world to you,’ said Mr. Broad. ‘A new window on the Infinite. But perhaps this is not in your line. We must all find our own key to the mystery after all. I wouldn’t for the world . . .’

‘I think I must be going,’ said John. ‘And I have enjoyed myself very much. If I follow this road, shall I find anywhere that will give me a night’s lodging in a few miles?’

John takes up the study of Metaphysics

‘Oh, easily,’ said Mr. Broad. ‘I should be very glad to have you here if you would care to stay. But if not, there is Mr. Wisdom within an easy walk. You will find him a delightful man. I used to go and see him quite often when I was younger, but it is a little too far for me now. A dear, good fellow — a *little* persistent, perhaps . . . I sometimes wonder if he is really quite free from a trace of narrow-mindedness. . . . You should hear what Sensible says about him! But there: we are none of us perfect, and he is a very good sort of man on the whole. You will like him very much.’

The old Steward bade good-bye to John with almost fatherly kindness, and John, still leading Vertue, pursued his journey.

CHAPTER SIX. The House of Wisdom

The stream that they had followed to the Steward's house was now no longer a brook by the roadside, but a river that sometimes approached, sometimes receded from the road, sliding in swift amber reaches and descending silver rapids. The trees grew more thickly hereabouts and were of larger kinds — and as the valley deepened, tiers of forest rose one above the other on each side. They walked in shadow. But far above their heads the sun was still shining on the mountain tops, beyond the forest slopes and beyond the last steep fields, where there were domed summits of pale grass and winding water-glens, and cliffs the colour of doves, and cliffs the colour of wine. The moths were already flying when they reached an open place. The valley widened and a loop of the river made room for a wide and level lawn between its banks and the wooded mountains. Amidst the lawn stood a low, pillared house approachable by a bridge, and the door stood open. John led the sick man up to them and saw that the lamps were already lit within; and then he saw Wisdom sitting among his children, like an old man.

'You may stay here as long as you wish,' he said in answer to John's question. 'And it may be that we shall heal your friend if his sickness is not incurable. Sit and eat, and when you have eaten you shall tell us your story.'

His imagination re-awakes

Then I saw that chairs were brought for the travellers and some of the young men of the house carried water to them to wash. And when they had washed, a woman set a table before them and laid on it a loaf, and cheese, and a dish of fruit, with some curds, and butter-milk in a pitcher: 'For we can get no wine here,' said the old man with a sigh.

When the meal was over there was silence in the house, and John saw that they waited for his story. So he collected himself and cast back in his mind, a long time, in silence; and when at last he spoke he told the whole thing in order, from the first sight he had had of the Island down to his arrival among them.

Then Vertue was led away from John, and he himself was brought into a cell where there was a bed, and a table, and a pitcher of water. He lay on the bed, and it was hard, but not lumpy, and he was immediately in a deep sleep.

CHAPTER SEVEN. Across the Canyon by Moonlight

In the middle of the night he opened his eyes and saw the full moon, very large and low, shining at his window: and beside his bed stood a woman darkly clothed, who held up her hand for silence when he would have spoken.

‘My name is Contemplation,’ she said, ‘and I am one of the daughters of Wisdom. You must rise and follow me.’

Then John rose and followed her out of the house on to the grassy lawn in the moonlight. She led him across it to its westward edge where the mountain began to rise under its cloak of forest. But as they came right up to the eaves of the forest he saw that there was a crack or crevasse in the earth between them and it, to which he could find no bottom, and though it was not very wide, it was too wide to jump.

‘It is too wide a jump by day,’ said the lady, ‘but in the moonlight you can jump it.’

John felt no doubt of her and gathered himself together and leaped. His leap carried him further than he had intended — though he felt no surprise — and he found himself flying over the tree tops, and the steep fields, and he never alighted till he reached the mountain top; and the Lady was there by his side.

Idealist Philosophy rejects the literal truth of religion but also rejects Materialism

‘Come,’ she said, ‘we have still far to go.’

Then they went on together over hills and dales, very fast, in the moonlight, till they came to the edge of a cliff, and he looked down and saw the sea below him: and out in the sea lay the Island. And because it was moonlight and night John could not see it so well as he had sometimes seen it, but either for that reason, or for some other, it seemed to him the more real.

‘When you have learned to fly further, we can leap from here right into the Island,’ said the Lady. ‘But for this night, it is enough.’

As John turned to answer her, the Island and the sea and the Lady herself vanished, and he was awake, in daylight, in his cell in the house of Wisdom, and a bell was ringing.

CHAPTER EIGHT. This Side by Sunlight

On the next day Mr. Wisdom caused John and Vertue both to sit by him in a porch of his house looking westward. The wind was in the South and the sky was a little clouded and over the western mountains there was a delicate mist, so that they had the air of being in another world, though they were not more than a mile away. And Mr. Wisdom instructed them.

‘As to this Island in the West, and those eastern mountains, and as touching the Landlord also and the Enemy, there are two errors, my sons, which you must equally conquer, and pass right between them, before you can become wise. The first error is that of the southern people, and it consists in holding that these eastern and western places are real places — real as this valley is real, and places as this valley is a place. If any such thought lingers in your minds, I would have you root it out utterly, and give no quarter to that thought, whether it threatens you with fears, or tempts you with hopes. For this is Superstition, and all who believe it will come in the end to the swamps and the jungles of the far South, where they will live in the city of Magicians, transported with delight in things that help not, and haunted with terror of that which cannot hurt. And it is part of the same error to think that the Landlord is a real man: real as I am real, man as I am man. That is the first error. And the second is the opposite of it, and is chiefly current to the North of the road: it is the error of those who say that the eastern and western things are merely illusions in our own minds. This also it is my will that you should utterly reject: and you must be on your guard lest you ever embrace this error in your fear of the other, or run to and fro between the two as your hearts will prompt you to do, like some who will be Materialists (for that is the name of the second error) when the story of the black hole frightens them for their lawless living, or even when they are afraid of spectres, and then another day will believe in the Landlord and the castle because things in this country go hard with them, or because the lease of some dear friend is running out and they would gladly hope to meet him again. But the wise man, ruling his passions with reason and disciplined imagination, withdraws himself to the middle point between these two errors, having found that the truth lies there, and remains fixed immovably. But what that truth is you shall learn to-morrow; and for the

present this sick man will be cared for, and you who are whole may do as you will.’

The chasm is still not crossed

Then I saw Mr. Wisdom rise and leave them, and Vertue was taken to another place. John spent the most part of that day walking in the neighbourhood of the house. He crossed the level grass of the valley and came to its western edge where the mountain began to rise under its cloak of forest. But as he came under the forest eaves, he saw that between him and the first trees there was a crack or crevasse in the earth to which he could find no bottom. It was very narrow, but not quite narrow enough to jump. There seemed also to be some vapour rising from it which made the further side indistinct: but the vapour was not so thick nor the chasm so wide but that he could see here a spray of foliage and there a stone with deep moss, and in one place falling water that caught the sunlight. His desire to pass and to go on to the Island was sharp, but not to the degree of pain. Mr. Wisdom’s words that the eastern and western things were neither wholly real nor wholly illusion, had spread over his mind a feeling of intent, yet quiet, comfort. Some fear was removed: the suspicion, never before wholly laid at rest, that his wanderings might lead him soon or late into the power of the Landlord, had passed away, and with it the gnawing anxiety lest the Island had never existed. The world seemed full of expectation, even as the misty veil between him and the forest seemed both to cover and discover sublimities that were without terror and beauties without sensuality; and every now and then a strengthening of the south wind would make a moment’s clearness and show him, withdrawn in unexpected depth, remote reaches of the mountain valleys, desolate fields of flowers, the hint of snow beyond. He lay down in the grass. Presently one of the young men of the house passed that way and stopped to talk with him. They spoke of this and that, lazily, and at long intervals. Sometimes they discussed the regions further South where John had not been; sometimes, his own travels. The young man told him that if he had followed the road a few miles beyond the valley he would have come to a fork. The left hand turn would lead you, by a long way round, to the parts about Claptrap: the right went on to the southern forests, to the city of the Magicians and the country of Nycteris, ‘and beyond that it is all swamp and sugar cane,’ said he, ‘and crocodiles and venomous spiders until the land sinks away altogether into the final salt swamp which becomes at last the southern ocean. There are no

settlements there except a few lake-dwellers, Theosophists and what not, and it is very malarial.'

While they were speaking of the parts that John already knew, he asked his informant whether they in the House of Wisdom knew anything of the Grand Canyon or of the way down into it.

'Do you not know?' said the other, 'that we are in the bottom of the canyon here?' Then he made John sit up and showed him the lie of the land. The sides of the valley drew together northward, and at the same time grew more precipitous, so that at last they came together into a great V. 'And that V is the canyon, and you are looking into it end-ways from the southern end. The eastern face of the canyon is gentle and you were walking down into it all day yesterday, though you did not notice it.'

But this Philosophy, while denying the Hope yet spares the Desire, to cross it

'So I am in the bottom of it already,' said John. 'And now there is nothing to prevent me from crossing it.'

The young man shook his head.

'There is no crossing it,' he said. 'When I told you we were now at the bottom, I meant the lowest point that can be reached by man. The real bottom is, of course, the bottom of this crevasse which we are sitting by: and that, of course — well, it would be a misunderstanding to talk of getting down it. There is no question of crossing or of getting to what you see over there.'

'Could it not be bridged?' said John.

'In a sense there is nothing to bridge — there is nowhere for this bridge to *arrive at*. You must not take literally the show of forest and mountain which we seem to see as we look across.'

'You don't mean that it is an illusion?'

'No. You will understand better when you have been longer with my father. It is not an illusion, it is an appearance. It is a true appearance, too, in a sense. You *must* see it as a mountainside or the like — a continuation of the world we *do* know — and it does not mean that there is anything wrong with your eyes or any better way of seeing it to which you can attain. But don't think you can get there. Don't think there is any meaning in the idea of you (a man) going "there", as if it were really a place.'

'What? And the Island too! You would have me give up my heart's desire?'

‘I would not. I would not have you cease to fix all your desires on the far side, for to wish to cross is simply to be a man, and to lose that wish is to be a beast. It is not desire that my father’s doctrine kills: it is only hope.’

‘And what is this valley called?’

‘We call it now simply Wisdom’s Valley: but the oldest maps mark it as the Valley of Humiliation.’

‘The grass is quite wet,’ said John, after a pause. ‘The dew is beginning.’

‘It is time that we went to supper,’ said the young man.

CHAPTER NINE. Wisdom — Exoteric

Whence come logical categories? Whence come moral values?

Next day, as before, Wisdom had John and Vertue into the porch and continued to instruct them;

‘You have heard what you are not to think of the eastern and western things, and now let us discover, as far as the imperfection of our faculty allows, what may rightly be thought. And first, consider this country in which we live. You see that it is full of roads, and no man remembers the making of these roads: neither have we any way to describe and order the land in our minds except by reference to them. You have seen how we determine the position of every other place by its relation to the main road: and though you may say that we have maps, you are to consider that the maps would be useless without the roads, for we find where we are on the map by the skeleton of roads which is common to it and to the country. We see that we have just passed such a turn to the right or the left, or that we are approaching such a bend in the road, and thus we know that we are near to some other place on the map which is not yet visible on the countryside. The people, indeed, say that the Landlord made these roads: and the Claptrapians say that we first made them on the map and have projected them, by some strange process, from it to the country. But I would have you hold fast to the truth, that we find them and do not make them: but also that no *man* could make them. For to make them he would need a bird’s-eye view of the whole country, which he could have only from the sky. But no man could live in the sky. Again, this country is full of rules. The Claptrapians say that the Stewards made the rules. The servants of the giant say that we made them ourselves in order to restrain by them the lusts of our neighbours and to give a pompous colouring to our own. The people say that the Landlord made them.

Philosophy says that the existence of God would not answer the question

‘Let us consider these doctrines one by one. The Stewards made them? How then came they to be Stewards, and why did the rest of us consent to their rules? As soon as we ask this question, we are obliged to ask another. How comes it that those who have rejected the Stewards immediately set about making new rules of their own, and that these new rules are substantially the same as the old? A man says, “I have finished with rules:

henceforth I will do what I want:" but he finds that his deepest want, the only want that is constant through the flux of his appetites and despondencies, his moments of calm and of passion, is to keep the rules. Because these rules are a disguise for his desires, say the giant's following. But, I ask, what desires? Not any and every desire: the rules are frequently denials of these desires. The desire for self-approbation, shall we say? But why should we approve ourselves for keeping the rules unless we already thought that the rules were good? A man may find pleasure in supposing himself swifter or stronger than he really is, but only if he already loves speed or strength. The giant's doctrine thus destroys itself. If we wish to give a seemly colouring to our lusts we have already the idea of the seemly, and the seemly turns out to be nothing else than that which is according to the rules. The want to obey the rules is thus presupposed in every doctrine which describes our obedience to them, or the rules themselves, as a self-flattery. Let us turn then to the old tale of the Landlord. Some mighty man beyond this country has made the rules. Suppose he has: then why do we obey them?'

Mr. Wisdom turned to Vertue and said, 'This part is of great concern to you and to your cure,' then he continued:

'There can be only two reasons. Either because we respect the power of the Landlord, and are moved by fear of the penalties and hopes of the rewards with which he sanctions the rules: or else, because we freely agree with the Landlord, because we also think good the things that he thinks good. But neither explanation will serve. If we obey through hope and fear, in that very act we disobey: for the rule which we reverence most, whether we find it in our own hearts or on the Steward's card, is that rule which says that a man must act disinterestedly. To obey the Landlord thus, would be to disobey. But what if we obey freely, because we agree with him? Alas, this is even worse. To say that we agree, and obey because we agree, is only to say again that we find the same rule written in our hearts and obey *that*. If the Landlord enjoins *that*, he enjoins only what we already purposed to do, and his voice is idle: if he enjoins anything else, his voice is again is idle, for we shall disobey him. In either case the mystery of the rules remains unsolved, and the Landlord is a meaningless addition to the problem. If he spoke, the rules were there before he spoke. If we and he agree about them, where is the common original which he and we both copy: what is the thing about which his doctrine and ours are both true?

Philosophy will not explain away John's glimpse of the Transcendent

'Of the rules, then as of the roads, we must say that indeed we find them and do not make them, but that it helps us not at all to assume a Landlord for their maker. And there is a third thing also' (here he looked to John) 'which specially concerns you. What of the Island in the West? The People in our age have all but forgotten it. The giant would say that it is, again, a delusion in your own mind trumped up to conceal lust. Of the Stewards, some do not know that there is such a thing: some agree with the giant, denouncing your Island as wickedness: some say that it is a blurred and confused sight from far off of the Landlord's castle. They have no common doctrine: but let us consider the question for ourselves.

'And first I would have you set aside all suspicion that the giant is right: and this will be the easier for you because you have already talked with Reason. They say it is there to conceal lust. But it does not conceal lust. If it is a screen, it is a very bad screen. The giant would make the dark part of our mind so strong and subtle that we never escape from its deceptions: and yet when this omnipotent conjuror has done all that he can, he produces an illusion which a solitary boy, in the fancies of his adolescence, can expose and see through in two years. This is but wild talk. There is no man and no nation at all capable of seeing the Island, who have not learned by experience, and that soon, how easily the vision ends in lust: and there is none also, not corrupted, who has not felt the disappointment of that ending, who has not known that it is the breaking of the vision not its consummation. The words between you and Reason were true. What does not satisfy when we find it, was not the thing we were desiring. If water will not set a man at ease, then be sure it was not thirst, or not thirst only, that tormented him: he wanted drunkenness to cure his dullness, or talk to cure his solitude, or the like. How, indeed, do we know our desires save by their satisfaction?

The Desired is real just because it is never an experience

'When do we know them until we say, "Ah, *this* was what I wanted"? And if there were any desire which it was natural for man to feel but impossible for man to satisfy, would not the nature of this desire remain to him always ambiguous? If old tales were true, if a man without putting off humanity could indeed pass the frontiers of our country, if he could be, and yet be a man, in that fabled East and fabled West, then indeed at the moment of fruition, the raising of the cup, the assumption of the crown, the

kiss of the spouse — then first, to his backward glance, the long roads of desire that he had trodden would become plain in all their winding, and when he found, he would know what it was that he had sought. I am old and full of tears, and I see that you also begin to feel the sorrow that is born with us. Abandon hope: do not abandon desire. Feel no wonder that these glimpses of your Island so easily confuse themselves with viler things, and are so easily blasphemed. Above all, never try to keep them, never try to revisit the same place or time wherein the vision was accorded to you. You will pay the penalty of all who would bind down to one place or time within our country that which our country cannot contain. Have you not heard from the Stewards of the sin of idolatry, and how, in their old chronicles, the manna turned to worms if any tried to hoard it? Be not greedy, be not passionate; you will but crush dead on your own breast with hot, rough hands the thing you loved. But if ever you incline to doubt that the thing you long for is something real, remember what your own experience has taught you. Think that it is a *feeling*, and at once the feeling has no value. Stand sentinel at your own mind, watching for that feeling, and you will find — what shall I say? — a flutter in the heart, an image in the head, a sob in the throat: and was *that* your desire? You know that it was not, and that no feeling whatever will appease you, that *feeling*, refine it as you will, is but one more spurious claimant — spurious as the gross lusts of which the giant speaks. Let us conclude then that what you desire is no state of yourself at all, but something, for that very reason, Other and Outer. And knowing this you will find tolerable the truth that you cannot attain it. That the thing should *be*, is so great a good that when you remember “it is” you will forget to be sorry that you can never have it. Nay, anything that you could have would be so much less than this that its fruition would be immeasurably below the mere hunger for this. Wanting is better than having. The glory of any world wherein you can live is in the end appearance: but then, as one of my sons has said, that leaves the world more glorious yet.’

CHAPTER TEN. Wisdom — Esoteric

John finds that the real strength in the lives of the Philosophers comes from sources better, or worse, than any their philosophies acknowledge

That day John spent as he had spent the other, wandering and often sleeping in the fields. In this valley the year came on with seven-leagued boots. To-day the riverside was thick with fritillaries, the kingfisher flew, the dragon-flies darted, and when he sat it was in the shade. A pleasing melancholy rested upon him, and a great indolence. He talked that day with many of the people of the house, and when he went that night to his cell his mind was full of their resigned voices, and of their faces, so quiet and yet so alert, as though they waited in hourly expectation of something that would never happen. When next he opened his eyes moonlight filled his cell; and as he lay waking heard a low whistle from without his window. He put out his head. A dark figure stood in the shadow of the house. ‘Come out and play,’ said he. At the same time there came a sound of suppressed laughter from an angle of deeper shadow beyond the speaker.

‘This window is too high for me to jump from,’ said John.

‘You forget that it is by moonlight,’ said the other, and held up his hands.

‘Jump!’ he said.

John cast some clothes about him and bounded from the window. To his surprise, he reached the ground with no hurt or shock, and a moment later he found himself progressing over the lawn in a series of great leaps amidst a laughing crowd of the sons and daughters of the house: so that the valley in the moonlight, if any had watched, would have looked like nothing so much as a great salver which had been made into the arena for a troupe of performing fleas. Their dance or race, led them to the dark border of a neighbouring wood and as John tumbled down breathless at the foot of a hawthorn, he heard with surprise all around him the sounds of silver and glass, of hampers opening, and bottles uncorking.

‘My father’s ideas of feeding are a little strict,’ explained his host, ‘and we younger ones have found it necessary to supplement the household meals a bit.’

‘Here is champagne, from Mr. Halfways,’ said one.

‘Cold chicken and tongue from Mr. Mammon. What *should* we do without our friends?’

‘Hashish from the south. Nycteris sent it up herself.’

‘This claret,’ said a girl beside him rather shyly, ‘is from Mother Kirk.’

‘I don’t think we ought to drink that,’ said another voice, ‘that is really going a bit too far.’

‘No further than your caviare from the Theosophists,’ said the first girl, ‘and anyway, I need it. It is only this that keeps me alive.’

‘Try some of my brandy,’ said another voice. ‘All made by Savage’s dwarfs.’

‘I don’t know how you can drink that stuff, Karl. Plain, honest food from Claptrap is what you need.’

‘So *you* say, Herbert,’ retorted a new speaker. ‘But some of us find it rather heavy. For me, a morsel of lamb from the Shepherd’s Country and a little mint sauce — that is really all you need to add to our Father’s table.’

‘We all know what you like, Benedict,’ said several.

‘I have finished,’ announced Karl, ‘and now for a night with the dwarfs. Anyone come with me?’

‘Not there,’ cried another. ‘I’m going South to-night to the magicians.’

‘You had much better not, Rudolph,’ said someone. ‘A few quiet hours in Puritania with me would be much better for you — much better.’

‘Chuck it, Immanuel,’ said another. ‘You might as well go to Mother Kirk straight away.’

Marx really a Dwarf; Spinoza a Jew; Kant a Puritan

‘Bernard does,’ said the girl, who had contributed the claret.

By this time the party was rapidly decreasing, for most of the young people, after trying in vain to win converts to their several schemes of pleasure, had bounded off alone, plunging from treetop to treetop, and soon even the thin silvery sound of their laughter had died away. Those who were left swarmed round John soliciting his attention now for this, now for that, amusement. Some sat down beyond the shadow of the wood to work out puzzles in the light of the moon: others settled to serious leap-frog: the more frivolous ran to and fro chasing the moths, wrestling with and tickling one another, giggling and making giggle, till the wood rang with their shrill squeals of glee. It seemed to go on for a long time and if there was any more in that dream John did not remember it when he woke.

CHAPTER ELEVEN. Mum’s the Word

John is taught that the finite self cannot enter the Noumenal World

At breakfast on the following morning John stole many furtive glances at the sons and daughters of Wisdom, but he could see no sign that they were conscious of having met him in such different guise during the night. Indeed, neither then, nor at any other time during his stay in the valley, did he find evidence that they were aware of their nocturnal holidays: and a few tentative questions assured him that, unless they were liars, they all believed themselves to be living exclusively on the spare diet of the house. Immanuel indeed admitted, as a speculative truth, that there were such things as dreams, and that he conceivably dreamed himself: but then he had a complex proof (which John never quite grasped) that no one could possibly remember a dream: and though his appearance and constitution were those of a prize-fighter he attributed this all to the excellent quality of the local fruit. Herbert was a lumpish sort of man who never could muster any appetite for his meals: but John discovered that Herbert put this down to his liver and had no notion that he had been stuffing himself with Claptrapian steak and gravy all night as hard as he could. Another of the family, Bernard by name, was in radiant health. John had seen him drinking Mother Kirk’s wine with great relish and refreshment by moonlight: but the waking Bernard maintained that Mother Kirk’s wine was merely a bad, early attempt at the admirable barley-water which his father sometimes brought out on birthdays and great occasions; and ‘to this barley-water,’ he said, ‘I owe my health. It has made me what I am.’ Still less could John discover, by all the traps that he laid for them, whether the younger members of the household had any recollection of their nightly leap-frog and other gambols. He was forced at last to conclude that either the whole thing had been a private dream of his own or else the secret was very well kept. A little irritation which some displayed when he questioned them, seemed to favour the second hypothesis.

CHAPTER TWELVE. More Wisdom

When they were seated in the porch, Wisdom continued his discourse.

‘You have learned that there are these three things, the Island, the Roads, and the Rules: that they are certainly in some way real and that we have not made them; and further that it does not help us to invent a Landlord. Nor is it possible that there should really be a castle at one end of the world and an island at the other: for the world is round and we are everywhere at the end of the world, since the end of a sphere is its surface. The world is *all* end: but we can never pass beyond that end. And yet these things which our imagination impossibly places as a world beyond the world’s end are, we have seen, in some sense real.

‘You have told me how Reason refuted the lies of the giant by asking what was the colour of things in dark places. You learned from her that there is no colour without seeing, no hardness without touching: no *body*, to say all, save in the minds of those who perceive it. It follows, then, that all this choir of heaven and furniture of earth are imaginations: not your imaginations nor mine, for here we have met in the same world, which could not be if the world was shut up within my mind or yours. Without doubt, then, all this show of sky and earth floats within some mighty imagination. If you ask Whose, again the Landlord will not help you. He is a man: make him as great as you will, he still is other than we and his imagining inaccessible to us, as yours would be to me. Rather we must say that the world is not in this mind, or in that, but in Mind itself, in that impersonal principle of consciousness which flows eternally through us, its perishable forms.

The doctrine of the Absolute or Mind-as-such covers more of the facts than any doctrine John has yet encountered

‘You see how this explains all the questions that have lain on our knees since we began. We find the roads, the reasonable skeleton in the countryside, the guiding-lines that enable us both to make maps and to use them when we have made, because our country is the off-spring of the rational. Consider also the Island. All that you know of it comes at last to this: that your first sight of it was yearning or wanting and that you have never ceased to want that first sight back, as though you wanted a wanting, as though the wanting were the having, and the having a wanting. What is

the meaning of this hungry fruition and this emptiness which is the best filling? Surely, it becomes plain when you have learned that no man says "I" in an unambiguous sense. I am an old man who must soon go over the brook and be seen no more: I am eternal Mind in which time and place themselves are contained. I am the Imaginer: I am one of his imaginations. The Island is nothing else than that perfection and immortality which I possess as Spirit eternal, and vainly crave as mortal soul. Its voices sound at my very ear and are further than the stars; it is under my hand and will never be mine: I have it and lo! the very having is the losing: because at every moment I, as Spirit, am indeed abandoning my rich estate to become that perishing and imperfect creature in whose repeated deaths and births stands my eternity. And I as man in every moment still enjoy the perfection I have lost, since still, so far as I am at all, I am Spirit, and only by being Spirit maintain my short vitality as soul. See how life subsists by death and each becomes the other: for Spirit lives by dying perpetually into such things as we, and we also attain our truest life by dying to our mortal nature and relapsing, as far as may be, into the impersonality of our source: for this is the final meaning of all moral precepts, and the goodness of temperance and justice and of love itself is that they plunge the red heat of our separate and individual passions back in the ice brook of the Spirit, there to take eternal temper, though not endless duration.

'What I tell you is the *evangelium eternum*. This has been known always: ancients and moderns bear witness to it. The stories of the Landlord in our own time are but a picture-writing which show to the people as much of the truth as they can understand. Stewards must have told you — though it seems that you neither heeded nor understood them — the legend of the Landlord's Son. They say that after the eating of the mountain-apple and the earthquake, when things in our country had gone all awry, the Landlord's Son himself became one of his Father's tenants and lived among us, for no other purpose than that he should be killed. The Stewards themselves do not know clearly the meaning of their story: hence, if you ask them how the slaying of the Son should help us, they are driven to monstrous answers. But to us the meaning is clear and the story is beautiful. It is a picture of the life of Spirit itself. What the Son is in the legend, every man is in reality: for the whole world is nothing else than the Eternal thus giving itself to death that it may live — that we may live. Death is life's mode, and the increase of life is through repeated death.

‘And what of the rules? You have seen that it is idle to make them the arbitrary commands of a Landlord: yet those who do so were not altogether astray, for it is equally an error to think that they are each man’s personal choice. Remember what we have said of the Island. Because I am and am not Spirit, therefore I have and have not my desire. The same double nature of the word “I”, explains the rules. I am the lawgiver: but I am also the subject. I, the Spirit, impose upon the soul which I become, the laws she must henceforth obey: and every conflict between the rules and our inclinations is but a conflict of the wishes of my mortal and apparent self against those of my real and eternal. “I ought but I do not wish” — how meaningless the words are, how close to saying, “I want and I do not want.” But once we have learned to say “I, and yet not I, want”, the mystery is plain.

‘And now your sick friend is almost whole, and it is nearly noon.’

BOOK EIGHT. AT BAY

He that hath understanding in himself is best;
He that lays up his brother's wisdom in his breast
Is good. But he that neither knoweth, nor will be taught
By the instruction of the wise — this man is naught.
— HESIOD

Persons without education certainly do not want either acuteness or strength of mind in what concerns themselves, or in things immediately within their observation; but they have no power of abstraction — they see their objects always near, never in the horizon. — HAZLITT

CHAPTER ONE. Two Kinds of Monist

But supposing one tries to live *by Pantheistic philosophy*?

That afternoon as John was walking in the water meadow he saw a man coming towards him who walked blunderingly like one whose legs were not his own. And as the man came nearer he saw that it was Vertue, with his face very pale.

‘What,’ cried John, ‘are you cured? Can you see? Can you speak?’

‘Yes,’ said Vertue in a weak voice, ‘I suppose I can see.’ And he leaned heavily on a stile and breathed hard.

‘You have walked too far,’ said John. ‘Are you ill?’

‘I am still weak. It is nothing. I shall get my breath in a moment.’

‘Sit down by me,’ said John. ‘And when you have rested we will go gently back to the house.’

‘I am not going back to the house.’

‘Not going back? You are not fit to travel — and where are you going?’

‘I am not fit for anything, apparently,’ said Vertue. ‘But I must go on.’

‘Go on where? You are not still hoping to cross the canyon? Do you not believe what Wisdom has told us?’

‘I do. That is why I am going on.’

‘Sit down at least for a moment,’ said John, ‘and explain yourself.’

‘It is plain enough!’

‘It isn’t plain at all.’

Vertue spoke impatiently.

‘Did you not hear what Wisdom said about the rules?’ he asked.

‘Of course I did,’ said John.

‘Well, then, he has given me back the rules. *That* puzzle is solved. The rules have to be obeyed, as I always thought. I know that now better than I have ever known it before.’

‘Well?’

Does it lead to a complacent Hegelian optimism?

‘And didn’t you see what all the rest came to? The rules are from this Spirit or whatever he calls it, which is somehow also me. And any disinclination to obey the rules is the other part of me — the mortal part. Does it not follow from that, and from everything else he said, that the real disobedience to the rules begins with being in this country at all? This

country is simply *not* the Island, *not* the rules: that is its definition. My mortal self — that is, for all practical purposes, myself — can be defined only as the part of me that is against the rules. Just as the Spirit answers to the Landlord, so this whole world answers to the black hole.'

'I take it all exactly the other way,' said John. 'Rather this world corresponds to the Landlord's castle. Everything is this Spirit's imagination, and therefore everything, properly understood, is good and happy. That the glory of this world in the end is appearance, leaves the world more glorious yet. I quite agree that the rules — the authority of the rules — becomes stronger than ever: but their content must be — well, easier. Perhaps I should say richer — more concrete.'

'Their content must become harsher. If the real good is simply "what is not here" and *here* means simply "the place where the good is not", what can the real rule be except to live here as little as possible, to commit ourselves as little as we can to the system of this world? I used to talk of innocent pleasures, fool that I was — as if anything could be innocent for us whose mere existence is a fall — as if all that a man eats or drinks or begets were not propagated curse.'

'Really, Vertue, this is a very strange view. The effect of Mr. Wisdom's lessons on me has been just the opposite. I have been thinking how much of the Puritanian virus there must still be in me, to have held me back so long from the blameless generosity of Nature's breasts. Is not the meanest thing, in its degree, a mirror of the One; the lightest or the wildest pleasure as necessary to the perfection of the whole as the most heroic sacrifice? I am assured that in the Absolute, every flame even of carnal passion burns on — —'

'Can even eating, even the coarsest food and the barest pittance, be justified? The flesh is but a living corruption — —'

'There was a great deal to be said for Media after all — —'

'I see that Savage was wiser than he knew — —'

'It is true she had a dark complexion. And yet — is not brown as necessary to the spectrum as any other colour?'

Or to Oriental pessimism and self-torture?

'Is not every colour equally a corruption of the white radiance?'

'What we call evil — our greatest wickednesses — seen in the true setting is an element in the good. I am the doubter and the doubt.'

‘What we call our righteousness is filthy rags. You are a fool, John, and I am going. I am going up into the rocks till I find where the wind is coldest and the ground hardest and the life of man furthest away. My notice to quit has not yet come, and I must be stained a while longer with the dye of our country. I shall still be part of that dark cloud which offends the white light: but I shall make that part of the cloud which is called Me as thin, as nearly not a cloud, as I can. Body and mind shall pay for the crime of their existence. If there is any fasting, or watching, any mutilation or self-torture more harsh to nature than another, I shall find it out.’

‘Are you mad?’ said John.

‘I have just become sane,’ said Vertue, ‘Why are you staring at me thus? I know I am pale and my pulse beats like a hammer. So much the saner! Disease is better than health and sees clearer, for it is one degree nearer to the Spirit, one degree less involved in the riot of our animal existence. But it will need stronger pains than this to kill the obscene thirst for life which I drank in with my mother’s milk.’

‘Why should we leave this pleasant valley?’ John began, but Vertue cut him short.

‘Who spoke of We? Do you think that I asked or expected *you* to accompany me? *You* to sleep on thorns and eat sloes?’

‘You don’t mean that we are to part?’ said John.

‘Pah!’ said Vertue. ‘You could not do the things I intend to do: and if you could, I would have none of you. Friendship — affection — what are these but the subtlest chains that tie us to our present country? He would be a fool indeed who mortified the body and left the mind free to be happy and thus still to affirm — to wallow in — her finite will. It is not this pleasure or that, but *all* that are to be cut off. No knife will cut deep enough to end the cancer. But I’ll cut as deep as I can.’

He rose, still swaying, and continued his way over the meadow northward. He held his hand to his side as though he was in pain. Once or twice he nearly fell.

‘What are you following me for?’ he shouted to John. ‘Go back.’

Adjustment between the two views seems impossible

John stopped for a moment, checked by the hatred in his friend’s face. Then, tentatively, he went on again. He thought that Vertue’s illness had harmed his brain and had some indistinct hope that he might find means to humour him and bring him back. Before they had gone many paces,

however, Vertue turned again and lifted a stone in his hand. ‘Be off,’ he said, ‘or I’ll throw it. We have nothing to do with one another, you and I. My own body and my own soul are enemies, and do you think I will spare *you*?’

John halted, undetermined, and then ducked, for the other had hurled the stone. I saw them go on like this for some way, John following at a distance, and stopping, and then continuing again, while Vertue every now and then stoned him and reviled him. But at last the distance between them was too great either for voice or stone to carry.

CHAPTER TWO. John Led

As they went on thus John saw that the valley narrowed and the sides of it grew steeper. At the same time, the crevasse on his left hand which separated him from the western forest, became wider and wider: so that, what with that, and with the narrowing of the valley as a whole, the level piece where they were travelling was constantly diminished. Soon it was no longer the floor of the valley but only a ledge on its eastern side: and the crevasse revealed itself as being not a slot in the floor but the very floor. John saw that he was, in fact, walking on a shelf half-way down one side of the Grand Canyon. The cliff towered above him.

John would turn back. Christ forces him on

Presently a kind of spur or root of rock came out from the cliff and barred their way — crossing the ledge with a ruin of granite. And as Vertue began to scramble about the bases of this ascent, trying this grip and that to go up, John gained on him and came again within earshot. Before he came to the foot of the crags, however, Vertue had begun to climb. John heard his gasping as he struggled from hold to hold. Once he slipped back and left a little trail of blood where the rock skinned his ankle: but he went on again, and soon John saw him stand up, shaking and wiping the sweat out of his eyes, apparently at the top. He looked down and made gestures threateningly, and shouted, but he was too far for John to hear his words. Next moment John leaped aside to save his limbs, for Vertue had sent a great boulder rolling down: and as its thunder ceased echoing in the gorge and John looked up again, Vertue had gone over the spur out of sight and he saw no more of him.

John sat down in the desolate place. The grass here was finer and shorter, such grass as sheep love, which grows in the quiet intervals between the rocks. The windings of the gorge had already shut off the sight of Wisdom’s Valley: yet I saw that John had no thought save of going back. There was indeed a confusion of shame and sorrow and bewilderment in his mind, but he put it all aside and held fast to his fear of the rocks and of meeting Vertue, now mad, in some narrow place whence he could not retreat. He thought, ‘I will sit here and rest, till I get my wind, and then I will go back. I must live out the rest of my life as best I can.’ Then suddenly he heard

himself hailed from above. A Man was descending where Vertue had gone up.

‘Hi!’ shouted the Man. ‘Your friend has gone on. Surely you will follow him?’

‘He is mad, sir,’ said John.

‘No madder than you, and no saner,’ said the Man. ‘You will both recover if only you will keep together.’

‘I cannot get up the rocks,’ said John.

‘I will give you a hand,’ said the Man. And he came down till he was within reach of John, and held out his hand. And John grew pale as paper and nausea came upon him.

‘It’s now or never,’ said the Man.

Then John set his teeth and took the hand that was offered him. He trembled at the very first grip he was made to take but he could not go back for they were speedily so high that he dared not attempt the return alone: and what with pushing and pulling the Man got him right up to the top and there he fell down on his belly in the grass to pant and to groan at the pains in his chest. When he sat up the Man was gone.

CHAPTER THREE. John Forgets Himself

As soon as he attempts seriously to live by Philosophy, it turns into Religion

John looked back and turned away with a shudder. All thought of descending again must be put aside at once and for ever. ‘That fellow has left me in a nice fix,’ he said bitterly. Next, he looked ahead. The cliffs still rose high above him and dropped far below him: but there was a ledge on a level with him, a narrow ledge, ten feet broad at its best and two at its worst, winding away along the cliff till it became but a green thread. His heart failed him. Then he tried to recall the lessons of Mr. Wisdom, whether they would give him any strength. ‘It is only myself,’ he said. ‘It is I myself, eternal Spirit, who drive this Me, the slave, along that ledge. I ought not to care whether he falls and breaks his neck or not. It is not he that is real, it is I — I — I. Can I remember that?’ But then he felt so different from the eternal Spirit that he could call it ‘I’ no longer. ‘It is all very well for *him*,’ said John, ‘but why does he give me no help? I want help. Help.’ Then he gazed up at the cliffs and the narrow sky, blue and remote, between them, and he thought of that universal mind and of the shining tranquillity hidden somewhere behind the colours and the shapes, the pregnant silence under all the sounds, and he thought, ‘If one drop of all that ocean would flow into me now — if I, the mortal, could but realize that I *am* that, all would be well. I know there is something there. I know the sensuous curtain is not a cheat.’ In the bitterness of his soul he looked up again, saying: ‘Help. Help. I want Help.’

But as soon as the words were out of his mouth, a new fear, far deeper than his fear of the cliffs, sprang at him from the hiding-place, close to the surface, where it had lain against this moment. As a man in a dream talks without fear to his dead friend, and only afterwards bethinks himself, ‘It was a ghost! I have talked with a ghost!’ and wakes screaming: even so John sprang up as he saw what he had done.

From Pantheism to Theism. The transcendental I becomes Thou

‘I have been *praying*,’ he said. ‘It is the Landlord under a new name. It is the rules and the black hole and the slavery dressed out in a new fashion to catch me. And I am caught. Who would have thought the old spider’s web was so subtle?’

But this was insupportable to him and he said that he had only fallen into a metaphor. Even Mr. Wisdom had confessed that Mother Kirk and the Stewards gave an account of the truth in picture writing. And one must use metaphors. The feelings and the imagination needed that support. ‘The great thing,’ said John, ‘is to keep the intellect free from them: to remember that they *are* metaphors.’

CHAPTER FOUR. John Finds his Voice

He was much comforted by this idea of metaphor, and as he was now also rested, he began his journey along the cliff path with some degree of timid resolution. But it was very dreadful to him in the narrower places: and his courage seemed to him to decrease rather than to grow as he proceeded. Indeed he soon found that he could go forward at all only by remembering Mr. Wisdom's Absolute incessantly. It was necessary by repeated efforts of the will to turn thither, consciously to draw from that endless reservoir the little share of vitality that he needed for the next narrow place. He knew now that he was praying, but he thought that he had drawn the fangs of that knowledge. In a sense, he said, Spirit is not I. I am it, but I am not the whole of it. When I turn back to that part of it which is not I — that far greater part which my soul does not exhaust — surely that part is to me an Other. It must become, for my imagination, not really 'I' but 'Thou'. A metaphor — perhaps more than a metaphor. Of course there is no need at all to confuse it with the *mythical* Landlord. . . . However I think of it, I think of it inadequately.

John must accept God's grace or die

Then a new thing happened to John, and he began to sing: and this is as much of his song as I remember from my dream.

He whom I bow to only knows to whom I bow
When I attempt the ineffable name, murmuring *Thou*;
And dream of Pheidian fancies and embrace in heart
Meanings, I know, that cannot be the thing thou art.
All prayers always, taken at their word, blaspheme,
Invoking with frail imageries a folk-lore dream;
And all men are idolaters, crying unheard
To senseless idols, if thou take them at their word,
And all men in their praying, self-deceived, address
One that is not (so saith that old rebuke) unless
Thou, of mere grace, appropriate, and to thee divert
Men's arrows, all at hazard aimed, beyond desert.
Take not, oh Lord, our literal sense, but in thy great,
Unbroken speech our halting metaphor translate.

When he came to think over the words that had gone out of him he began once more to be afraid of them. Day was declining and in the narrow chasm it was already almost dark.

CHAPTER FIVE. Food at a Cost

For a while he went on cautiously, but he was haunted by a picture in his mind of a place where the path would break off short when it was too dark for him to see, and he would step on air. This fear made him halt more and more frequently to examine his ground: and when he went on it was each time more slowly: till at last he came to a standstill. There seemed to be nothing for it but to rest where he was. The night was warm, but he was both hungry and thirsty. And he sat down. It was quite dark now.

Then I dreamed that once more a Man came to him in the darkness and said, ‘You must pass the night where you are, but I have brought you a loaf and if you crawl along the ledge ten paces more you will find that a little fall of water comes down the cliff.’

‘Sir,’ said John. ‘I do not know your name and I cannot see your face, but I thank you. Will you not sit down and eat, yourself?’

Having accepted His grace, he must acknowledge His existence

‘I am full and not hungry,’ said the Man. ‘And I will pass on. But one word before I go. You cannot have it both ways.’

‘What do you mean, sir?’

‘Your life has been saved all this day by crying out to something which you call by many names, and you have said to yourself that you used metaphors.’

‘Was I wrong, sir?’

‘Perhaps not. But you must play fair. If its help is not a metaphor, neither are its commands. If it can answer when you call, then it can speak without your asking. If you can go to it, it can come to you.’

‘I think I see, sir. You mean that I am not my own man: in some sense I have a Landlord after all?’

‘Even so. But what is it that dismays you? You heard from Wisdom how the rules were yours and not yours. Did you not mean to keep them? And if so, can it scare you to know that there is one who will make you able to keep them?’

‘Well,’ said John, ‘I suppose you have found me out. Perhaps I did not fully mean to keep them — not all — or not all the time. And yet, in a way, I think I did. It is like a thorn in your finger, sir. You know when you set about taking it out yourself — you mean to get it out — you know it will

hurt — and it does hurt — but somehow it is not very serious business — well, I suppose, because you feel that you always *could* stop if it was very bad. Not that you intend to stop. But it is a very different thing to hold your hand out to a surgeon to be hurt as much as he thinks fit. And at *his* speed.'

The Man laughed, 'I see you understand me very well,' He said, 'but the great thing is to get the thorn out.' And then He went away.

CHAPTER SIX. Caught

John had no difficulty in finding the stream and when he had drunk he sat by it and ate. The bread had a rather flat taste which was somehow familiar and not very agreeable, but he was in no position to be dainty. Extreme weariness prevented him from thinking much of the conversation that had just passed. At the bottom of John's heart the stranger's words lay like a cold weight that he must some day take up and carry: but his mind was full of the pictures of cliff and chasm, of wondering about Vertue, and of smaller fears for the morrow and the moment, and, above all, the blessedness of food and of sitting still; and all these jumbled themselves together in an even dimmer confusion till at last he could no longer remember which he had been thinking of the moment before: and then he knew that he was sleeping: and at last he was in deep sleep and knew nothing.

The terror of the Lord

In the morning it was not so. With his first waking thought the full-grown horror leaped upon him. The blue sky above the cliffs was watching him: the cliffs themselves were imprisoning him: the rocks behind were cutting off his retreat: the path ahead was ordering him on. In one night the Landlord — call him by what name you would — had come back to the world, and filled the world, quite full without a cranny. His eyes stared and His hand pointed and His voice commanded in everything that could be heard or seen, even from this place where John sat, to the end of the world: and if you passed the end of the world He would be there too. All things were indeed one — more truly one than Mr. Wisdom dreamed — and all things said one word: CAUGHT — Caught into slavery again, to walk warily and on sufferance all his days, never to be alone; never the master of his own soul, to have no privacy, no corner whereof you could say to the whole universe: This is my own, here I can do as I please. Under that universal and inspecting gaze, John cowered like some small animal caught up in a giant's hands and held beneath a magnifying-glass.

When he had drunk and splashed his face in the stream he continued his way, and presently he made this song.

You rest upon me all my days
The inevitable Eye,

Dreadful and undeflected as the blaze
Of some Arabian sky;
Where, dead still, in their smothering tent
Pale travellers crouch, and, bright
About them, noon’s long-drawn Astonishment
Hammers the rocks with light.
Oh, for but one cool breath in seven,
One air from northern climes,
The changing and the castle-clouded heaven
Of my old Pagan times!
But you have seized all in your rage
Of Oneness. Round about,
Beating my wings, all ways, within your cage,
I flutter, but not out.
Where now is Sweet Desire?

And as he walked on, all day, in the strength of the bread he had eaten, not daring often to look down into the gulf and keeping his head mostly turned a little inward to the cliff, he had time to turn his trouble over in his mind and discover new sides to it. Above all it grew upon him that the return of the Landlord had blotted out the Island: for if there still were such a place he was no longer free to spend his soul in seeking it, but must follow whatever designs the Landlord had for him. And at the very best it now seemed that the last of things was at least more like a person than a place, so that the deepest thirst within him was not adapted to the deepest nature of the world. But sometimes he comforted himself by saying that this new and real Landlord must yet be very different from him whom the Stewards proclaimed and indeed from all images that men could make of him. There might still hang about him some of that promising darkness which had covered the Absolute.

CHAPTER SEVEN. The Hermit

Presently he heard a bell struck, and he looked and saw a little chapel in a cave of the cliff beside him; and there sat a hermit whose name was History, so old and thin that his hands were transparent and John thought that a little wind would have blown him away.

John begins to learn something of the history of human thought

‘Turn in, my son,’ said the hermit, ‘and eat bread and then you shall go on your journey.’ John was glad to hear the voice of a man among the rocks and he turned in and sat. The hermit gave him bread and water but he himself ate no bread and drank a little wine.

‘Where are you going, son?’ he said.

‘It seems to me, Father, that I am going where I do not wish; for I set out to find an Island and I have found a Landlord instead.’

And the hermit sat looking at him, nodding almost imperceptibly with the tremors of age.

‘The Clevers were right and the pale men were right,’ said John, thinking aloud, ‘since the world holds no allaying for the thirst I was born with, and seemingly the Island was an illusion after all. But I forget, Father, that you will not know these people.’

‘I know all parts of this country,’ said the hermit, ‘and the genius of places. Where do these people live?’

‘To the North of the road. The Clevers are in the country of Mammon, where a stone giant is the lord of the soil, and the pale men are on the Tableland of the Tough-Minded.’

‘I have been in these countries a thousand times, for in my young days I was a pedlar and there is no land I have not been in. But tell me, do they still keep their old customs?’

‘What customs were those?’

‘Why, they all sprang from the ownership of the land there, for more than half of the country North of the road is now held by the Enemy’s tenants. Eastward it was the giant, and under him Mammon and some others. But westward, on the Tableland, it was two daughters of the Enemy — let me see — yes, Ignorantia and Superbia. They always did impose strange customs on the smaller tenants. I remember many tenants there — Stoics and Manichees, Spartiates, and all sorts. One time they had a notion

to eat better bread than is made of wheat. Another time their very nurses took up a strange ritual of always emptying the baby out along with the bath. Then once the Enemy sent a fox without a tail among them and it persuaded them that all animals should be without tails and they docked all their dogs and horses and cows. I remember they were very puzzled how to apply any corresponding treatment to themselves, until at last a wise man suggested that they could cut off their noses. But the strangest custom of all was one that they practised all the time through all their other changes of customs. It was this — that they never set anything to rights but destroyed it instead. When a dish was dirty they did not wash it, they broke it; and when their clothes were dirty they burned them.'

History has seen people like the Counter Romantics in many ages

'It must have been a very expensive custom.'

'It was ruinous, and it meant, of course, that they were constantly importing new clothes and new crockery. But indeed they had to import everything for that is the difficulty of the Tableland. It never has been able to support life and it never will. Its inhabitants have always lived on their neighbours.'

'They must always have been very rich men.'

'They always *were* very rich men. I don't think I remember a single case of a poor or a common person going there. When humble people go wrong they generally go South. The Tough-Minded nearly always go to the Tableland as colonists from Mammon's country. I would guess that your pale men are reformed Clevers.'

'In a kind of way I believe they are. But can you tell me, Father, why these Tough-Minded people behave so oddly?'

'Well, for one thing, they *know* very little. They never travel and consequently never learn anything. They really do not know that there are any places outside Mammon's country and their own Tableland — except that they have heard exaggerated rumours about the Southern swamps, and suppose that everything is swamp a few miles South of themselves. Thus, their disgust with bread came about through sheer ignorance. At home in Mammon's country they knew only the standard bread that Mammon makes, and a few sweet, sticky cakes which Mammon imported from the South — the only kind of Southern product that Mammon would be likely to let in. As they did not like either of these, they invented a biscuit of their own. It never occurred to them to walk a mile off the Tableland into the

nearest cottage and try what an honest loaf tasted like. The same with the babies. They disliked babies because babies meant to them the various deformities spawned in the brothels of Mammon: again, a moderate walk would have shown them healthy children at play in the lanes. As for their poor noses — on the Tableland there is nothing to smell, good, bad, or indifferent, and in Mammon's land whatever does not reek of scent reeks of ordure. So they saw no good in noses, though five miles away from them the hay was being cut.'

There was a really Divine element in John's Romanticism

'And what about the Island, Father?' said John. 'Were they equally wrong about that?'

'That is a longer story, my son. But I see it is beginning to rain, so perhaps you may as well hear it.'

John went to the mouth of the cave and looked out. The sky had grown dark while they talked and a warm rain, blotting out the cliffs like a steam, was descending as far as his eye could reach.

CHAPTER EIGHT. History’s Words

When John had returned and seated himself, the hermit resumed:

‘You may be sure that they make the same mistake about the Island that they make about everything else. But what is the current lie at present?’

‘They say it is all a device of Mr. Halfways — who is in the pay of the Brown Girls.’

‘Poor Halfways! They treat him very unfairly — as if he were anything more than the local representative of a thing as widespread and as necessary (though, withal, as dangerous) as the sky! Not a bad representative, either, if you take his songs in your stride and use them as they are meant to be used: of course people who go to him in cold blood to get as much *pleasure* as they can, and therefore hear the same song over and over again, have only themselves to thank if they wake in the arms of Media.’

‘That is very true, Father. But they wouldn’t believe that I had seen and longed for the Island before I met Mr. Halfways — before I ever heard a song at all. They insist on treating it as his invention.’

‘That is always the way with stay-at-homes. If they like something in their own village they take it for a thing universal and eternal, though perhaps it was never heard of five miles away; if they dislike something, they say it is a local, backward, provincial convention, though, in fact, it may be the law of nations.’

For Morality is by no means God’s only witness in the sub-Christian world

‘Then it is really true that all men, all nations, have had this vision of an Island?’

‘It does not always come in the form of an Island: and to some men, if they inherit particular diseases, it may not come at all.’

‘But what *is* it, Father? And has it anything to do with the Landlord? I do not know how to fit things together.’

‘It comes from the Landlord. We know this by its results. It has brought you to where you now are: and nothing leads back to him which did not at first proceed from him.’

‘But the Stewards would say that it was the Rules which come from him.’

‘Not all Stewards are equally travelled men. But those who are, know perfectly well that the Landlord has circulated other things besides the Rules. What use are Rules to people who cannot read?’

‘But nearly everyone can.’

‘No one is born able to read: so that the starting point for all of us must be a picture and not the Rules. And there are more than you suppose who are illiterate all their lives, or who, at the best, never learn to read well.’

‘And for these people the pictures are the right thing?’

‘I would not quite say that. The pictures alone are dangerous, and the Rules alone are dangerous. That is why the best thing of all is to find Mother Kirk at the very beginning, and to live from infancy with a third thing which is neither the Rules nor the pictures and which was brought into the country by the Landlord’s Son. That, I say, is the best: never to have known the quarrel between the Rules and the pictures. But it very rarely happens. The Enemy’s agents are everywhere at work, spreading illiteracy in one district and blinding men to the pictures in another. Even where Mother Kirk is nominally the ruler men can grow old without knowing how to read the Rules. Her empire is always crumbling. But it never quite crumbles: for as often as men become Pagans again, the Landlord again sends them pictures and stirs up sweet desire and so leads them back to Mother Kirk even as he led the actual Pagans long ago. There is, indeed, no other way.’

Even Pagan mythology contained a Divine call

‘Pagans?’ said John. ‘I do not know that people.’

‘I forgot that you had travelled so little. It may well be that you were never in the country of Pagus in the flesh, though in another sense, you have lived there all your life. The curious thing about Pagus was that the people there had not heard of the Landlord.’

‘Surely, a great many other people don’t know either?’

‘Oh, a great many *deny* his existence. But you have to be told about a thing before you can deny it. The peculiarity of the Pagans was that they had not been told: or if they had, it is so long ago that the tradition had died out. You see, the Enemy had practically supplanted the Landlord, and he kept a sharp watch against any news from that quarter reaching the tenants.’

‘Did he succeed?’

‘No. It is commonly thought that he did, but that is a mistake. It is commonly thought that he fuddled the tenants by circulating a mass of false

stories about the Landlord. But I have been through Pagus in my rounds too often to think it was quite so simple. What really happened was this: The Landlord succeeded in getting a lot of messages through.'

'What sort of messages?'

'Mostly pictures. You see, the Pagans couldn't read, because the Enemy shut up the schools as soon as he took over Pagus. But they had pictures. The moment you mentioned your Island I knew what you were at. I have seen that Island dozens of times in those pictures.'

'And what happened then?'

'Almost certainly the same thing has happened to you. These pictures woke desire. You understand me?'

'Very well.'

'And then the Pagans made mistakes. They would keep on trying to get the same picture again: and if it didn't come, they would make copies of it for themselves. Or even if it did come they would try to get out of it not desire but satisfaction. But you must know all this.'

'Yes, yes, indeed. But what came of it?'

'They went on making up more and more stories for themselves about the pictures, and then pretending the stories were true. They turned to brown girls and tried to believe that that was what they wanted. They went far South, some of them and became magicians, and tried to believe it was that. There was no absurdity and no indecency they did not commit. But however far they went, the Landlord was too many for them. Just when their own stories seemed to have completely overgrown the original messages and hidden them beyond recovery, suddenly the Landlord would send them a new message and all their stories would look stale. Or just when they seemed to be growing really contented with lust or mystery mongering, a new message would arrive and the old desire, the real one, would sting them again, and they would say "Once more it has escaped us".'

But the Jews, instead of a mythology, had the Law

'I know. And then the whole cycle would begin over again.'

'Yes. But all the while there was one people that could read. You have heard of the Shepherd People?'

'I had been hoping you would not come to that, Father. I have heard the Stewards talk of them and I think it is that more than anything else that sickened me of the whole story. It is so clear that the Shepherd People are

just one of these Pagan peoples — and a peculiarly unattractive one. If the whole thing is hobbled by one leg to that special People . . .'

'This is merely a blunder,' said History. 'You, and those whom you trust, have not *travelled*. You have never been in Pagus, nor among the Shepherds. If you had lived on the roads as I have, you would never say that they were the same. The Shepherds could read: that is the thing to remember about them. And because they could read, they had from the Landlord, not pictures but Rules.'

'But who wants Rules instead of Islands?'

'That is like asking who wants cooking instead of dinner. Do you not see that the Pagans, because they were under the enemy, were beginning at the wrong end? They were like lazy schoolboys attempting eloquence before they learn grammar. They had pictures for their eyes instead of roads for their feet, and that is why most of them could do nothing but desire and then, through starved desire, become corrupt in their imaginations, and so awake and despair, and so desire again. Now the Shepherds, because they were under the Landlord, were made to begin at the right end. Their feet were set on a road: and as the Landlord's Son once said, if the feet have been put right the hands and the head will come right sooner or later. It won't work the other way.'

Conscience and Sweet Desire must come together to make a Whole Man

'You know so much, Father,' said John, 'that I do not know how to answer you. But this is all unlike the accounts I have heard of those countries. Surely some of the Pagans did get somewhere.'

'They did. They got to Mother Kirk. That is the definition of a Pagan — a man so travelling that if all goes well he arrives at Mother Kirk's chair and is carried over this gorge. I saw it happen myself. But we define a thing by its perfection. The trouble about Pagus is that the perfect, and in that sense typical, Pagan, is so uncommon there. It must be so, must it not? These pictures — this ignorance of writing — this endless desire which so easily confuses itself with other desires and, at best, remains pure only by knowing what it does *not* want — you see that it is a starting point from which *one* road leads home and a thousand roads lead into the wilderness.'

'But were the Shepherds not just as bad in their own way? Is it not true that they were illiberal, narrow, bigoted?'

'They *were* narrow. The thing they had charge of was narrow: it was the Road. They found it. They sign-posted it. They kept it clear and repaired it.

But you must not think I am setting them up against the Pagans. The truth is that a Shepherd is only half a man, and a Pagan is only half a man, so that neither people was well without the other, nor could either be healed until the Landlord's Son came into the country. And even so, my son, you will not be well until you have overtaken your fellow traveller who slept in my cell last night.'

'Do you mean Vertue?' said John.

'That was his name. I knew him though he did not tell me, for I know his family; and his father, whom he does not know, was called Nomos and lived among the Shepherds. You will never do anything until you have sworn blood brotherhood with him: nor can he do anything without you.'

'I would gladly overtake him,' said John, 'but he is so angry with me that I am afraid to come near him. And even if we made it up, I don't see how we could help falling out again. Somehow we have never been able to be quite comfortable together for very long.'

It is dangerous to welcome Sweet Desire, but fatal to reject it

'Of yourselves you never will. It is only a third that can reconcile you.'

'Who is that?'

'The same who reconciled the Shepherds and the Pagans. But you must go to Mother Kirk to find him.'

'It is raining harder than ever,' said John from the mouth of the cave.

'It will not stop to-night,' said Father History. 'You must stay with me till the morning.'

CHAPTER NINE. Matter of Fact

‘I see,’ said John presently, ‘that this question is harder than the Clevers and the pale men suppose. But they were right in distrusting the Island. From all that you have told me, it is a very dangerous thing.’

‘There is no avoiding danger in our country,’ said History. ‘Do you know what happens to people who set about learning to skate with a determination to get no falls? They fall as often as the rest of us, and they cannot skate in the end.’

‘But it is more than dangerous. You said it was beginning at the wrong end, while the Shepherd people began at the right end.’

‘That is true. But if you are a Pagan by birth or by nature, you have no choice. It is better to begin at the wrong end than not to begin at all. And the most part of men are always Pagans. Their first step will always be the desire born of the pictures: and though that desire hides a thousand false trails it also hides the only true one for them, and those who preach down the desire under whatever pretext — Stoic, Ascetic, Rigorist, Realist, Classicist — are on the Enemy’s side whether they know it or not.’

‘Then there is always need for the Island?’

Whether it comes as Courtly Love in the Middle Ages

‘It does not always take the form of an Island, as I have said. The Landlord sends pictures of many different kinds. What is universal is not the particular picture, but the arrival of some message, not perfectly intelligible, which wakes this desire and sets men longing for something East or West of the world; something possessed, if at all, only in the act of desiring it, and lost so quickly that the craving itself becomes craved; something that tends inevitably to be confused with common or even with vile satisfactions lying close to hand, yet which is able, if any man faithfully live through the dialectic of its successive births and deaths, to lead him at last where true joys are to be found. As for the shapes in which it comes, I have seen many in my travels. In Pagus it was sometimes, as I said, an Island. But it was often, too, a picture of people, stronger and fairer than we are. Sometimes it was a picture telling a story. The strangest shape it ever took was in Medium Aevum — that was a master stroke of the Landlord’s diplomacy; for of course, since the Enemy has been in the country, the Landlord has had to become a politician. Medium Aevum was first

inhabited by colonists from Pagus. They came there at the very worst period in the history of Pagus, when the Enemy seemed to have succeeded completely in diverting all the desires that the Landlord could arouse into nothing but lust. These poor colonists were in such a state that they could not let their fancies wander for a minute without seeing images of black, craving eyes, and breasts, and gnawing kisses. It seemed hopeless to do anything with them. Then came the Landlord's crowning audacity. The very next picture he sent them was a picture of a Lady! Nobody had ever had the idea of a Lady before: and yet a Lady is a woman: so this was a new thing, which took the Enemy off his guard, and yet at the same time it was an old thing — in fact, the very thing which he was reckoning on as his strongest point. He got the shock of his life. The people went mad over the new picture, and made songs that are sung still, and looked away from the picture at the real women around them and saw them quite differently — so that ordinary love for women became, for a time, itself a form of the real desire, and not merely one of the spurious satisfactions offered to it. Of course the Landlord was playing a dangerous game (nearly all his games *are* dangerous) and the Enemy managed to mix up and corrupt the new message — as usual — but not so much as he wished, or as people afterwards said: and before he had recovered himself, one at least of the tenants had carried this new form of the desire right up to its natural conclusion and found what he had really been wanting. He wrote it all down in what he called a *Comedy*.'

Or nature-worship in the Nineteenth century

'And what about Mr. Halfways?' said John. 'Where did his kind of song begin?'

'That was the last big arrival of new messages that we had,' said History. 'And it happened just before I retired from the world. It was in the land of Mr. Enlightenment, but he was very different then. I do not know any man who has deteriorated so with advancing years. In those days Claptrap had not been built. The Enemy had agents in the country but did not come there often himself: it must have been just about that time that Mammon was taking it over, and building new towns and turning the people out of the fields into the factories. One of the results was a great deal of anæmia — though there were other causes for that too — and weak hearts. This time the Landlord did a curious thing: he sent them pictures of the country they were actually living in — as if he had sent them a number of mirrors. You

see, he always does the last thing the Enemy is expecting. And just as the pictures of the Lady in Medium Aevum had made the real women look different, so when men looked at these pictures of the country and then turned to the real landscape, it was all changed. And a new idea was born in their minds, and they saw something — the old something, the Island West of the world, the Lady, the heart's desire — as it were hiding, yet not quite hidden, like something ever more about to be, in every wood and stream and under every field. And because they saw this, the land seemed to be coming to life, and all the old stories of the Pagans came back to their minds and meant more than the Pagans themselves ever knew: and because women also were in the landscape, the old idea of the Lady came back too. For this is part of the Landlord's skill, that when one message has died he brings it to life again in the heart of the next. But out of this third revelation, which they called Romantic, so many songs were made that I cannot remember all of them: and many deeds were done, too, and many, through the usual false starts and disillusions and rebeginnings of desire, found their way home. Your Mr. Halfways is one of the later and weaker followers of that school.'

'I don't think that the history of the Romantic pictures is quite as clear as the other histories. What exactly was the Landlord doing? And what did the Enemy do?'

Every form has its proper corruption: but 'de-bunking' is not the cure

'I thought you would have seen. This third stroke of policy was in a way one of the greatest. All the previous pictures had been of something that was *not there* in the world around you. This gave the Enemy the chance of making people believe that you *had* it in the picture, and *lacked* it elsewhere — in other words that the picture itself was the thing you wanted. And that, as you know, means idolatry, and then, when the idol disappoints you (as it must) there is an easy passage to all the spurious satisfactions. But this weapon was knocked out of the Enemy's hand when once the thing in the picture was the very same thing that you saw all round you. Even the stupidest tenant could see that you *had* the landscape, in the only sense in which it could be had, already: and still you *wanted*: therefore the landscape was not what you wanted. Idolatry became impossible. Of course the Enemy when he had recovered himself, found a new method of defence. Just because the new message could not be idolized, it could be easily belittled. The desire awakened thus between the picture and the countryside

could be confused with the ordinary *pleasure* that any healthy man feels in moving about out-of-doors: and when it had been so confused, the Enemy could pretend that the Romantics had made a great pother about nothing. And you can imagine that all the people who had not had pictures sent to them, and therefore not felt the desire, and therefore were itching with envy, would welcome this explanation.'

'I see,' said John. 'But still — on your own showing, all these messages get blurred and corrupted in the end, and then, surely, the thing to do is to look out for the new one. These pale men might be quite right to occupy themselves in cleaning away the rubbish of the old revelation. That might be the way to get ready for the next.'

We know that the object of this Desire is not subjective

'That is another notion they have which a little travel would soon blow to pieces. They think that the Landlord works like the factories in Claptrap, inventing every day a new machine which supersedes the old. As machines are among the very few things that they do know something about, they cannot help thinking that everything is like them. But this leads them into two mistakes. First of all, they have no conception how slowly the Landlord acts — the enormous intervals between these big changes in his type of picture. And secondly, they think that the new thing refutes and cancels the old, whereas, in reality it brings it to a fuller life. I have never known a case where the man who was engaged in ridiculing or rejecting the old message became the receiver of the new. For one thing it all takes so long. Why, bless my soul, I remember Homer in Pagus ridiculing some of the story pictures: but they had thousands of years to run still and thousands of souls were to get nourishment out of them. I remember Clopinel in Medium Aevum, jeering at the pictures of the Lady before they had reached half his countrymen. But his jeer was no spell to evoke a new message, nor was he helping any cause but the Enemy's.'

CHAPTER TEN. Archtype and Ectype

There was a long silence in the cave except for the sound of the rain. Then John began once more:

‘And yet . . .’ he said, ‘and yet, Father, I am terribly afraid. I am afraid that the things the Landlord really intends for me may be utterly unlike the things he has taught me to desire.’

‘They will be very unlike the things you imagine. But you already know that the objects which your desire imagines are always inadequate to that desire. Until you have it you will not know what you wanted.’

‘I remember that Wisdom said that too. And I understand that. Perhaps what troubles me is a fear that my desires, after all you have said, do not really come from the Landlord — that there is some older and rival Beauty in the world which the Landlord will not allow me to get. How can we *prove* that the Island comes from him? Angular would say it did not.’

‘You have proved it for yourself: you have *lived* the proof. Has not every object which fancy and sense suggested for the desire, proved a failure, confessed itself, after trial, not to be what you wanted? Have you not found by elimination that this desire is the perilous siege in which only One can sit?’

Nay, even the Desire ceases to be our *Desire*

‘But, then,’ said John, ‘the very quality of it is so — so unlike what we think of the Landlord. I will confess to you what I had hoped to keep secret. It has been with me almost a bodily desire. There have been times . . . I have felt the sweetness flow over from the soul into the body . . . pass through me from head to foot. It is quite true, what the Clevers say. It *is* a thrill — a physical sensation.’

‘That is an old story. You must fear thrills, but you must not fear them too much. It is only a foretaste of that which the real Desirable will be when you have found it. I remember well what an old friend of mine in Medium Aevum once said to me— “out of the soul’s bliss,” he said, “there shall be a flowing over into the flesh.”’

‘Did he say that? I did not suppose that anyone except the Clevers knew it. Do not laugh at me, Father — or laugh if you will — I am indeed very ignorant and I have listened to people more ignorant still.’

Twilight, hastened by the rain, had fallen on the canyon, and in the cave it was quite dark. John heard the old man moving to and fro and presently there came the flame of a little lamp lighting up his pale bird-like face. He set food for supper before his guest and bade him eat and then sleep.

‘Gladly, Father,’ said John, ‘for I am very tired. I do not know why I have plagued you with questions about the Island. It is all a story of what happened to me long ago. It was long ago that I saw it clearly. The visions, ever since the first one, have grown rarer, the desires fainter. I have been talking as if I still craved it, but I do not think I can find any craving in my heart now at all.’

The old man sat still, nodding a little as before.

Suddenly John spoke again.

‘Why should it *wear out* if it is from the Landlord? It doesn’t last, you know. Isn’t it that which gives away the whole case?’

‘Have you not heard men say, or have you forgotten, that it is like human love?’ asked the hermit.

‘What has that to do with it?’

No matter; for it is God’s love, not ours, that moves us and all things

‘You would not ask if you had been married, or even if you had studied generation among the beasts. Do you not know how it is with love? First comes delight: then pain: then fruit. And then there is joy of the fruit, but that is different again from the first delight. And mortal lovers must not try to remain at the first step: for lasting passion is the dream of a harlot and from it we wake in despair. You must not try to keep the raptures: they have done their work. Manna kept, is worms. But you are full of sleep and we had better talk no more.’

Then I dreamed that John lay down on a hard bed in the cave; and as he lay between waking and sleeping, the hermit, as he thought, lit two candles at the back of the cave on an altar and went to and fro doing and saying his holy things. And on the very borders of sleep John heard him begin to sing, and this was the song:

‘My heart is empty. All the fountains that should run
With longing, are in me
Dried up. In all my countryside there is not one
That drips to find the sea.
I have no care for anything thy love can grant
Except the moment’s vain

And hardly noticed filling of the moment’s want
And to be free from pain.
Oh, thou that art unwearying, that dost neither sleep
Nor slumber, who didst take
All care for Lazarus in the careless tomb, oh keep
Watch for me till I wake.
If thou think for me what I cannot think, if thou
Desire for me what I
Cannot desire, my soul’s interior Form, though now
Deep-buried, will not die,
— No more than the insensible dropp’d seed which grows
Through winter ripe for birth
Because, while it forgets, the heaven remembering throws
Sweet influence still on earth,
— Because the heaven, moved moth-like by thy beauty, goes
Still turning round the earth.

BOOK NINE. ACROSS THE CANYON

Sholde nevere whete wexe bote whete fyrste deyde;
And other sedes also, in the same wyse,
That ben leide on louh erthe, ylore as hit were,
And thorwh the grete grace of God, of greyn ded in erthe
Atte last launceth up wher-by we liven alle.
— LANGLAND

You will not sleep, if you lie there a thousand years, until you have opened your hand and yielded that which is not yours to give or to withhold. You may think you are dead, but it will be only a dream; you may think you have come awake, but it will still be only a dream. Open your hand, and you will sleep indeed — then wake indeed. — GEORGE MACDONALD

You may as well come quiet. — POLICE MAXIM

CHAPTER ONE. Across the Canyon by the Inner Light

John realises that he is in imminent danger of becoming a Christian

When John opened his eyes the day was still far off but there was light in the cave as though from a hundred candles. The hermit lay fast asleep by one wall of the cell as John lay by the other, and between them stood a woman, something like Reason and something like Mother Kirk, very bright.

‘I am Contemplation,’ she said. ‘Rise and come with me.’

‘You are not like the Contemplation that I know,’ said John.

‘It is one of my shadows whom you have met,’ said the Lady. ‘And there is little good in them and less harm. But rise and come.’

He struggles to withdraw

Then John rose and the Lady took him by the hand and led him out on to the ledge before the cave. And the night was still black with thunderous rain, but the lady and he were in a sphere of light, so that the raindrops as they passed out of the darkness into it became bright like diamonds in the centre of the sphere and iridescent at the circumference. Held by the Lady’s hand he crossed the chasm and passed up the glens of the mountains on the other side. When they had travelled a long way (and still the darkness lay everywhere save where they trod) they came to the sea. And they crossed the sea also, gliding a little above the water, and the water also was dark until it reached their light, but within that it was blue as though it lay in Mediterranean sunshine. But presently the surrounding darkness vanished away and the drop of light in which they had journeyed entered an ocean of light and was swallowed up. The sky was visible above them and it seemed to be early morning, for it was cool and dew soaked their feet. And John looked and saw fields going up before him and the light ran down as a river in the midst of the fields, singing with a voice like a river but more articulate and very loud, too bright to look at. There were many people with them. And as John looked round upon the people he saw that they were approaching some high walls and great gates. And, at the shape of the towers clustered above him, a memory, very deeply buried, stirred in his mind, first sweet, then uneasy, then spreading through the pool of his mind in widening circles of dismay, till at last with certainty, inevitable, unbearable, there flashed before him the picture of those turreted crags seen

long ago from Puritania at the summit of the Eastern mountains, and he saw where he was — beyond the brook — where Uncle George had vanished — at the Landlord's castle — the good kind Landlord with the black hole. He began to draw his hand out of the Lady's hand. He could not get it free. She was leading him on to the castle gates and all the crowd of people were moving on in the same direction, with a sinister happiness on their faces. He struggled with Contemplation and screamed: and with that and the struggling he awoke.

CHAPTER TWO. This Side by Lightning

It was now pitchy black in the cave. Only the quiet breathing of the hermit recalled to John where he was: and with the first return of the knowledge he was already creeping out of the cave to dare the black night and the narrow ledge, to crawl the skin off his hands and his knees, to do and suffer anything so long as he was going back and not on — on in this direction where the next turning might lead him into the heart of his adversary's power. The rain fell in torrents and thunder echoed among the rocks: but the cool moisture on his back was better than the hot moisture on his forehead. He did not dare to stand up and walk, for the new terrors had not driven out the old, but rather joined with them in a phantasmagoric harmony, so that all in one moment his inner eye saw the black hole full of the spiders and scorpions — the narrow, narrow ledge sloping horribly the wrong way — the drop into the darkness and his own body bounced from crag to crag — the terrible face of Uncle George when the mask would not stay on it. And as the flashes came faster and the thunder followed faster on each flash, a new fear joined the dance: and in each flash the timeless unforgettable sight of the cliffs, lit up from end to end, gave a new edge to the old fear of climbing: and that again brought back the fear of Uncle George's face (so will mine look when I lie broken at the bottom of the gorge), until at last, when the complexity of fears seemed to admit no increase, a sharp, commanding voice out of the darkness suddenly startled him with such a shock that he seemed not to have been frightened till then.

But Reason will not let him

'Back!' said the voice.

John crouched motionless from the balance of fears. He was not even sure that he *could* turn on this bit of the ledge.

'Back,' said the voice, 'or else show that you're the better man.'

The lightning tore open the darkness and flung it to again. But John had seen his enemy. It was Reason, this time on foot, but still mailed, and her sword drawn in her hand.

'Do you want to fight?' she said in the darkness.

John had a wild thought of catching one of the mailed ankles from where he crouched: but when he had a picture of Reason falling into the gulf he could not get it clear of another picture in which he fell with her.

‘I can’t turn here,’ he said: but the steel was at his throat and turn he did. He shuffled along at a surprising speed, still on his hands and knees, till he had passed the cave again. It was no longer a question of plans or of ultimate escape. The hunted animal’s impulse to prolong the chase kept him ragingly on the move. The flashes were growing rarer and a star or two showed ahead. Then all of a sudden a wind shook the last raindrops fiercely in his face and there was moonlight all about him. But he drew back with a groan.

CHAPTER THREE. This Side by the Darkness

Within an inch of him he had seen a face. Now a cloud crossed the moon and the face was no longer visible, but he knew that it was still looking at him — an aged, appalling face, crumbling and chaotic, larger than human. Presently its voice began:

He sees the face of Death and learns that dying is the only escape from it

‘Do you still think it is the black hole you fear? Do you not know even now the deeper fear whereof the black hole is but the veil? Do you not know why they would all persuade you that there is nothing beyond the brook and that when a man’s lease is out his story is done! Because, if this were true, they could in their reckoning make me equal to nought, therefore not dreadful: could say that where I am they are not, that while they are, I am not. They have prophesied soft things to you. I am no negation, and the deepest of your heart acknowledges it. Else why have you buried the memory of your uncle’s face so carefully that it has needed all these things to bring it up! Do not think that you can escape me; do not think you can call me Nothing. To you I am not Nothing; I am the being blindfolded, the losing all power of self-defence, the surrender, not because any terms are offered, but because resistance is gone: the step into the dark: the defeat of all precautions: utter helplessness turned out to utter risk: the final loss of liberty. The Landlord’s Son who feared nothing, feared me.’

‘What am I to do?’ said John.

‘Which you choose,’ said the voice. ‘Jump, or be thrown. Shut your eyes or have them bandaged by force. Give in or struggle.’

‘I would sooner do the first, if I could.’

‘Then I am your servant and no more your master. The cure of death is dying. He who lays down his liberty in that act receives it back. Go down to Mother Kirk.’

John looked about him when next the moon shone. The bottom of the chasm was level far below him, and there he saw what seemed a concourse of dark figures. Amidst them they had left an open space, where there was a glimmer as of water: and near the water there was someone standing. It seemed to him that he was waited for, and he began to explore the face of cliff below him. To his surprise it was no longer sheer and smooth. He tried a few footholds and got five feet below the ledge. Then he sat down again,

sick. But the kind of fear which he now suffered was cold and leaden: there was no panic in it: and soon he continued his descent.

CHAPTER FOUR. Securus Te Projice

He returns to the Church of Christ

On the floor of *Peccatum Adae* stood Mother Kirk crowned and sceptred in the midst of the bright moonlit circle left by the silent people. All their faces were turned towards her, and she was looking eastward to where John slowly descended the cliff. Not far from her sat Vertue, mother-naked. They were both on the margin of a large pool which lay in a semicircle against the western cliff. On the far side of the water that cliff rose sheer to the edge of the canyon. There was deep silence for about half an hour.

At last the small, drooping figure of a man detached itself from the shadow of the crags and advanced towards them through the open moonlight. It was John.

‘I have come to give myself up,’ he said.

‘It is well,’ said Mother Kirk. ‘You have come a long way round to reach this place, whither I would have carried you in a few moments. But it is very well.’

‘What must I do?’ said John.

‘You must take off your rags,’ said she, ‘as your friend has done already, and then you must dive into this water.’

‘Alas,’ said he, ‘I have never learned to dive.’

‘There is nothing to learn,’ said she. ‘The art of diving is not to do anything new but simply to cease doing something. You have only to let yourself go.’

‘It is only necessary,’ said Vertue, with a smile, ‘to abandon all efforts at self-preservation.’

‘I think,’ said John, ‘that if it is all one, I would rather jump.’

‘It is not all one,’ said Mother Kirk. ‘If you jump, you will be trying to save yourself and you may be hurt. As well, you would not go deep enough. You must dive so that you can go right down to the bottom of the pool: for you are not to come up again on this side. There is a tunnel in the cliff, far beneath the surface of the water, and it is through that that you must pass so that you may come up on the far side.’

Though all the states of mind through which he has ever passed rise up to dissuade him

‘I see,’ thought John to himself, ‘that they have brought me here to kill me,’ but he began, nevertheless, to take off his clothes. They were little loss to him, for they hung in shreds, plastered with blood and with the grime of every shire from Puritania to the canyon: but they were so stuck to him that they came away with pain and a little skin came with them. When he was naked Mother Kirk bade him come to the edge of the pool, where Vertue was already standing. It was a long way down to the water, and the reflected moon seemed to look up at him from the depth of a mine. He had had some thought of throwing himself in, with a run, the very instant he reached the edge, before he had time to be afraid. And the making of that resolution had seemed to be itself the bitterness of death, so that he half believed the worst must be over and that he would find himself in the water before he knew. But lo! he was still standing on the edge, still on this side. Then a stranger thing came to pass. From the great concourse of spectators, shadowy people came stealing out to his side, touching his arm and whispering to him: and every one of them appeared to be the wraith of some old acquaintance.

First came the wraith of old Enlightenment and said, ‘There’s still time. Get away and come back to me and all this will vanish like a nightmare.’

Then came the wraith of Media Halfways and said, ‘Can you really risk losing me for ever? I know you do not desire me at this moment. But for ever? Think. Don’t burn your boats.’

And the wraith of old Halfways said, ‘After all — has this anything to do with the Island as you used to imagine it? Come back and hear my songs instead. You *know* them.’

The wraith of young Halfways said, ‘Aren’t you ashamed? Be a man. Move with the times and don’t throw your life away for an old wives’ tale.’

The wraith of Sigmund said, ‘You know what this is, I suppose. Religious melancholia. Stop while there is time. If you dive, you dive into insanity.’

The wraith of Sensible said, ‘Safety first. A touch of rational piety adds something to life: but this salvationist business . . . well! Who knows where it will end? Never accept unlimited liabilities.’

The wraith of Humanist said, ‘Mere atavism. You are diving to escape your real duties. All this emotionalism, after the first plunge, is so much *easier* than virtue in the classical sense.’

The wraith of Broad said, ‘My dear boy, you are losing your head. These sudden conversions and violent struggles don’t achieve anything. We have

had to discard so much that our ancestors thought necessary. It is all far easier, far more gracious and beautiful than they supposed.’

But at that moment the voice of Vertue broke in:

‘Come on, John,’ he said, ‘the longer we look at it the less we shall like it.’ And with that he took a header into the pool and they saw him no more. And how John managed it or what he felt I did not know, but he also rubbed his hands, shut his eyes, despaired, and let himself go. It was not a good dive, but, at least, he reached the water head first.

CHAPTER FIVE. Across the Canyon

My dream grew darker so that I have a sense, but little clear memory of the things that John experienced both in the pool and in great catacombs, paved sometimes with water, sometimes with stone, and upon winding stairways in the live rocks whereby he and Vertue ascended through the inwards of the mountain to the land beyond *Peccatum Adae*. He learned many mysteries in the earth and passed through many elements, dying many deaths. One thing has come through into my waking memory. Of all the people he had met in his journey only Wisdom appeared to him in the caverns, and troubled him by saying that no man could really come where he had come and that all his adventures were but figurative, for no professed experience of these places could be anything other than mythology. But then another voice spoke to him from behind him, saying:

He comes where Philosophy said no man could come

‘Child, if you will, it *is* mythology. It is but truth, not fact: an image, not the very real. But then it is My mythology. The words of Wisdom are also myth and metaphor: but since they do not know themselves for what they are, in them the hidden myth is master, where it should be servant: and it is but of man’s inventing. But this is My inventing, this is the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now. For this end I made your senses and for this end your imagination, that you might see My face and live. What would you have? Have you not heard among the Pagans the story of Semele? Or was there any age in any land when men did not know that corn and wine were the blood and body of a dying and yet living God?’

And not long after that the light and colour, as with the sound of a trumpet, rushed back upon my dreaming eyes, and my ears were full of the sounds of bird and the rustle of leaves, for John and Vertue had come up out of the earth into the green forests of the land beyond the canyon. Then I saw that they were received into a great company of other pilgrims who had all descended like them into the water and the earth and again come up, and now took their march westward along the banks of a clear river. All kinds of men were among them. And during the whole of this part of their journey Reason rode with the company, talking to them at will and not visiting them any longer by sudden starts, nor vanishing suddenly. It was a wonder to

John to find so many companions: nor could he conceive how he had failed to run across them in the earlier parts of his journey.

The goal is, and is not, what he had always Desired

I watched this journey in my dream a long time. At the outset their goal was heard of only by rumours as of something very far off: then, by continuous marching, winding their way among the peaked and valleyed lands, I saw where they came down to the white beaches of a bay of the sea, the western end of the world; a place very ancient, folded many miles deep in the silence of forests; a place, in some sort, lying rather at the world's beginning, as though men were born travelling away from it. It was early in the morning when they came there and heard the sound of the waves; and looking across the sea — at that hour still almost colourless — all these thousands became still. And what the others saw I do not know: but John saw the Island. And the morning wind, blowing off-shore from it, brought the sweet smell of its orchards to them, but rarefied and made faint with the thinness and purity of early air, and mixed with a little sharpness of the sea. But for John, because so many thousands looked at it with him, the pain and the longing were changed and all unlike what they had been of old: for humility was mixed with their wildness, and the sweetness came not with pride and with the lonely dreams of poets nor with the glamour of a secret, but with the homespun truth of folk-tales, and with the sadness of graves and freshness as of earth in the morning. There was fear in it also, and hope: and it began to seem well to him that the Island should be different from his desires, and so different that, if he had known it, he would not have sought it.

CHAPTER SIX. Nella sua Voluntade

How it fared with the other pilgrims I did not see, but presently a comely person took John and Vertue apart and said that he had been appointed to be their Guide. I dreamed that he was one born in the Mountain and they called him Slikisteinsauga because his sight was so sharp that the sight of any other who travelled with him would be sharpened by his company.

‘Thank you,’ said John. ‘Pray, do we take ship from here?’

But Slikisteinsauga shook his head: and he asked them to look at the Island again and specially to consider the shape of the crags, or the castle (for they could not well see which at that distance) to which it rose at its highest point.

‘I see,’ said John presently.

‘What do you see?’ said the Guide.

‘They are the very same shape as that summit of the Eastern Mountain which we called the Landlord’s castle as we saw it from Puritania.’

‘They are not only the same shape. They are the same.’

‘How can that be?’ said John with a sinking heart, ‘for those mountains were in the extreme East, and we have been travelling West ever since we left home.’

And the Christian life still to begin

‘But the world is round,’ said the Guide, ‘and you have come nearly round it. The Island is the Mountains: or, if you will, the Island is the other side of the Mountains, and not, in truth, an Island at all.’

‘And how do we go on from here?’

The Guide looked at him as a merciful man looks on an animal which he must hurt.

‘The way to go on,’ he said at last, ‘is to go back. There are no ships. The only way is to go East again and cross the brook.’

‘What must be must be,’ said John. ‘I deserve no better. You mean that I have been wasting my labour all my life, and I have gone half-round the world to reach what Uncle George reached in a mile or so.’

‘Who knows what your uncle has reached, except the Landlord? Who knows what you would have reached if you had crossed the brook without ever leaving home? You may be sure the Landlord has brought you the shortest way: though I confess it would look an odd journey on a map.’

‘How does it strike you, friend?’ said John to Vertue.

‘It cannot be helped,’ said Vertue. ‘But indeed, after the water and the earth, I thought we had already crossed the brook in a sense.’

‘You will be always thinking that,’ said the Guide. ‘We call it Death in the Mountain language. It is too tough a morsel to eat at one bite. You will meet that brook more often than you think: and each time you will suppose that you have done with it for good. But some day you really will.’

They were all silent for a while.

‘Come,’ said the Guide at last, ‘if you are ready let us start East again. But I should warn you of one thing — the country will look very different on the return journey.’

BOOK TEN. THE REGRESS

And if, when he returned into the cave, he were constrained once more to contend with those that had always there been prisoners, in judgment of the said shadows, would they not mock him, and say of him that by going up out of the cave he had come down again with his eyes marred for his pains, and that it was lost labour for any so much as to try that ascent? — PLATO

First I must lead the human soul through all the range
Of heaven, that she may learn
How fortune hath the turning of the wheel of change,
How fate will never turn.
— BERNARDUS SILVESTRIS

Let us suppose a person destitute of that knowledge which we have from our senses. . . . Let it be supposed that in his drought he puts golden dust into his eyes: when his eyes smart, he puts wine into his ears; that in his hunger, he puts gravel into his mouth; that in pain, he loads himself with the iron chains: that feeling cold, he puts his feet in the water; that being frighted at the fire, he runs away from it; that being weary, he makes a seat of his bread. . . . Let us suppose that some good being came to him, and showed him the nature and use of all the things that were about him. — LAW

CHAPTER ONE. The Same yet Different

John now first sees the real shape of the world we live in

Then I dreamed that the Guide armed John and Vertue at all points and led them back through the country they had just been travelling, and across the canyon again into this country. And they came up out of the canyon at the very place where the main road meets it by Mother Kirk's chair. I looked forward in the same direction where they were looking, expecting to see on my left the bare tableland rising to the North with Sensible's house a little way off, and on my right the house of Mr. Broad and the pleasant valleys southward. But there was nothing of the kind: only the long straight road, very narrow, and on the left crags rising within a few paces of the road into ice and mist and, beyond that, black cloud: on the right, swamps and jungle sinking almost at once into black cloud. But, as it happens in dreams, I never doubted that this was the same country which I had seen before, although there was no similarity. John and Vertue came to a stand with their surprise.

'Courage,' said Slikisteinsauga, 'you are seeing the land as it really is. It is long but very narrow. Beyond these crags and cloud on the North it sinks immediately into the Arctic Sea, beyond which again lies the Enemy's country. But the Enemy's country is joined up with ours on the North by a land bridge called the Isthmus Sadisticus and right amid that Isthmus sits the cold dragon, the cold, costive, crustacean dragon who wishes to enfold all that he can get within the curl of his body and then to draw his body tighter round it so as to have it all inside himself. And you, John, when we pass the Isthmus must go up and contend with him that you may be hardened. But on the South, as soon as it passes into these swamps and this other cloud, the land sinks into the Southern Sea: and across that sea also there comes a land bridge, the Isthmus Mazochisticus, where the hot dragon crawls, the expansive, invertebrate dragon whose fiery breath makes all that she touches melt and corrupt. And to her you, Vertue, must go down that you may steal her heat and be made malleable.'

How we walk on a knife-edge between Heaven and Hell

'Upon my soul,' said John, 'I think Mother Kirk treats us very ill. Since we have followed her and eaten her food the way seems twice as narrow and twice as dangerous as it did before.'

‘You all know,’ said the Guide, ‘that security is mortals’ greatest enemy.’
‘It will do very well,’ said Vertue, ‘let us begin.’
Then they set out on their journey and Vertue sang this song:
‘Thou only art alternative to God, oh, dark
And burning island among spirits, tenth hierarch,
Wormwood, immortal Satan, Ahriman, alone
Second to Him to whom no second else were known,
Being essential fire, sprung of His fire, but bound
Within the lightless furnace of thy Self, bricked round
To rage in the reverberated heat from seven
Containing walls: hence power thou hast to rival heaven.
Therefore, except the temperance of the eternal love
Only thy absolute lust is worth the thinking of.
All else is weak disguisings of the wishful heart,
All that seemed earth is Hell, or Heaven. God is: thou art:
The rest, illusion. How should man live save as glass
To let the white light without flame, the Father, pass
Unstained: or else — opaque, molten to thy desire,
Venus infernal starving in the strength of fire!’
‘Lord, open not too often my weak eyes to this.’

CHAPTER TWO. The Synthetic Man

As they went on, Vertue glanced to the side of the road to see if there were any trace of Mr. Sensible's house, but there was none.

'It is just as it was when you passed it before,' said the Guide, 'but your eyes are altered. You see nothing now but realities: and Mr. Sensible was so near to nonentity — so shadowy even as an appearance — that he is now invisible to you. That mote will trouble your eyes no longer.'

'The World of all Sensible Men' becomes invisible

'I am very surprised,' said Vertue, 'I should have thought that even if he was bad he was a singularly solid and four-square kind of evil.'

'All that solidity,' said the Guide, 'belonged not to him but to his predecessors in that house. There was an appearance of temperance about him, but it came from Epicurus. There was an appearance of poetry, but it came from Horace. A trace of old Pagan dignities lingered in his house — it was Montaigne's. His heart seemed warm for a moment, but the warmth was borrowed from Rabelais. He was a man of shreds and patches, and when you have taken from him what was not his own, the remainder equals nought.'

'But surely,' said Vertue, 'these things were not the less his own because he learned them from others.'

'He did not learn them. He learned only catchwords from them. He could talk like Epicurus of spare diet, but he was a glutton. He had from Montaigne the language of friendship, but no friend. He did not even know what these predecessors had really said. He never read one ode of Horace seriously in his life. And for his Rabelais, he can quote *Do what you will*. But he has no notion that Rabelais gave that liberty to his Thelemites on the condition that they should be bound by Honour, and for this reason alone free from laws positive. Still less does he know that Rabelais himself was following a great Steward of the olden days who said *Habe caritatem et fac quod vis*: and least of all that this Steward in his turn was only reducing to an epigram the words of his Master, when He said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."'

CHAPTER THREE. Limbo

Then I dreamed that John looked aside on the right hand of the road and saw a little island of willow trees amid the swamps, where ancient men sat robed in black, and the sound of their sighing reached his ears.

God's mercy on philosophical Despair

'That place,' said the Guide, 'is the same which you called the Valley of Wisdom when you passed it before: But now that you are going East you may call it Limbo, or the twilit porches of the black hole.'

'Who live there?' asked John, 'and what do they suffer?'

'Very few live there, and they are all men like old Mr. Wisdom — men who have kept alive and pure the deep desire of the soul but through some fatal flaw, of pride or sloth or, it may be, timidity, have refused till the end the only means to its fulfilment; taking huge pains, often, to prove to themselves that the fulfilment is impossible. They are very few because old Wisdom has few sons who are true to him, and the most part of those who come to him either go on and cross the canyon, or else, remaining his sons in name, secretly slip back to feed on worse fare than his. To stay long where he lives requires both a strange strength and a strange weakness. As for their sufferings, it is their doom to live for ever in desire without hope.'

'Is it not rather harsh of the Landlord to make them suffer at all?'

'I can answer that only by hearsay,' returned the Guide, 'for pain is a secret which he has shared with your race and not with mine; and you would find it as hard to explain suffering to me as I should find it to reveal to you the secrets of the Mountain people. But those who know best say this, that any liberal man would choose the pain of this desire, even for ever, rather than the peace of feeling it no longer: and that though the best thing is to have, the next best is to want, and the worst of all is not to want.'

'I see that,' said John, 'Even the wanting, though it is pain too, is more precious than anything else we experience.'

The Divine Justice

'It is as I foresaw, and you understand it already better than I can. But there is this also. The Landlord does not condemn them to lack of hope: they have done that themselves. The Landlord's interference is all on the other side. Left to itself, the desire without the hope would soon fall back to spurious satisfactions, and these souls would follow it of their own free will

into far darker regions at the very bottom of the black hole. What the Landlord has done is to fix it forever: and by his art, though unfulfilled, it is uncorrupted. Men say that his love and his wrath are one thing. Of some places in the black hole you cannot see this, though you can believe it: but of that Island yonder under the willows, you can see it with your own eyes.'

'I see it very well,' said John.

Then the Guide sang:

'God in His mercy made
The fixèd pains of Hell.
That misery might be stayed,
God in His mercy made
Eternal bounds and bade
Its waves no further swell.
God in his mercy made
The fixèd pains of Hell.'

CHAPTER FOUR. The Black Hole

‘Then there is, after all,’ said John, ‘a black hole such as my old Steward described to me.’

‘I do not know what your Steward described. But there is a black hole.’

‘And still the Landlord is “so kind and good”!’

‘I see you have been among the Enemy’s people. In these latter days there is no charge against the Landlord which the Enemy brings so often as cruelty. That is just like the Enemy: for he is, at bottom, very dull. He has never hit on the one slander against the Landlord which would be really plausible. Anyone can refute the charge of cruelty. If he really wants to damage the Landlord’s character, he has a much stronger line than that to take. He ought to say that the Landlord is an inveterate gambler. That would not be true, but it would be plausible, for there is no denying that the Landlord does take risks.’

‘But what about the charge of cruelty?’

Hell as a tourniquet

‘I was just coming to that. The Landlord has taken the risk of working the country with free tenants instead of slaves in chain gangs: and as they are free there is no way of making it impossible for them to go into forbidden places and eat forbidden fruits. Up to a certain point he can doctor them even when they have done so, and break them off the habit. But beyond that point — you can see for yourself. A man can go on eating mountain-apple so long that *nothing* will cure his craving for it: and the very worms it breeds inside him will make him more certain to eat more. You must not try to fix the point after which a return is impossible, but you can see that there will be such a point somewhere.’

‘But surely the Landlord can do anything?’

‘He cannot do what is contradictory: or, in other words, a meaningless sentence will not gain meaning simply because someone chooses to prefix to it the words “the Landlord can”. And it is meaningless to talk of forcing a man to do freely what a man has freely made impossible for himself.’

‘I see. But at least these poor creatures are unhappy enough: there is no need to add a black hole.’

‘The Landlord does not make the blackness. The blackness is there already wherever the taste of mountain-apple has created the vermiculate

will. What do you mean by a hole? Something that ends. A black hole is blackness enclosed, limited. And in that sense the Landlord has made the black hole. He has put into the world a Worst Thing. But evil of itself would never reach a worst: for evil is fissiparous and could never in a thousand eternities find any way to arrest its own reproduction. If it could, it would be no longer evil: for Form and Limit belong to the good. The walls of the black hole are the tourniquet on the wound through which the lost soul else would bleed to a death she never reached. It is the Landlord's last service to those who will let him do nothing better for them.'

Human Choice

Then the Guide sang:

'Nearly they stood who fall;
Themselves as they look back
See always in the track
The one false step, where all
Even yet, by lightest swerve
Of foot not yet enslaved,
By smallest tremor of the smallest nerve,
Might have been saved.
'Nearly they fell who stand,
And with cold after fear
Look back to mark how near
They grazed the Sirens' land,
Wondering that subtle fate,
By threads so spidery fine,
The choice of ways so small, the event so great,
Should thus entwine.
'Therefore oh, man, have fear
Lest oldest fears be true,
Lest thou too far pursue
The road that seems so clear,
And step, secure, a hair's
Breadth past the hair-breadth bourne,
Which, being once crossed forever unawares,
Denies return.'

CHAPTER FIVE. Superbia

Then they went further and saw in the rocks beside them on the left what seemed at first sight a skeleton, but as they drew nearer they saw that there was indeed skin stretched over its bones and eyes flaming in the sockets of its skull. And it was scrabbling and puddering to and fro on what appeared to be a mirror; but it was only the rock itself scraped clean of every speck of dust and fibre of lichen and polished by the continued activity of this famished creature.

Tough-Mindedness revealed as a form of Pride

‘This is one of the Enemy’s daughters,’ said the Guide, ‘and her name is Superbia. But when you last saw her, perhaps she wore the likeness of three pale men.’

As they passed her she began to croak out her song.

‘I have scraped clean the plateau from the filthy earth,
Earth the unchaste, the fruitful, the great grand maternal,
Sprawling creature, lolling at random and supine
The broad-faced, sluttish helot, the slave wife
Grubby and warm, who opens unashamed
Her thousand wombs unguarded to the lickerous sun.
Now I have scoured my rock clean from the filthy earth,
On it no root can strike and no blade come to birth,
And though I starve of hunger it is plainly seen
That I have eaten nothing common or unclean.
‘I have by fasting purged away the filthy flesh,
Flesh the hot, moist, salt scum, the obscenity
And parasitic tetter, from my noble bones.
I have torn from my breasts — I was an udder’d beast —
My child, for he was fleshly. Flesh is caught
By a contagion carried from impure
Generation to generation through the body’s sewer.
And now though I am barren, yet no man can doubt
I am clean and my iniquities are blotted out.
‘I have made my soul (once filthy) a hard, pure, bright
Mirror of steel: no damp breath breathes upon it
Warming and dimming: it would freeze the finger

If any touched it. I have a mineral soul.
Minerals eat no food and void no excrement.
So I, borrowing nothing and repaying
Nothing, neither growing nor decaying,
Myself am to myself, a mortal God, a self-contained
Unwindowed monad, unindebted and unstained.'

John and the Guide were hurrying past, but Vertue hesitated.

'Her means may be wrong,' he said, 'but there is something to be said for her idea of the End.'

As virtue increases so does the temptation to Pride

'What idea?' said the Guide.

'Why — self-sufficiency, integrity. Not to commit herself, you know. All said and done, there *is* something foul about all these natural processes.'

'You had better be careful of your thoughts here,' said the Guide. 'Do not confuse Repentance with Disgust: for the one comes from the Landlord and the other from the Enemy.'

'And yet disgust has saved many a man from worse evils.'

'By the power of the Landlord it may be so — now and then. But don't try to play that game for yourself. Fighting one vice with another is about the most dangerous strategy there is. You know what happens to kingdoms that use alien mercenaries.'

'I suppose you are right,' said Vertue, 'and yet this feeling goes very deep. Is it wholly wrong to be ashamed of being in the body?'

'The Landlord's Son was not. You know the verses— "When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man".'

'That was a special case.'

'It was a special case because it was the archtypal case. Has no one told you that that Lady spoke and acted for all that bears, in the presence of all that begets: for this country as against the things East and West: for matter as against form and patiency against agency? Is not the very word Mother akin to Matter? Be sure that the whole of this land, with all its warmth and wetness and fecundity with all the dark and the heavy and the multitudinous for which you are too dainty, spoke through her lips when she said that He had regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden. And if that Lady was a maid though a mother, you need not doubt that the nature which is, to human sense, impure, is also pure.'

'Well,' said Vertue, turning away from Superbia, 'I will think this over.'

‘One thing you may as well know,’ remarked the Guide, ‘whatever virtues you may attribute to the Landlord, decency is not one of them. That is why so few of your national jokes have any point in my country.’

The vision of God is the fountain of Humility

And as they continued their journey, Vertue sang:

‘Because of endless pride
Reborn with endless error,
Each hour I look aside
Upon my secret mirror
Trying all postures there
To make my image fair.
‘Thou givest grapes, and I,
Though starving, turn to see
How dark the cool globes lie
In the white hand of me,
And linger gazing thither
Till the live clusters wither.
‘So should I quickly die
Narcissus-like of want,
But, in the glass, my eye
Catches such forms as haunt
Beyond nightmare, and make
Pride humble for pride’s sake.
‘Then and then only turning
The stiff neck round, I grow
A molten man all burning
And look behind and know
Who made the glass, whose light makes dark, whose fair
Makes foul, my shadowy form reflected there
That Self-Love, brought to bed of Love may die and bear
Her sweet son in despair.’

CHAPTER SIX. Ignorantia

The change from classical to scientific education strengthens our Ignorance

Still I lay dreaming and saw these three continue their journey through that long and narrow land with the rocks upon their left and the swamps on their right. They had much talk on the way of which I have remembered only snatches since I woke. I remember that they passed Ignorantia some miles beyond her sister Superbia and that led the pilgrims to question their Guide as to whether the Ignorance of the Tough-minded and the Clevers would some day be cured. He said there was less chance of that now than there had ever been: for till recently the Northern people had been made to learn the languages of Pagus ‘and that meant’, said the Guide, ‘that at least they started no further from the light than the old Pagans themselves and had therefore the chance to come at last to Mother Kirk. But now they are cutting themselves off even from that roundabout route.’

‘Why have they changed?’ asked one of the others.

‘Why did the shadow whom you call Sensible leave his old house and go to practise αὐτάρκεια in a hotel? Because his Drudge revolted. The same thing is happening all over the plateau and in Mammon’s country: their slaves are escaping further north and becoming dwarfs, and therefore the masters are turning all their attention to machinery, by which they hope to be able to lead their old life without slaves. And this seems to them so important that they are suppressing every kind of knowledge except mechanical knowledge. I am speaking of the sub-tenants. No doubt the great landowners in the back-ground have their own reasons for encouraging this movement.’

‘There must be a good side somewhere to this revolution,’ said Vertue. ‘It is too solid — it looks too lasting — to be a mere evil. I cannot believe that the Landlord would otherwise allow the whole face of nature and the whole structure of life to be so permanently and radically changed.’

The Guide laughed. ‘You are falling into their own error,’ he said, ‘the change is not radical, nor will it be permanent. That idea depends on a curious disease which they have all caught — an inability to disbelieve advertisements. To be sure, if the machines did what they promised, the change would be very deep indeed. Their next war, for example, would change the state of their country from disease to death. They are afraid of

this themselves — though most of them are old enough to know by experience that a gun is no more likely than a toothpaste or a cosmetic to do the things its makers say it will do. It is the same with all their machines. Their labour-saving devices multiply drudgery; their aphrodisiacs make them impotent: their amusements bore them: their rapid production of food leaves half of them starving, and their devices for saving time have banished leisure from their country. There will be no radical change. And as for permanence — consider how quickly all machines are broken and obliterated. The black solitudes will some day be green again, and of all cities that I have seen these iron cities will break most suddenly.'

Though the Machine Age, for good or ill, will do less than is expected of it

And the Guide sang:
'Iron will eat the world's old beauty up.
Girder and grid and gantry will arise,
Iron forest of engines will arise,
Criss-cross of iron crotchet. For your eyes
No green or growth. Over all, the skies
Scribbled from end to end with boasts and lies.
(When Adam ate the irrevocable apple, Thou
Saw'st beyond death the resurrection of the dead.)
'Clamour shall clean put out the voice of wisdom,
The printing-presses with their clapping wings,
Fouling your nourishment. Harpy wings,
Filling your minds all day with foolish things,
Will tame the eagle Thought: till she sings
Parrot-like in her cage to please dark kings.
(When Israel descended into Egypt, Thou
Didst purpose both the bondage and the coming out.)
'The new age, the new art, the new ethic and thought,
And fools crying, Because it has begun
It will continue as it has begun!
The wheel runs fast, therefore the wheel will run
Faster for ever. The old age is done,
We have new lights and see without the sun.
(Though they lay flat the mountains and dry up the sea,
Wilt thou yet change, as though God were a god?)'

CHAPTER SEVEN. Luxuria

Lechery means not simply forbidden pleasure

After this, John looked up and saw that they were approaching a concourse of living creatures beside the road. Their way was so long and desolate (and he was footsore too) that he welcomed any diversion, and he cast his eyes curiously upon this new thing. When he was nearer he saw that the concourse was of men, but they lay about in such attitudes and were so disfigured that he had not recognized them for men: moreover, the place was to the south of the road, and therefore the ground was very soft and some of them were half under water and some hidden in the reeds. All seemed to be suffering from some disease of a crumbling and disintegrating kind. It was doubtful whether all the life that pulsated in their bodies was their own: and soon John was certain, for he saw what seemed to be a growth on a man's arm slowly detach itself under his eyes and become a fat reddish creature, separable from the parent body, though it was in no hurry to separate itself. And once he had seen that, his eyes were opened and he saw the same thing happening all round him, and the whole assembly was but a fountain of writhing and reptilian life quickening as he watched and sprouting out of the human forms. But in each form the anguished eyes were alive, sending to him unutterable messages from the central life which survived, self-conscious, though the self were but a fountain of vermin. One old cripple, whose face was all gone but the mouth and eyes, was sitting up to receive drink from a cup which a woman held to his lips. When he had as much as she thought good, she snatched the cup from his hands and went on to her next patient. She was dark but beautiful.

'Don't lag,' said the Guide, 'this is a very dangerous place. You had better come away, This is Luxuria.'

But loss of the man's unity

But John's eyes were caught by a young man to whom the witch had just come in her rounds. The disease, by seeming, had hardly begun with him: there was an unpleasant suspicion about his fingers — something a little too supple for joints — a little independent of his other movements — but, on the whole, he was still a well-looking person. And as the witch came to him the hands shot out to the cup, and the man drew them back again: and the

hands went crawling out for the cup a second time, and again the man wrenched them back, and turned his face away, and cried out:

‘Quick! The black, sulphurous, never quenched,
Old festering fire begins to play
Once more within. Look! By brute force I have wrenched
Unmercifully my hands the other way.
‘Quick, Lord! On the rack thus, stretched tight,
Nerves clamouring as at nature’s wrong.
Scorched to the quick, whipp’d raw — Lord, in this plight
You see, you see no man can suffer long.
‘Quick, Lord! Before new scorpions bring
New venom — ere fiends blow the fire
A second time — quick, show me that sweet thing
Which, ‘spite of all, more deeply I desire.’

And all the while the witch stood saying nothing, but only holding out the cup and smiling kindly on him with her dark eyes and her dark, red mouth. Then, when she saw that he would not drink, she passed on to the next: but at the first step she took, the young man gave a sob and his hands flew out and grabbed the cup and he buried his head in it: and when she took it from his lips clung to it as a drowning man to a piece of wood. But at last he sank down in the swamp with a groan. And the worms where there should have been fingers were unmistakable.

‘Come on,’ said Vertue.

They resumed their journey, John lagging a bit. I dreamed that the witch came to him walking softly in the marshy ground by the roadside and holding out the cup to him also: when he went faster she kept pace with him.

‘I will not deceive you,’ she said. ‘You see there is no pretence. I am not trying to make you believe that this cup will take you to your Island. I am not saying it will quench your thirst for long. But taste it, none the less, for you are very thirsty.’

Its supreme mode of temptation is to make all else insipid

But John walked forward in silence.

‘It is true,’ said the witch, ‘that you never can tell when you have reached the point beyond which there is no return. But that cuts both ways. If you can never be certain that one more taste is safe, neither can you be

certain that one more taste is fatal. But you can be certain that you are terribly thirsty.’

But John continued as before.

‘At least,’ said the witch, ‘have one more taste of it, before you abandon it for ever. This is a bad moment to choose for resistance, when you are tired and miserable and have already listened to me too long. Taste this once, and I will leave you. I do not promise never to come back: but perhaps when I come again you will be strong and happy and well able to resist me — not as you are now.’

And John continued as before.

‘Come,’ said the witch. ‘You are only wasting time. You know you will give in, in the end. Look ahead at the hard road and the grey sky. What other pleasure is there in sight?’

So she accompanied him for a long way, till the weariness of her importunity tempted him far more than any positive desire. But he forced his mind to other things and kept himself occupied for a mile or so by making the following verses:

The Northern and Southern diseases of the Soul

When Lilith means to draw me
Within her secret bower,
She does not overawe me
With beauty’s pomp and power,
Nor, with angelic grace
Of courtesy, and the pace
Of gliding ships, comes veiled at evening hour.
Eager, unmasked, she lingers
Heart-sick and hunger sore;
With hot, dry, jewelled fingers
Stretched out, beside her door,
Offering with gnawing haste
Her cup, whereof who taste,
(She promises no better) thirst far more.
What moves me, then, to drink it?
— Her spells, which all around
So change the land, we think it
A great waste where a sound
Of wind like tales twice told

Blusters, and cloud is rolled
Always above yet no rain falls to ground.
Across drab iteration
Of bare hills, line on line,
The long road’s sinuation
Leads on. The witch’s wine,
Though promising nothing, seems
In that land of no streams,
To promise best — the unrelished anodyne.

And by the time he had reached the word *anodyne* the witch was gone. But he had never in his life felt more weary, and for a while the purpose of his pilgrimage woke no desire in him.

CHAPTER EIGHT. The Northern Dragon

‘Now,’ said the Guide, ‘our time is come.’

They looked at him inquiringly.

‘We are come,’ said he, ‘to that point of the road which lies midway between the two land bridges that I spoke of. The cold dragon is here on our left, and the hot dragon on our right. Now is the time to show what you are made of. Wolf is waiting in the wood southward: in the rocks northward, raven wheeling, in hope of carrion. Behoves you both be on guard quickly. God defend you.’

‘Well,’ said Vertue. And he drew his sword and slung his shield round from his back. Then he held out his hand first to the Guide, and then to John. ‘So long,’ he said.

The Northern tension, hardness, possessiveness, coldness, anaemia

‘Go where it is least green,’ said Guide, ‘for there the ground is firmest. And good luck.’

Vertue left the road and began to pick his way cautiously southward, feeling out the fen-paths. The Guide turned to John.

‘Have you any practice with a sword?’ he said.

‘None, sir,’ answered John.

‘None is better than a smattering. You must trust to mother-wit. Aim at his belly — an upward jab. I shouldn’t try cutting, if I were you: you don’t know enough.’

‘I will do the best I can,’ said John. And then, after a pause: ‘There is only one dragon, I suppose. I don’t need to guard my back.’

‘Of course there is only one, for he has eaten all the others. Otherwise he would not be a dragon. You know the maxim — *serpens nisi serpentem comederit — —*’

Then I saw John also settle his gear and step off the road to the left. The ascent began at once, and before he was ten yards from the road he was six feet above it: but the formation of the rocks was such that it was like mounting a huge stair, and was tiring rather than difficult. When he first stopped to wipe the sweat out of his eyes the mist was already so dense that he could hardly see the road beneath him. Ahead the grey darkness shaded quickly into black. Then suddenly John heard a dry, rattling sound in front of him, and a little above. He got a better grip on his sword, and took one

pace towards it, listening intently. Then came the sound again: and after that he heard a croaking voice, as of a gigantic frog. The dragon was singing to himself:

John overcomes it and wins from it some of the needful hardness he lacked

‘Once the worm-laid egg broke in the wood.
I came forth shining into the trembling wood,
The sun was on my scales, dew upon the grasses,
The cool, sweet grasses and the budding leaves.
I wooed my speckled mate. We played at druery
And sucked warm milk dropping from the goats’ teats.
‘Now I keep watch on the gold in my rock cave
In a country of stones: old, deplorable dragon,
Watching my hoard. In winter night the gold
Freezes through toughest scales my cold belly.
The jagged crowns and twisted cruel rings
Knobbly and icy are old dragon’s bed.
‘Often I wish I hadn’t eaten my wife,
Though worm grows not to dragon till he eat worm.
She could have helped me, watch and watch about,
Guarding the hoard. Gold would have been the safer.
I could uncoil my weariness at times and take
A little sleep, sometimes when she was watching.
‘Last night under the moonset a fox barked,
Woke me. Then I knew I had been sleeping.
Often an owl flying over the country of stones
Startles me, and I think I must have slept.
Only a moment. That very moment a man
Might have come out of the cities, stealing, to get my gold.
‘They make plots in the towns to steal my gold.
They whisper of me in a low voice, laying plans,
Merciless men. Have they not ale upon the benches,
Warm wife in bed, singing, and sleep the whole night?
But I leave not the cave but once in winter
To drink of the rock pool: in summer twice.
‘They feel no pity for the old, lugubrious dragon.
Oh, Lord, that made the dragon, grant me Thy peace!

But ask not that I should give up the gold,
Nor move, nor die; others would get the gold.
Kill, rather, Lord, the men and the other dragons
That I may sleep, go when I will to drink.’

As John listened to this song he forgot to be afraid. Disgust first, and then pity, chased fear from his mind: and after them came a strange desire to speak with the dragon and to suggest some sort of terms and division of the spoil: not that he desired the gold, but it seemed to him a not all ignoble desire to surround and contain so much within oneself. But while these things passed through his imagination, his body took care of him, keeping his grip steady on the sword hilt, his eyes strained into the darkness, and his feet ready to spring: so that he was not taken by surprise when he saw that in the rolling of the mist above him something else was rolling, and rolling round him to enclose him. But still he did not move. The dragon was paying its body out like a rope from a cave just above him. At first it swayed, the great head bobbing vertically, as a caterpillar sways searching for a new grip with half its length while the other half rests still on the leaf. Then the head dived and went behind him. He kept turning round to watch it, and it led the volume of the dragon’s body round in a circle and finally went back into the cave, leaving a loop of dragon all round the man. Still John waited till the loop began to tighten, about on a level with his chest. Then he ducked and came up again with a jab of his sword into the under-side of the brute. It went in to the hilt, but there was no blood. At once the head came twisting back out of the cave. Eyes full of cruelty — cold cruelty without a spark of rage in it — stared into his face. The mouth was wide open — it was not red within, but grey like lead — and the breath of the creature was freezing cold. As soon as it touched John’s face, everything was changed. A corselet of ice seemed to be closed about him, seemed to shut in his heart, so that it could never again flutter with panic or with greed. His strength was multiplied. His arms seemed to him iron. He found he was laughing and making thrust after thrust into the brute’s throat. He found that the struggle was already over — perhaps hours ago. He was standing unwearied in a lonely place among rocks with a dead reptile at his feet. He remembered that he had killed it. And the time before he had killed it seemed very long ago.

CHAPTER NINE. The Southern Dragon

Meanwhile his Moral Self must meet the Southern evil and take into him its heat, which will make Virtue itself henceforth a passion

John came leaping down the rocks into the road, whistling a tune. The Guide came to greet him, but before they had spoken a word they both turned round in wonder at a great cry from the South. The sun had come out so that the whole marsh glittered like dirty copper: and at first they thought that it was the sun upon his arms that made Vertue flash like flame as he came leaping, running, and dancing towards them. But as he drew nearer they saw that he was veritably on fire. Smoke came from him, and where his feet slipped into the bog holes there were little puffs of steam. Hurtless flames ran up and down his sword and licked over his hand. His breast heaved and he reeled like a drunk man. They made towards him, but he cried out:

‘I have come back with victory got —
But stand away — touch me not
Even with your clothes. I burn red-hot.
‘The worm was bitter. When she saw
My shield glitter beside the shaw
She spat flame from her golden jaw.
‘When on my sword her vomit spilt
The blade took fire. On the hilt
Beryl cracked, and bubbled gilt.
‘When sword and sword arm were all flame
With the very heat that came
Out of the brute, I flogged her tame.
‘In her own spew the worm died.
I rolled her round and tore her wide
And plucked the heart from her boiling side.
‘When my teeth were in the heart
I felt a pulse within me start
As though my breast would break apart.
‘It shook the hills and made them reel
And spun the woods round like a wheel.
The grass singed where I set my heel.

‘Behemoth is my serving man!
Before the conquered hosts of Pan
Riding tamed Leviathan,
Loud I sing for well I can
Resvrgam and Io Paean,
Io, Io, Io, Paean!!
‘Now I know the stake I played for,
Now I know what a worm’s made for!’

CHAPTER TEN. The Brook

My dream was full of light and noise. I thought they went on their way singing and laughing like schoolboys. Vertue lost all his dignity, and John was never tired: and for ten miles or so they picked up an old fiddler who was going that way, who played them such jigs and they danced more than they walked. And Vertue invented doggerels to his tunes to mock the old Pagan virtues in which he had been bred.

But in the midst of all this gaiety, suddenly John stood still and his eyes filled with tears. They had come to a little cottage, beside a river, which was empty and ruinous. Then they all asked John what ailed him.

‘We have come back to Puritania,’ he said, ‘and that was my father’s house. I see that my father and mother are gone already beyond the brook. I had much I would have said to them. But it is no matter.’

‘No matter indeed,’ said the Guide, ‘since you will cross the brook yourself before nightfall.’

‘For the last time?’ said Vertue.

‘For the last time,’ said the Guide, ‘all being well.’

And now the day was declining and the Eastern Mountains loomed big and black ahead of them. Their shadows lengthened as they went down towards the brook.

‘I am cured of playing the Stoic,’ said Vertue, ‘and I confess that I go down in fear and sadness. I also — there were many people I would have spoken to. There were many years I would call back. Whatever there is beyond the brook, it cannot be the same. Something is being ended. It is a real brook.

Death is at hand. Morality still seeks no reward and desires no resurrection
‘I am not one that easily flits past in thought
The ominous stream, imagining death made for nought.
This person, mixed of body and breath, to which concurred
Once only one articulation of thy word,
Will be resolved eternally: nor can time bring
(Else time were vain) once back again the self-same thing.
Therefore among the riddles that no man has read
I put thy paradox, Who liveth and was dead.

As Thou hast made substantially, thou wilt unmake
In earnest and for everlasting. Let none take
Comfort in frail supposal that some hour and place
To those who mourn recovers the wished voice and face.
Whom Thy great *Exit* banishes, no after age
Of epilogue leads back upon the lighted stage.
Where is Prince Hamlet when the curtain's down?
Where fled
Dreams at the dawn, or colours when the light is sped?
We are thy colours, fugitive, never restored,
Never repeated again. Thou only art the Lord,
Thou only art holy. In the shadowy vast
Of thine Osirian wings Thou dost enfold the past.
There sit in throne antediluvian, cruel kings,
There the first nightingale that sang to Eve yet sings,
There are the irrecoverable guiltless years,
There, yet unfallen, Lucifer among his peers.
'For thou art also a deity of the dead, a god
Of graves, with necromancies in thy potent rod;
Thou art Lord of the unbreathable transmortal air
Where mortal thinking fails: night's nuptial darkness, where
All lost embraces intermingle and are bless'd,
And all die, but all are, while Thou continuest.'

The twilight was now far advanced and they were in sight of the brook. And John said, 'I thought all those things when I was in the house of Wisdom. But now I think better things. Be sure it is not for nothing that the Landlord has knit our hearts so closely to time and place — to one friend rather than another and one shire more than all the land.

But Faith, being humbler, asks more
'Passing to-day by a cottage, I shed tears
When I remembered how once I had dwelled there
With my mortal friends who are dead. Years
Little had healed the wound that was laid bare.
'Out, little spear that stabs. I, fool, believed
I had outgrown the local, unique sting,

I had transmuted away (I was deceived)
Into love universal the lov’d thing.
‘But Thou, Lord, surely knewest Thine own plan
When the angelic indifferences with no bar
Universally loved but Thou gav’st man
The tether and pang of the particular;
‘Which, like a chemic drop, infinitesimal,
Plashed into pure water, changing the whole,
Embodies and embitters and turns all
Spirit’s sweet water to astringent soul.
‘That we, though small, may quiver with fire’s same
Substantial form as Thou — nor reflect merely,
As lunar angel, back to thee, cold flame.
Gods we are, Thou has said: and we pay dearly.’

And now they were already at the brook, and it was so dark that I did not see them go over. Only, as my dream ended, and the voice of the birds at my window began to reach my ear (for it was a summer morning), I heard the voice of the Guide, mixed with theirs and not unlike them, singing this song:

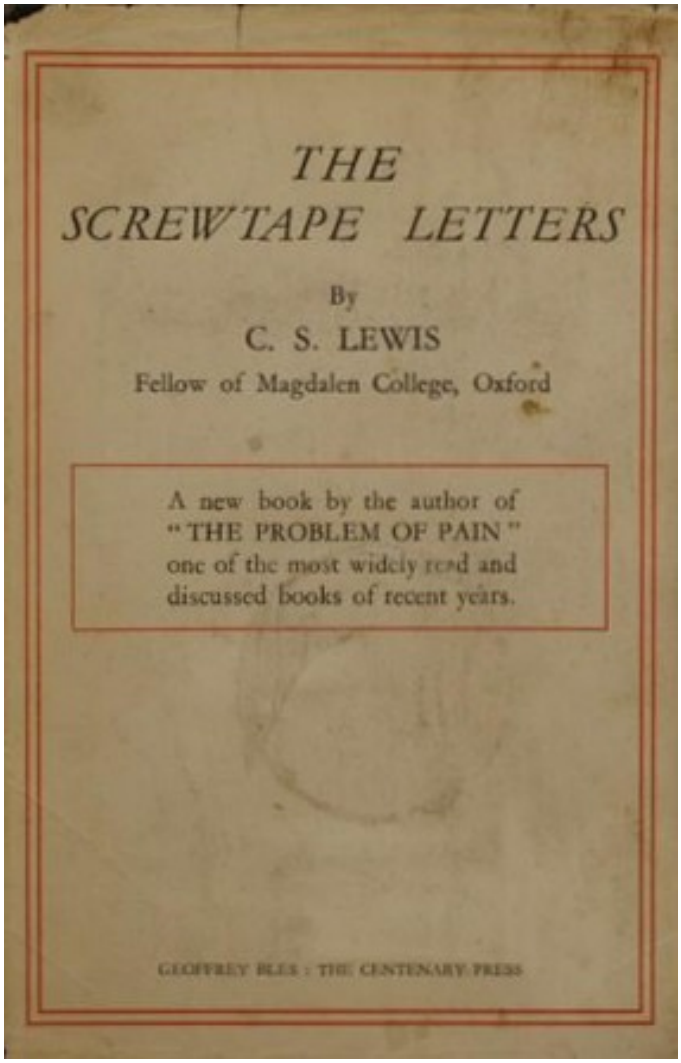
The Angel sings
‘I know not, I,
What the men together say,
How lovers, lovers die
And youth passes away.
‘Cannot understand
Love that mortal bears
For native, native land
— All lands are theirs.
‘Why at grave they grieve
For one voice and face,
And not, and not receive
Another in its place.
‘I, above the cone
Of the circling night
Flying, never have known

More or lesser light.
‘Sorrow it is they call
This cup: whence my lip,
Woe’s me, never in all
My endless days must sip.’

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS (1942)



Originally published weekly in the Anglican periodical *The Guardian* between May and November 1941, this apologetic novel is written in a satirical, epistolary style and addresses Christian theological issues, primarily those to do with temptation and resistance to it. First published in book form in February 1942, the narrative is conveyed through a series of letters from a senior Demon Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood, a Junior Tempter. The uncle's mentorship pertains to the nephew's responsibility in securing the damnation of a British man known only as "the Patient". Lewis provides a series of lessons in the importance of taking a deliberate role in Christian faith by portraying a typical human life, with all its temptations and failings, seen from devils' viewpoints. Screwtape holds an administrative post in the bureaucracy (Lowerarchy) of Hell and acts as a mentor to his nephew Wormwood, an inexperienced tempter. In the thirty-one letters that form the book, Screwtape gives Wormwood detailed advice on various methods of undermining faith and of promoting sin in "the Patient", interspersed with observations on human nature and on Christian doctrine. In Screwtape's advice, individual benefit and greed are seen as the greatest good, and neither demon can comprehend God's love for man or acknowledge human virtue.


THE
SCREWTAPE LETTERS
By
C. S. LEWIS
Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford
A new book by the author of
"THE PROBLEM OF PAIN"
one of the most widely read and
discussed books of recent years.
GEOFFREY BLES : THE CENTENARY PRESS

The first edition

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TO

J. R. R. TOLKIEN

“The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn.” — *Luther*

“The devill . . the prowde spirite . . cannot endure to be mocked.” — *Thomas More*

PREFACE

I have no intention of explaining how the correspondence which I now offer to the public fell into my hands.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. The sort of script which is used in this book can be very easily obtained by anyone who has once learned the knack; but ill-disposed or excitable people who might make a bad use of it shall not learn it from me.

Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar. Not everything that Screwtape says should be assumed to be true even from his own angle. I have made no attempt to identify any of the human beings mentioned in the letters; but I think it very unlikely that the portraits, say, of Fr. Spike or the patient's mother, are wholly just. There is wishful thinking in Hell as well as on Earth.

In conclusion, I ought to add that no effort has been made to clear up the chronology of the letters. Number XVII appears to have been composed before rationing became serious; but in general the diabolical method of dating seems to bear no relation to terrestrial time and I have not attempted to reproduce it. The history of the European War, except in so far as it happens now and then to impinge upon the spiritual condition of one human being, was obviously of no interest to Screwtape.

C. S. LEWIS
MAGDALEN COLLEGE
July 5, 1941

I

My dear Wormwood,

I note what you say about guiding your patient's reading and taking care that he sees a good deal of his materialist friend. But are you not being a trifle *naïf*? It sounds as if you supposed that *argument* was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's clutches. That might have been so if he had lived a few centuries earlier. At that time the humans still knew pretty well when a thing was proved and when it was not; and if it was proved they really believed it. They still connected thinking with doing and were prepared to alter their way of life as the result of a chain of reasoning. But what with the weekly press and other such weapons we have largely altered that. Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily "true" or "false", but as "academic" or "practical", "outworn" or "contemporary", "conventional" or "ruthless". Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is *true*! Make him think it is strong, or stark, or courageous — that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about.

The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy's own ground. He can argue too; whereas in really practical propaganda of the kind I am suggesting He has been shown for centuries to be greatly the inferior of Our Father Below. By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favour, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences. Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it "real life" and don't let him ask what he means by "real".

Remember, he is not, like you, a pure spirit. Never having been a human (Oh that abominable advantage of the Enemy's!) you don't realise how enslaved they are to the pressure of the ordinary. I once had a patient, a sound atheist, who used to read in the British Museum. One day, as he sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way.

The Enemy, of course, was at his elbow in a moment. Before I knew where I was I saw my twenty years' work beginning to totter. If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone. But I was not such a fool. I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested that it was just about time he had some lunch. The Enemy presumably made the counter-suggestion (you know how one can never *quite* overhear what He says to them?) that this was more important than lunch. At least I think that must have been His line for when I said "Quite. In fact much *too* important to tackle at the end of a morning", the patient brightened up considerably; and by the time I had added "Much better come back after lunch and go into it with a fresh mind", he was already half way to the door. Once he was in the street the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday paper, and a No. 73 bus going past, and before he reached the bottom of the steps I had got into him an unalterable conviction that, whatever odd ideas might come into a man's head when he was shut up alone with his books, a healthy dose of "real life" (by which he meant the bus and the newsboy) was enough to show him that all "that sort of thing" just couldn't be true. He knew he'd had a narrow escape and in later years was fond of talking about "that inarticulate sense for actuality which is our ultimate safeguard against the aberrations of mere logic". He is now safe in Our Father's house.

You begin to see the point? Thanks to processes which we set at work in them centuries ago, they find it all but impossible to believe in the unfamiliar while the familiar is before their eyes. Keep pressing home on him the *ordinariness* of things. Above all, do not attempt to use science (I mean, the real sciences) as a defence against Christianity. They will positively encourage him to think about realities he can't touch and see. There have been sad cases among the modern physicists. If he must dabble in science, keep him on economics and sociology; don't let him get away from that invaluable "real life". But the best of all is to let him read no science but to give him a grand general idea that he knows it all and that everything he happens to have picked up in casual talk and reading is "the results of modern investigation". Do remember you are there to fuddle him. From the way some of you young fiends talk, anyone would suppose it was our job to *teach*!

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

II

My dear Wormwood,

I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Do not indulge the hope that you will escape the usual penalties; indeed, in your better moments, I trust you would hardly even wish to do so. In the meantime we must make the best of the situation. There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the Enemy's camp and are now with us. All the *habits* of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favour.

One of our great allies at present is the Church itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean the Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy. But fortunately it is quite invisible to these humans. All your patient sees is the half-finished, sham Gothic erection on the new building estate. When he goes inside, he sees the local grocer with rather an oily expression on his face bustling up to offer him one shiny little book containing a liturgy which neither of them understands, and one shabby little book containing corrupt texts of a number of religious lyrics, mostly bad, and in very small print. When he gets to his pew and looks round him he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided. You want to lean pretty heavily on those neighbours. Make his mind flit to and fro between an expression like "the body of Christ" and the actual faces in the next pew. It matters very little, of course, what kind of people that next pew really contains. You may know one of them to be a great warrior on the Enemy's side. No matter. Your patient, thanks to Our Father below, is a fool. Provided that any of those neighbours sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, the patient will quite easily believe that their religion must therefore be somehow ridiculous. At his present stage, you see, he has an idea of "Christians" in his mind which he supposes to be spiritual but which, in fact, is largely pictorial. His mind is full of togas and sandals and armour and bare legs and the mere fact that the other people in church wear modern clothes is a real — though of course an unconscious — difficulty to him. Never let it come to the surface; never let him ask what he expected them to look like. Keep everything hazy in his

mind now, and you will have all eternity wherein to amuse yourself by producing in him the peculiar kind of clarity which Hell affords.

Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman. The Enemy allows this disappointment to occur on the threshold of every human endeavour. It occurs when the boy who has been enchanted in the nursery by *Stories from the Odyssey* buckles down to really learning Greek. It occurs when lovers have got married and begin the real task of learning to live together. In every department of life it marks the transition from dreaming aspiration to laborious doing. The Enemy takes this risk because He has a curious fantasy of making all these disgusting little human vermin into what He calls His "free" lovers and servants— "sons" is the word He uses, with His inveterate love of degrading the whole spiritual world by unnatural liaisons with the two-legged animals. Desiring their freedom, He therefore refuses to carry them, by their mere affections and habits, to any of the goals which He sets before them: He leaves them to "do it on their own". And there lies our opportunity. But also, remember, there lies our danger. If once they get through this initial dryness successfully, they become much less dependent on emotion and therefore much harder to tempt.

I have been writing hitherto on the assumption that the people in the next pew afford no *rational* ground for disappointment. Of course if they do — if the patient knows that the woman with the absurd hat is a fanatical bridge-player or the man with squeaky boots a miser and an extortioner — then your task is so much the easier. All you then have to do is to keep out of his mind the question "If I, being what I am, can consider that I am in some sense a Christian, why should the different vices of those people in the next pew prove that their religion is mere hypocrisy and convention?" You may ask whether it is possible to keep such an obvious thought from occurring even to a human mind. It is, Wormwood, it is! Handle him properly and it simply won't come into his head. He has not been anything like long enough with the Enemy to have any real humility yet. What he says, even on his knees, about his own sinfulness is all parrot talk. At bottom, he still believes he has run up a very favourable credit-balance in the Enemy's ledger by allowing himself to be converted, and thinks that he is showing great humility and condescension in going to church with these

“smug”, commonplace neighbours at all. Keep him in that state of mind as long as you can.

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

III

My dear Wormwood,

I am very pleased by what you tell me about this man's relations with his mother. But you must press your advantage. The Enemy will be working from the centre outwards, gradually bringing more and more of the patient's conduct under the new standard, and may reach his behaviour to the old lady at any moment. You want to get in first. Keep in close touch with our colleague Glubose who is in charge of the mother, and build up between you in that house a good settled habit of mutual annoyance; daily pinpricks. The following methods are useful.

1. Keep his mind on the inner life. He thinks his conversion is something *inside* him and his attention is therefore chiefly turned at present to the states of his own mind — or rather to that very expurgated version of them which is all you should allow him to see. Encourage this. Keep his mind off the most elementary duties by directing it to the most advanced and spiritual ones. Aggravate that most useful human characteristic, the horror and neglect of the obvious. You must bring him to a condition in which he can practise self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself which are perfectly clear to anyone who has ever lived in the same house with him or worked in the same office.

2. It is, no doubt, impossible to prevent his praying for his mother, but we have means of rendering the prayers innocuous. Make sure that they are always very "spiritual", that he is always concerned with the state of her soul and never with her rheumatism. Two advantages will follow. In the first place, his attention will be kept on what he regards as her sins, by which, with a little guidance from you, he can be induced to mean any of her actions which are inconvenient or irritating to himself. Thus you can keep rubbing the wounds of the day a little sorer even while he is on his knees; the operation is not at all difficult and you will find it very entertaining. In the second place, since his ideas about her soul will be very crude and often erroneous, he will, in some degree, be praying for an imaginary person, and it will be your task to make that imaginary person daily less and less like the real mother — the sharp-tongued old lady at the breakfast table. In time, you may get the cleavage so wide that no thought or feeling from his prayers for the imagined mother will ever flow over into

his treatment of the real one. I have had patients of my own so well in hand that they could be turned at a moment's notice from impassioned prayer for a wife's or son's "soul" to beating or insulting the real wife or son without a qualm.

3. When two humans have lived together for many years it usually happens that each has tones of voice and expressions of face which are almost unendurably irritating to the other. Work on that. Bring fully into the consciousness of your patient that particular lift of his mother's eyebrows which he learned to dislike in the nursery, and let him think how much he dislikes it. Let him assume that she knows how annoying it is and does it to annoy — if you know your job he will not notice the immense improbability of the assumption. And, of course, never let him suspect that he has tones and looks which similarly annoy her. As he cannot see or hear himself, this is easily managed.

4. In civilised life domestic hatred usually expresses itself by saying things which would appear quite harmless on paper (the *words* are not offensive) but in such a voice, or at such a moment, that they are not far short of a blow in the face. To keep this game up you and Glubose must see to it that each of these two fools has a sort of double standard. Your patient must demand that all his own utterances are to be taken at their face value and judged simply on the actual words, while at the same time judging all his mother's utterances with the fullest and most over-sensitive interpretation of the tone and the context and the suspected intention. She must be encouraged to do the same to him. Hence from every quarrel they can both go away convinced, or very nearly convinced, that they are quite innocent. You know the kind of thing: "I simply ask her what time dinner will be and she flies into a temper." Once this habit is well established you have the delightful situation of a human saying things with the express purpose of offending and yet having a grievance when offence is taken.

Finally, tell me something about the old lady's religious position. Is she at all jealous of the new factor in her son's life? — at all piqued that he should have learned from others, and so late, what she considers she gave him such good opportunity of learning in childhood? Does she feel he is making a great deal of "fuss" about it — or that he's getting in on very easy terms? Remember the elder brother in the Enemy's story,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

IV

My dear Wormwood,

The amateurish suggestions in your last letter warn me that it is high time for me to write to you fully on the painful subject of prayer. You might have spared the comment that my advice about his prayers for his mother "proved singularly unfortunate". That is not the sort of thing that a nephew should write to his uncle — nor a junior tempter to the under-secretary of a department. It also reveals an unpleasant desire to shift responsibility; you must learn to pay for your own blunders.

The best thing, where it is possible, is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether. When the patient is an adult recently re-converted to the Enemy's party, like your man, this is best done by encouraging him to remember, or to think he remembers, the parrot-like nature of his prayers in childhood. In reaction against that, he may be persuaded to aim at something entirely spontaneous, inward, informal, and unregularised; and what this will actually mean to a beginner will be an effort to produce in himself a vaguely devotional *mood* in which real concentration of will and intelligence have no part. One of their poets, Coleridge, has recorded that he did not pray "with moving lips and bended knees" but merely "composed his spirit to love" and indulged "a sense of supplication". That is exactly the sort of prayer we want; and since it bears a superficial resemblance to the prayer of silence as practised by those who are very far advanced in the Enemy's service, clever and lazy patients can be taken in by it for quite a long time. At the very least, they can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers; for they constantly forget, what you must always remember, that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their souls. It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.

If this fails, you must fall back on a subtler misdirection of his intention. Whenever they are attending to the Enemy Himself we are defeated, but there are ways of preventing them from doing so. The simplest is to turn their gaze away from Him towards themselves. Keep them watching their own minds and trying to produce *feelings* there by the action of their own wills. When they meant to ask Him for charity, let them, instead, start trying

to manufacture charitable feelings for themselves and not notice that this is what they are doing. When they meant to pray for courage, let them really be trying to feel brave. When they say they are praying for forgiveness, let them be trying to feel forgiven. Teach them to estimate the value of each prayer by their success in producing the desired feeling; and never let them suspect how much success or failure of that kind depends on whether they are well or ill, fresh or tired, at the moment.

But of course the Enemy will not meantime be idle. Wherever there is prayer, there is danger of His own immediate action. He is cynically indifferent to the dignity of His position, and ours, as pure spirits, and to human animals on their knees He pours out self-knowledge in a quite shameless fashion. But even if He defeats your first attempt at misdirection, we have a subtler weapon. The humans do not start from that direct perception of Him which we, unhappily, cannot avoid. They have never known that ghastly luminosity, that stabbing and searing glare which makes the background of permanent pain to our lives. If you look into your patient's mind when he is praying, you will not find *that*. If you examine the object to which he is attending, you will find that it is a composite object containing many quite ridiculous ingredients. There will be images derived from pictures of the Enemy as He appeared during the discreditable episode known as the Incarnation: there will be vaguer — perhaps quite savage and puerile — images associated with the other two Persons. There will even be some of his own reverence (and of bodily sensations accompanying it) objectified and attributed to the object revered. I have known cases where what the patient called his "God" was actually *located* — up and to the left at the corner of the bedroom ceiling, or inside his own head, or in a crucifix on the wall. But whatever the nature of the composite object, you must keep him praying to *it* — to the thing that he has made, not to the Person who has made him. You may even encourage him to attach great importance to the correction and improvement of his composite object, and to keeping it steadily before his imagination during the whole prayer. For if he ever comes to make the distinction, if ever he consciously directs his prayers "Not to what I think thou art but to what thou knowest thyself to be", our situation is, for the moment, desperate. Once all his thoughts and images have been flung aside or, if retained, retained with a full recognition of their merely subjective nature, and the man trusts himself to the completely real, external, invisible Presence, there with him in the room and never knowable

by him as he is known by it — why, then it is that the incalculable may occur. In avoiding this situation — this real nakedness of the soul in prayer — you will be helped by the fact that the humans themselves do not desire it as much as they suppose. There’s such a thing as getting more than they bargained for!

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

V

My dear Wormwood,

It is a little bit disappointing to expect a detailed report on your work and to receive instead such a vague rhapsody as your last letter. You say you are “delirious with joy” because the European humans have started another of their wars. I see very well what has happened to you. You are not delirious; you are only drunk. Reading between the lines in your very unbalanced account of the patient’s sleepless night, I can reconstruct your state of mind fairly accurately. For the first time in your career you have tasted that wine which is the reward of all our labours — the anguish and bewilderment of a human soul — and it has gone to your head. I can hardly blame you. I do not expect old heads on young shoulders. Did the patient respond to some of your terror-pictures of the future? Did you work in some good self-pitying glances at the happy past? — some fine thrills in the pit of his stomach, were there? You played your violin prettily did you? Well, well, it’s all very natural. But do remember, Wormwood, that duty comes before pleasure. If any present self-indulgence on your part leads to the ultimate loss of the prey, you will be left eternally thirsting for that draught of which you are now so much enjoying your first sip. If, on the other hand, by steady and cool-headed application here and now you can finally secure his soul, he will then be yours forever — a brim-full living chalice of despair and horror and astonishment which you can raise to your lips as often as you please. So do not allow any temporary excitement to distract you from the real business of undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtues. Give me without fail in your next letter a full account of the patient’s reactions to the war, so that we can consider whether you are likely to do more good by making him an extreme patriot or an ardent pacifist. There are all sorts of possibilities. In the meantime, I must warn you not to hope too much from a war.

Of course a war is entertaining. The immediate fear and suffering of the humans is a legitimate and pleasing refreshment for our myriads of toiling workers. But what permanent good does it do us unless we make use of it for bringing souls to Our Father Below? When I see the temporal suffering of humans who finally escape us, I feel as if I had been allowed to taste the first course of a rich banquet and then denied the rest. It is worse than not to

have tasted it at all. The Enemy, true to His barbarous methods of warfare, allows us to see the short misery of His favourites only to tantalise and torment us — to mock the incessant hunger which, during this present phase of the great conflict, His blockade is admittedly imposing. Let us therefore think rather how to use, than how to enjoy, this European war. For it has certain tendencies inherent in it which are, in themselves, by no means in our favour. We may hope for a good deal of cruelty and unchastity. But, if we are not careful, we shall see thousands turning in this tribulation to the Enemy, while tens of thousands who do not go so far as that will nevertheless have their attention diverted from themselves to values and causes which they believe to be higher than the self. I know that the Enemy disapproves many of these causes. But that is where He is so unfair. He often makes prizes of humans who have given their lives for causes He thinks bad on the monstrously sophistical ground that the humans thought them good and were following the best they knew. Consider too what undesirable deaths occur in wartime. Men are killed in places where they knew they might be killed and to which they go, if they are at all of the Enemy's party, prepared. How much better for us if *all* humans died in costly nursing homes amid doctors who lie, nurses who lie, friends who lie, as we have trained them, promising life to the dying, encouraging the belief that sickness excuses every indulgence, and even, if our workers know their job, withholding all suggestion of a priest lest it should betray to the sick man his true condition! And how disastrous for us is the continual remembrance of death which war enforces. One of our best weapons, contented worldliness, is rendered useless. In wartime not even a human can believe that he is going to live forever.

I know that Scabtree and others have seen in wars a great opportunity for attacks on faith, but I think that view was exaggerated. The Enemy's human partisans have all been plainly told by Him that suffering is an essential part of what He calls Redemption; so that a faith which is destroyed by a war or a pestilence cannot really have been worth the trouble of destroying. I am speaking now of diffused suffering over a long period such as the war will produce. Of course, at the precise moment of terror, bereavement, or physical pain, you may catch your man when his reason is temporarily suspended. But even then, if he applies to Enemy headquarters, I have found that the post is nearly always defended,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

VI

My dear Wormwood,

I am delighted to hear that your patient's age and profession make it possible, but by no means certain, that he will be called up for military service. We want him to be in the maximum uncertainty, so that his mind will be filled with contradictory pictures of the future, every one of which arouses hope or fear. There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human's mind against the Enemy. He wants men to be concerned with what they do; our business is to keep them thinking about what will happen to them.

Your patient will, of course, have picked up the notion that he must submit with patience to the Enemy's will. What the Enemy means by this is primarily that he should accept with patience the tribulation which has actually been dealt out to him — the present anxiety and suspense. It is about *this* that he is to say "Thy will be done", and for the daily task of bearing *this* that the daily bread will be provided. It is your business to see that the patient never thinks of the present fear as his appointed cross, but only of the things he is afraid of. Let him regard them as his crosses: let him forget that, since they are incompatible, they cannot all happen to him, and let him try to practise fortitude and patience to them all in advance. For real resignation, at the same moment, to a dozen different and hypothetical fates, is almost impossible, and the Enemy does not greatly assist those who are trying to attain it: resignation to present and actual suffering, even where that suffering consists of fear, is far easier and is usually helped by this direct action.

An important spiritual law is here involved. I have explained that you can weaken his prayers by diverting his attention from the Enemy Himself to his own states of mind about the Enemy. On the other hand fear becomes easier to master when the patient's mind is diverted from the thing feared to the fear itself, considered as a present and undesirable state of his own mind; and when he regards the fear as his appointed cross he will inevitably think of it as a state of mind. One can therefore formulate the general rule; in all activities of mind which favour our cause, encourage the patient to be un-selfconscious and to concentrate on the object, but in all activities favourable to the Enemy bend his mind back on itself. Let an insult or a

woman’s body so fix his attention outward that he does not reflect “I am now entering into the state called Anger — or the state called Lust”. Contrariwise let the reflection “My feelings are now growing more devout, or more charitable” so fix his attention inward that he no longer looks beyond himself to see our Enemy or his own neighbours.

As regards his more general attitude to the war, you must not rely too much on those feelings of hatred which the humans are so fond of discussing in Christian, or anti-Christian, periodicals. In his anguish, the patient can, of course, be encouraged to revenge himself by some vindictive feelings directed towards the German leaders, and that is good so far as it goes. But it is usually a sort of melodramatic or mythical hatred directed against imaginary scapegoats. He has never met these people in real life — they are lay figures modelled on what he gets from newspapers. The results of such fanciful hatred are often most disappointing, and of all humans the English are in this respect the most deplorable milksops. They are creatures of that miserable sort who loudly proclaim that torture is too good for their enemies and then give tea and cigarettes to the first wounded German pilot who turns up at the back door.

Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient’s soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary. There is no good at all in inflaming his hatred of Germans if, at the same time, a pernicious habit of charity is growing up between him and his mother, his employer, and the man he meets in the train. Think of your man as a series of concentric circles, his will being the innermost, his intellect coming next, and finally his fantasy. You can hardly hope, at once, to exclude from all the circles everything that smells of the Enemy: but you must keep on shoving all the virtues outward till they are finally located in the circle of fantasy, and all the desirable qualities inward into the Will. It is only in so far as they reach the will and are there embodied in habits that the virtues are really fatal to us. (I don’t, of course, mean what the patient mistakes for his will, the conscious fume and fret of resolutions and clenched teeth, but the real centre, what the Enemy calls the Heart.) All sorts of virtues painted in the fantasy or approved by the intellect or even, in

some measure, loved and admired, will not keep a man from our Father’s house: indeed they may make him more amusing when he gets there,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

VII

My dear Wormwood,

I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered for us by the High Command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course this has not always been so. We are really faced with a cruel dilemma. When the humans disbelieve in our existence we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and sceptics. At least, not yet. I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalise and mythologise their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, a belief in us, (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The "Life Force", the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful. If once we can produce our perfect work — the Materialist Magician, the man, not using, but veritably worshipping, what he vaguely calls "Forces" while denying the existence of "spirits" — then the end of the war will be in sight. But in the meantime we must obey our orders. I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that "devils" are predominantly *comic* figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them) he therefore cannot believe in you.

I had not forgotten my promise to consider whether we should make the patient an extreme patriot or an extreme pacifist. All extremes, except extreme devotion to the Enemy, are to be encouraged. Not always, of course, but at this period. Some ages are lukewarm and complacent, and then it is our business to soothe them yet faster asleep. Other ages, of which the present is one, are unbalanced and prone to faction, and it is our business to inflame them. Any small coterie, bound together by some interest which other men dislike or ignore, tends to develop inside itself a hothouse mutual admiration, and towards the outer world, a great deal of pride and hatred which is entertained without shame because the "Cause" is

its sponsor and it is thought to be impersonal. Even when the little group exists originally for the Enemy's own purposes, this remains true. We want the Church to be small not only that fewer men may know the Enemy but also that those who do may acquire the uneasy intensity and the defensive self-righteousness of a secret society or a clique. The Church herself is, of course, heavily defended and we have never yet quite succeeded in giving her *all* the characteristics of a faction; but subordinate factions within her have often produced admirable results, from the parties of Paul and of Apollos at Corinth down to the High and Low parties in the Church of England.

If your patient can be induced to become a conscientious objector he will automatically find himself one of a small, vocal, organised, and unpopular society, and the effects of this, on one so new to Christianity, will almost certainly be good. But only *almost* certainly. Has he had serious doubts about the lawfulness of serving in a just war before this present war began? Is he a man of great physical courage — so great that he will have no half-conscious misgivings about the real motives of his pacifism? Can he, when nearest to honesty (no human is ever *very* near), feel fully convinced that he is actuated wholly by the desire to obey the Enemy? If he is that sort of man, his pacifism will probably not do us much good, and the Enemy will probably protect him from the usual consequences of belonging to a sect. Your best plan, in that case, would be to attempt a sudden, confused, emotional crisis from which he might emerge as an uneasy convert to patriotism. Such things can often be managed. But if he is the man I take him to be, try Pacifism.

Whichever he adopts, your main task will be the same. Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the "cause", in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the British war-effort or of Pacifism. The attitude which you want to guard against is that in which temporal affairs are treated primarily as material for obedience. Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing. Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades, matter more to him

than prayers and sacraments and charity, he is ours — and the more "religious" (on those terms) the more securely ours. I could show you a pretty cageful down here,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

VIII

My dear Wormwood,

So you "have great hopes that the patient's religious phase is dying away", have you? I always thought the Training College had gone to pieces since they put old Slubgob at the head of it, and now I am sure. Has no one ever told you about the law of Undulation?

Humans are amphibians — half spirit and half animal. (The Enemy's determination to produce such a revolting hybrid was one of the things that determined Our Father to withdraw his support from Him.) As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they inhabit time. This means that while their spirit can be directed to an eternal object, their bodies, passions, and imaginations are in continual change, for to be in time means to change. Their nearest approach to constancy, therefore, is undulation — the repeated return to a level from which they repeatedly fall back, a series of troughs and peaks. If you had watched your patient carefully you would have seen this undulation in every department of his life — his interest in his work, his affection for his friends, his physical appetites, all go up and down. As long as he lives on earth periods of emotional and bodily richness and liveliness will alternate with periods of numbness and poverty. The dryness and dulness through which your patient is now going are not, as you fondly suppose, your workmanship; they are merely a natural phenomenon which will do us no good unless you make a good use of it.

To decide what the best use of it is, you must ask what use the Enemy wants to make of it, and then do the opposite. Now it may surprise you to learn that in His efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, He relies on the troughs even more than on the peaks; some of His special favourites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else. The reason is this. To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own area of selfhood at its expense. But the obedience which the Enemy demands of men is quite a different thing. One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really *does* want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself — creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has

absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself: the Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct.

And that is where the troughs come in. You must have often wondered why the Enemy does not make more use of His power to be sensibly present to human souls in any degree He chooses and at any moment. But you now see that the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of His scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to over-ride a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo. For His ignoble idea is to eat the cake and have it; the creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve. He is prepared to do a little over-riding at the beginning. He will set them off with communications of His presence which, though faint, seem great to them, with emotional sweetness, and easy conquest over temptation. But He never allows this state of affairs to last long. Sooner or later He withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives. He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs — to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish. It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods, that it is growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be. Hence the prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please Him best. We can drag our patients along by continual tempting, because we design them only for the table, and the more their will is interfered with the better. He cannot “tempt” to virtue as we do to vice. He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles. Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy’s will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.

But of course the troughs afford opportunities to our side also. Next week I will give you some hints on how to exploit them,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

IX

My dear Wormwood,

I hope my last letter has convinced you that the trough of dulness or "dryness" through which your patient is going at present will not, of itself, give you his soul, but needs to be properly exploited. What forms the exploitation should take I will now consider.

In the first place I have always found that the Trough periods of the human undulation provide excellent opportunity for all sensual temptations, particularly those of sex. This may surprise you, because, of course, there is more physical energy, and therefore more potential appetite, at the Peak periods; but you must remember that the powers of resistance are then also at their highest. The health and spirits which you want to use in producing lust can also, alas, be very easily used for work or play or thought or innocuous merriment. The attack has a much better chance of success when the man's whole inner world is drab and cold and empty. And it is also to be noted that the Trough sexuality is subtly different in quality from that of the Peak — much less likely to lead to the milk and water phenomenon which the humans call "being in love", much more easily drawn into perversions, much less contaminated by those generous and imaginative and even spiritual concomitants which often render human sexuality so disappointing. It is the same with other desires of the flesh. You are much more likely to make your man a sound drunkard by pressing drink on him as an anodyne when he is dull and weary than by encouraging him to use it as a means of merriment among his friends when he is happy and expansive. Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula. It is more certain; and it's better *style*. To get the man's soul and give him *nothing* in return —

that is what really gladdens our Father's heart. And the troughs are the time for beginning the process.

But there is an even better way of exploiting the Trough; I mean through the patient's own thoughts about it. As always, the first step is to keep knowledge out of his mind. Do not let him suspect the law of undulation. Let him assume that the first ardours of his conversion might have been expected to last, and ought to have lasted, forever, and that his present dryness is an equally permanent condition. Having once got this misconception well fixed in his head, you may then proceed in various ways. It all depends on whether your man is of the desponding type who can be tempted to despair, or of the wishful-thinking type who can be assured that all is well. The former type is getting rare among the humans. If your patient should happen to belong to it, everything is easy. You have only got to keep him out of the way of experienced Christians (an easy task now-a-days), to direct his attention to the appropriate passages in scripture, and then to set him to work on the desperate design of recovering his old feelings by sheer will-power, and the game is ours. If he is of the more hopeful type, your job is to make him acquiesce in the present low temperature of his spirit and gradually become content with it, persuading himself that it is not so low after all. In a week or two you will be making him doubt whether the first days of his Christianity were not, perhaps, a little excessive. Talk to him about "moderation in all things". If you can once get him to the point of thinking that "religion is all very well up to a point", you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all — and more amusing.

Another possibility is that of direct attack on his faith. When you have caused him to assume that the trough is permanent, can you not persuade him that "his religious phase" is just going to die away like all his previous phases? Of course there is no conceivable way of getting by reason from the proposition "I am losing interest in this" to the proposition "This is false". But, as I said before, it is jargon, not reason, you must rely on. The mere word *phase* will very likely do the trick. I assume that the creature has been through several of them before — they all have — and that he always feels superior and patronising to the ones he has emerged from, not because he has really criticised them but simply because they are in the past. (You keep him well fed on hazy ideas of Progress and Development and the Historical

Point of View, I trust, and give him lots of modern Biographies to read? The people in them are always emerging from Phases, aren't they?)

You see the idea? Keep his mind off the plain antithesis between True and False. Nice shadowy expressions— "It was a phase"— "I've been through all that" — and don't forget the blessed word "Adolescent",

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

X

My dear Wormwood,

I was delighted to hear from Triptweeze that your patient has made some very desirable new acquaintances and that you seem to have used this event in a really promising manner. I gather that the middle-aged married couple who called at his office are just the sort of people we want him to know — rich, smart, superficially intellectual, and brightly sceptical about everything in the world. I gather they are even vaguely pacifist, not on moral grounds but from an ingrained habit of belittling anything that concerns the great mass of their fellow men and from a dash of purely fashionable and literary communism. This is excellent. And you seem to have made good use of all his social, sexual, and intellectual vanity. Tell me more. Did he commit himself deeply? I don't mean in words. There is a subtle play of looks and tones and laughs by which a mortal can imply that he is of the same party as those to whom he is speaking. That is the kind of betrayal you should specially encourage, because the man does not fully realise it himself; and by the time he does you will have made withdrawal difficult.

No doubt he must very soon realise that his own faith is in direct opposition to the assumptions on which all the conversation of his new friends is based. I don't think that matters much provided that you can persuade him to postpone any open acknowledgment of the fact, and this, with the aid of shame, pride, modesty and vanity, will be easy to do. As long as the postponement lasts he will be in a false position. He will be silent when he ought to speak and laugh when he ought to be silent. He will assume, at first only by his manner, but presently by his words, all sorts of cynical and sceptical attitudes which are not really his. But if you play him well, they may become his. All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be. This is elementary. The real question is how to prepare for the Enemy's counter attack.

The first thing is to delay as long as possible the moment at which he realises this new pleasure as a temptation. Since the Enemy's servants have been preaching about "the World" as one of the great standard temptations for two thousand years, this might seem difficult to do. But fortunately they have said very little about it for the last few decades. In modern Christian

writings, though I see much (indeed more than I like) about Mammon, I see few of the old warnings about Worldly Vanities, the Choice of Friends, and the Value of Time. All that, your patient would probably classify as "Puritanism" — and may I remark in passing that the value we have given to that word is one of the really solid triumphs of the last hundred years? By it we rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety of life.

Sooner or later, however, the real nature of his new friends must become clear to him, and then your tactics must depend on the patient's intelligence. If he is a big enough fool you can get him to realise the character of the friends only while they are absent; their presence can be made to sweep away all criticism. If this succeeds, he can be induced to live, as I have known many humans live, for quite long periods, two parallel lives; he will not only appear to be, but actually be, a different man in each of the circles he frequents. Failing this, there is a subtler and more entertaining method. He can be made to take a positive pleasure in the perception that the two sides of his life are inconsistent. This is done by exploiting his vanity. He can be taught to enjoy kneeling beside the grocer on Sunday just because he remembers that the grocer could not possibly understand the urbane and mocking world which he inhabited on Saturday evening; and contrariwise, to enjoy the bawdy and blasphemy over the coffee with these admirable friends all the more because he is aware of a "deeper", "spiritual" world within him which they cannot understand. You see the idea — the worldly friends touch him on one side and the grocer on the other, and he is the complete, balanced, complex man who sees round them all. Thus, while being permanently treacherous to at least two sets of people, he will feel, instead of shame, a continual undercurrent of self-satisfaction. Finally, if all else fails, you can persuade him, in defiance of conscience, to continue the new acquaintance on the ground that he is, in some unspecified way, doing these people "good" by the mere fact of drinking their cocktails and laughing at their jokes, and that to cease to do so would be "priggish", "intolerant", and (of course) "Puritanical".

Meanwhile you will of course take the obvious precaution of seeing that this new development induces him to spend more than he can afford and to neglect his work and his mother. Her jealousy, and alarm, and his increasing evasiveness or rudeness, will be invaluable for the aggravation of the domestic tension,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XI

My dear Wormwood,

Everything is clearly going very well. I am specially glad to hear that the two new friends have now made him acquainted with their whole set. All these, as I find from the record office, are thoroughly reliable people; steady, consistent scoffers and worldlings who without any spectacular crimes are progressing quietly and comfortably towards our Father's house. You speak of their being great laughers. I trust this does not mean that you are under the impression that laughter as such is always in our favour. The point is worth some attention.

I divide the causes of human laughter into Joy, Fun, the Joke Proper, and Flippancy. You will see the first among friends and lovers reunited on the eve of a holiday. Among adults some pretext in the way of Jokes is usually provided, but the facility with which the smallest witticisms produce laughter at such a time shows that they are not the real cause. What that real cause is we do not know. Something like it is expressed in much of that detestable art which the humans call Music, and something like it occurs in Heaven — a meaningless acceleration in the rhythm of celestial experience, quite opaque to us. Laughter of this kind does us no good and should always be discouraged. Besides, the phenomenon is of itself disgusting and a direct insult to the realism, dignity, and austerity of Hell.

Fun is closely related to Joy — a sort of emotional froth arising from the play instinct. It is very little use to us. It can sometimes be used, of course, to divert humans from something else which the Enemy would like them to be feeling or doing: but in itself it has wholly undesirable tendencies; it promotes charity, courage, contentment, and many other evils.

The Joke Proper, which turns on sudden perception of incongruity, is a much more promising field. I am not thinking primarily of indecent or bawdy humour, which, though much relied upon by second-rate tempters, is often disappointing in its results. The truth is that humans are pretty clearly divided on this matter into two classes. There are some to whom "no passion is as serious as lust" and for whom an indecent story ceases to produce lasciviousness precisely in so far as it becomes funny: there are others in whom laughter and lust are excited at the same moment and by the same things. The first sort joke about sex because it gives rise to many

incongruities: the second cultivate incongruities because they afford a pretext for talking about sex. If your man is of the first type, bawdy humour will not help you — I shall never forget the hours which I wasted (hours to me of unbearable tedium) with one of my early patients in bars and smoking-rooms before I learned this rule. Find out which group the patient belongs to — and see that he does *not* find out.

The real use of Jokes or Humour is in quite a different direction, and it is specially promising among the English who take their "sense of humour" so seriously that a deficiency in this sense is almost the only deficiency at which they feel shame. Humour is for them the all-consoling and (mark this) the all-excusing, grace of life. Hence it is invaluable as a means of destroying shame. If a man simply lets others pay for him, he is "mean"; if he boasts of it in a jocular manner and twits his fellows with having been scored off, he is no longer "mean" but a comical fellow. Mere cowardice is shameful; cowardice boasted of with humorous exaggerations and grotesque gestures can be passed off as funny. Cruelty is shameful — unless the cruel man can represent it as a practical joke. A thousand bawdy, or even blasphemous, jokes do not help towards a man's damnation so much as his discovery that almost anything he wants to do can be done, not only without the disapproval but with the admiration of his fellows, if only it can get itself treated as a Joke. And this temptation can be almost entirely hidden from your patient by that English seriousness about Humour. Any suggestion that there might be too much of it can be represented to him as "Puritanical" or as betraying a "lack of humour".

But flippancy is the best of all. In the first place it is very economical. Only a clever human can make a real Joke about virtue, or indeed about anything else; any of them can be trained to talk *as if* virtue were funny. Among flippant people the Joke is always assumed to have been made. No one actually makes it; but every serious subject is discussed in a manner which implies that they have already found a ridiculous side to it. If prolonged, the habit of Flippancy builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy that I know, and it is quite free from the dangers inherent in the other sources of laughter. It is a thousand miles away from joy: it deadens, instead of sharpening, the intellect; and it excites no affection between those who practice it,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XII

My dear Wormwood,

Obviously you are making excellent progress. My only fear is lest in attempting to hurry the patient you awaken him to a sense of his real position. For you and I, who see that position as it really is, must never forget how totally different it ought to appear to him. We know that we have introduced a change of direction in his course which is already carrying him out of his orbit around the Enemy; but he must be made to imagine that all the choices which have effected this change of course are trivial and revocable. He must not be allowed to suspect that he is now, however slowly, heading right away from the sun on a line which will carry him into the cold and dark of utmost space.

For this reason I am almost glad to hear that he is still a churchgoer and a communicant. I know there are dangers in this; but anything is better than that he should realise the break he has made with the first months of his Christian life. As long as he retains externally the habits of a Christian he can still be made to think of himself as one who has adopted a few new friends and amusements but whose spiritual state is much the same as it was six weeks ago. And while he thinks that, we do not have to contend with the explicit repentance of a definite, fully recognised, sin, but only with his vague, though uneasy, feeling that he hasn't been doing very well lately.

This dim uneasiness needs careful handling. If it gets too strong it may wake him up and spoil the whole game. On the other hand, if you suppress it entirely — which, by the by, the Enemy will probably not allow you to do — we lose an element in the situation which can be turned to good account. If such a feeling is allowed to live, but not allowed to become irresistible and flower into real repentance, it has one invaluable tendency. It increases the patient's reluctance to think about the Enemy. All humans at nearly all times have some such reluctance; but when thinking of Him involves facing and intensifying a whole vague cloud of half-conscious guilt, this reluctance is increased tenfold. They hate every idea that suggests Him, just as men in financial embarrassment hate the very sight of a pass-book. In this state your patient will not omit, but he will increasingly dislike, his religious duties. He will think about them as little as he feels he decently can beforehand, and forget them as soon as possible when they are over. A few

weeks ago you had to *tempt* him to unreality and inattention in his prayers: but now you will find him opening his arms to you and almost begging you to distract his purpose and benumb his heart. He will *want* his prayers to be unreal, for he will dread nothing so much as effective contact with the Enemy. His aim will be to let sleeping worms lie.

As this condition becomes more fully established, you will be gradually freed from the tiresome business of providing Pleasures as temptations. As the uneasiness and his reluctance to face it cut him off more and more from all real happiness, and as habit renders the pleasures of vanity and excitement and flippancy at once less pleasant and harder to forgo (for that is what habit fortunately does to a pleasure) you will find that anything or nothing is sufficient to attract his wandering attention. You no longer need a good book, which he really likes, to keep him from his prayers or his work or his sleep; a column of advertisements in yesterday's paper will do. You can make him waste his time not only in conversation he enjoys with people whom he likes, but in conversations with those he cares nothing about on subjects that bore him. You can make him do nothing at all for long periods. You can keep him up late at night, not roistering, but staring at a dead fire in a cold room. All the healthy and outgoing activities which we want him to avoid can be inhibited and *nothing* given in return, so that at last he may say, as one of my own patients said on his arrival down here, "I now see that I spent most of my life in doing *neither* what I ought *nor* what I liked". The Christians describe the Enemy as one "without whom Nothing is strong". And Nothing is very strong: strong enough to steal away a man's best years not in sweet sins but in a dreary flickering of the mind over it knows not what and knows not why, in the gratification of curiosities so feeble that the man is only half aware of them, in drumming of fingers and kicking of heels, in whistling tunes that he does not like, or in the long, dim labyrinth of reveries that have not even lust or ambition to give them a relish, but which, once chance association has started them, the creature is too weak and fuddled to shake off.

You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick.

Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one — the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XIII

My dear Wormwood,

It seems to me that you take a great many pages to tell a very simple story. The long and the short of it is that you have let the man slip through your fingers. The situation is very grave, and I really see no reason why I should try to shield you from the consequences of your inefficiency. A repentance and renewal of what the other side call “grace” on the scale which you describe is a defeat of the first order. It amounts to a second conversion — and probably on a deeper level than the first.

As you ought to have known, the asphyxiating cloud which prevented your attacking the patient on his walk back from the old mill, is a well-known phenomenon. It is the Enemy’s most barbarous weapon, and generally appears when He is directly present to the patient under certain modes not yet fully classified. Some humans are permanently surrounded by it and therefore inaccessible to us.

And now for your blunders. On your own showing you first of all allowed the patient to read a book he really enjoyed, because he enjoyed it and not in order to make clever remarks about it to his new friends. In the second place, you allowed him to walk down to the old mill and have tea there — a walk through country he really likes, and taken alone. In other words you allowed him two real positive Pleasures. Were you so ignorant as not to see the danger of this? The characteristic of Pains and Pleasures is that they are unmistakably real, and therefore, as far as they go, give the man who feels them a touchstone of reality. Thus if you had been trying to damn your man by the Romantic method — by making him a kind of Childe Harold or Werther submerged in self-pity for imaginary distresses — you would try to protect him at all costs from any real pain; because, of course, five minutes’ genuine toothache would reveal the romantic sorrows for the nonsense they were and unmask your whole strategem. But you were trying to damn your patient by the World, that is by palming off vanity, bustle, irony, and expensive tedium as pleasures. How can you have failed to see that a *real* pleasure was the last thing you ought to have let him meet? Didn’t you foresee that it would just kill by contrast all the trumpery which you have been so laboriously teaching him to value? And that the sort of pleasure which the book and the walk gave him was the most

dangerous of all? That it would peel off from his sensibility the kind of crust you have been forming on it, and make him feel that he was coming home, recovering himself? As a preliminary to detaching him from the Enemy, you wanted to detach him from himself, and had made some progress in doing so. Now, all that is undone.

Of course I know that the Enemy also wants to detach men from themselves, but in a different way. Remember always, that He really likes the little vermin, and sets an absurd value on the distinctness of every one of them. When He talks of their losing their selves, He only means abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid, sincerely) that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever. Hence, while He is delighted to see them sacrificing even their innocent wills to His, He hates to see them drifting away from their own nature for any other reason. And we should always encourage them to do so. The deepest likings and impulses of any man are the raw material, the starting-point, with which the Enemy has furnished him. To get him away from those is therefore always a point gained; even in things indifferent it is always desirable to substitute the standards of the World, or convention, or fashion, for a human's own real likings and dislikings. I myself would carry this very far. I would make it a rule to eradicate from my patient any strong personal taste which is not actually a sin, even if it is something quite trivial such as a fondness for county cricket or collecting stamps or drinking cocoa. Such things, I grant you, have nothing of virtue in them; but there is a sort of innocence and humility and self-forgetfulness about them which I distrust. The man who truly and disinterestedly enjoys any one thing in the world, for its own sake, and without caring twopence what other people say about it, is by that very fact fore-armed against some of our subtlest modes of attack. You should always try to make the patient abandon the people or food or books he really likes in favour of the "best" people, the "right" food, the "important" books. I have known a human defended from strong temptations to social ambition by a still stronger taste for tripe and onions.

It remains to consider how we can retrieve this disaster. The great thing is to prevent his doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. Let the little brute wallow in it. Let him, if he has any bent that way, write a book about it; that is often an excellent way of sterilising the seeds which

the Enemy plants in a human soul. Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will. As one of the humans has said, active habits are strengthened by repetition but passive ones are weakened. The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XIV

My dear Wormwood,

The most alarming thing in your last account of the patient is that he is making none of those confident resolutions which marked his original conversion. No more lavish promises of perpetual virtue, I gather; not even the expectation of an endowment of "grace" for life, but only a hope for the daily and hourly pittance to meet the daily and hourly temptation! This is very bad.

I see only one thing to do at the moment. Your patient has become humble; have you drawn his attention to the fact? All virtues are less formidable to us once the man is aware that he has them, but this is specially true of humility. Catch him at the moment when he is really poor in spirit and smuggle into his mind the gratifying reflection, "By jove! I'm being humble", and almost immediately pride — pride at his own humility — will appear. If he awakes to the danger and tries to smother this new form of pride, make him proud of his attempt — and so on, through as many stages as you please. But don't try this too long, for fear you awake his sense of humour and proportion, in which case he will merely laugh at you and go to bed.

But there are other profitable ways of fixing his attention on the virtue of Humility. By this virtue, as by all the others, our Enemy wants to turn the man's attention away from self to Him, and to the man's neighbours. All the abjection and self-hatred are designed, in the long run, solely for this end; unless they attain this end they do us little harm; and they may even do us good if they keep the man concerned with himself, and, above all, if self-contempt can be made the starting-point for contempt of other selves, and thus for gloom, cynicism, and cruelty.

You must therefore conceal from the patient the true end of Humility. Let him think of it not as self-forgetfulness but as a certain kind of opinion (namely, a low opinion) of his own talents and character. Some talents, I gather, he really has. Fix in his mind the idea that humility consists in trying to believe those talents to be less valuable than he believes them to be. No doubt they *are* in fact less valuable than he believes, but that is not the point. The great thing is to make him value an opinion for some quality other than truth, thus introducing an element of dishonesty and make-

believe into the heart of what otherwise threatens to become a virtue. By this method thousands of humans have been brought to think that humility means pretty women trying to believe they are ugly and clever men trying to believe they are fools. And since what they are trying to believe may, in some cases, be manifest nonsense, they cannot succeed in believing it and we have the chance of keeping their minds endlessly revolving on themselves in an effort to achieve the impossible. To anticipate the Enemy's strategy, we must consider His aims. The Enemy wants to bring the man to a state of mind in which he could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another. The Enemy wants him, in the end, to be so free from any bias in his own favour that he can rejoice in his own talents as frankly and gratefully as in his neighbour's talents — or in a sunrise, an elephant, or a waterfall. He wants each man, in the long run, to be able to recognise all creatures (even himself) as glorious and excellent things. He wants to kill their animal self-love as soon as possible; but it is His long-term policy, I fear, to restore to them a new kind of self-love — a charity and gratitude for all selves, including their own; when they have really learned to love their neighbours as themselves, they will be allowed to love themselves as their neighbours. For we must never forget what is the most repellent and inexplicable trait in our Enemy; He *really* loves the hairless bipeds He has created and always gives back to them with His right hand what He has taken away with His left.

His whole effort, therefore, will be to get the man's mind off the subject of his own value altogether. He would rather the man thought himself a great architect or a great poet and then forgot about it, than that he should spend much time and pains trying to think himself a bad one. Your efforts to instil either vainglory or false modesty into the patient will therefore be met from the Enemy's side with the obvious reminder that a man is not usually called upon to have an opinion of his own talents at all, since he can very well go on improving them to the best of his ability without deciding on his own precise niche in the temple of Fame. You must try to exclude this reminder from the patient's consciousness at all costs. The Enemy will also try to render real in the patient's mind a doctrine which they all profess but find it difficult to bring home to their feelings — the doctrine that they did not create themselves, that their talents were given them, and that they

might as well be proud of the colour of their hair. But always and by all methods the Enemy's aim will be to get the patient's mind off such questions, and yours will be to fix it on them. Even of his sins the Enemy does not want him to think too much: once they are repented, the sooner the man turns his attention outward, the better the Enemy is pleased,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XV

My dear Wormwood,

I had noticed, of course, that the humans were having a lull in their European war — what they naïvely call "*The War*"! — and am not surprised that there is a corresponding lull in the patient's anxieties. Do we want to encourage this, or to keep him worried? Tortured fear and stupid confidence are both desirable states of mind. Our choice between them raises important questions.

The humans live in time but our Enemy destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which our Enemy has of reality as a whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered them. He would therefore have them continually concerned either with eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the Present — either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from, Himself, or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure.

Our business is to get them away from the eternal, and from the Present. With this in view, we sometimes tempt a human (say a widow or a scholar) to live in the Past. But this is of limited value, for they have some real knowledge of the past and it has a determinate nature and, to that extent, resembles eternity. It is far better to make them live in the Future. Biological necessity makes all their passions point in that direction already, so that thought about the Future inflames hope and fear. Also, it is unknown to them, so that in making them think about it we make them think of unrealities. In a word, the Future is, of all things, the thing *least like* eternity. It is the most completely temporal part of time — for the Past is frozen and no longer flows, and the Present is all lit up with eternal rays. Hence the encouragement we have given to all those schemes of thought such as Creative Evolution, Scientific Humanism, or Communism, which fix men's affections on the Future, on the very core of temporality. Hence nearly all vices are rooted in the future. Gratitude looks to the past and love

to the present; fear, avarice, lust, and ambition look ahead. Do not think lust an exception. When the present pleasure arrives, the sin (which alone interests us) is already over. The pleasure is just the part of the process which we regret and would exclude if we could do so without losing the sin; it is the part contributed by the Enemy, and therefore experienced in a Present. The sin, which is our contribution, looked forward.

To be sure, the Enemy wants men to think of the Future too — just so much as is necessary for *now* planning the acts of justice or charity which will probably be their duty tomorrow. The duty of planning the morrow's work is *today's* duty; though its material is borrowed from the future, the duty, like all duties, is in the Present. This is not straw splitting. He does not want men to give the Future their hearts, to place their treasure in it. We do. His ideal is a man who, having worked all day for the good of posterity (if that is his vocation), washes his mind of the whole subject, commits the issue to Heaven, and returns at once to the patience or gratitude demanded by the moment that is passing over him. But we want a man hag-ridden by the Future — haunted by visions of an imminent heaven or hell upon earth — ready to break the Enemy's commands in the present if by so doing we make him think he can attain the one or avert the other — dependent for his faith on the success or failure of schemes whose end he will not live to see. We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest, nor kind, nor happy *now*, but always using as mere fuel wherewith to heap the altar of the future every real gift which is offered them in the Present.

It follows then, in general, and others things being equal, that it is better for your patient to be filled with anxiety or hope (it doesn't much matter which) about this war than for him to be living in the present. But the phrase "living in the present" is ambiguous. It may describe a process which is really just as much concerned with the Future as anxiety itself. Your man may be untroubled about the Future, not because he is concerned with the Present, but because he has persuaded himself that the Future is going to be agreeable. As long as that is the real course of his tranquillity, his tranquillity will do us good, because it is only piling up more disappointment, and therefore more impatience, for him when his false hopes are dashed. If, on the other hand, he is aware that horrors may be in store for him and is praying for the virtues, wherewith to meet them, and meanwhile concerning himself with the Present because there, and there

alone, all duty, all grace, all knowledge, and all pleasure dwell, his state is very undesirable and should be attacked at once. Here again, our Philological Arm has done good work; try the word “complacency” on him. But, of course, it is most likely that he is “living in the Present” for none of these reasons but simply because his health is good and he is enjoying his work. The phenomenon would then be merely natural. All the same, I should break it up if I were you. No natural phenomenon is really in our favour. And anyway, why *should* the creature be happy?

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XVI

My dear Wormwood,

You mentioned casually in your last letter that the patient has continued to attend one church, and one only, since he was converted, and that he is not wholly pleased with it. May I ask what you are about? Why have I no report on the causes of his fidelity to the parish church? Do you realise that unless it is due to indifference it is a very bad thing? Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for the church that "suits" him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.

The reasons are obvious. In the first place the parochial organisation should always be attacked, because, being a unity of place and not of likings, it brings people of different classes and psychology together in the kind of unity the Enemy desires. The congregational principle, on the other hand, makes each church into a kind of club, and finally, if all goes well, into a coterie or faction. In the second place, the search for a "suitable" church makes the man a critic where the Enemy wants him to be a pupil. What He wants of the layman in church is an attitude which may, indeed, be critical in the sense of rejecting what is false or unhelpful, but which is wholly uncritical in the sense that it does not appraise — does not waste time in thinking about what it rejects, but lays itself open in uncommenting, humble receptivity to any nourishment that is going. (You see how grovelling, how unspiritual, how irredeemably vulgar He is!) This attitude, especially during sermons, creates the condition (most hostile to our whole policy) in which platitudes can become really audible to a human soul. There is hardly any sermon, or any book, which may not be dangerous to us if it is received in this temper. So pray bestir yourself and send this fool the round of the neighbouring churches as soon as possible. Your record up to date has not given us much satisfaction.

The two churches nearest to him, I have looked up in the office. Both have certain claims. At the first of these the Vicar is a man who has been so long engaged in watering down the faith to make it easier for a supposedly incredulous and hard-headed congregation that it is now he who shocks his parishioners with his unbelief, not *vice versa*. He has undermined many a soul's Christianity. His conduct of the services is also admirable. In order to

spare the laity all “difficulties” he has deserted both the lectionary and the appointed psalms and now, without noticing it, revolves endlessly round the little treadmill of his fifteen favourite psalms and twenty favourite lessons. We are thus safe from the danger that any truth not already familiar to him and to his flock should ever reach them through Scripture. But perhaps your patient is not quite silly enough for this church — or not yet?

At the other church we have Fr. Spike. The humans are often puzzled to understand the range of his opinions — why he is one day almost a Communist and the next not far from some kind of theocratic Fascism — one day a scholastic, and the next prepared to deny human reason altogether — one day immersed in politics, and, the day after, declaring that all states of this world are *equally* “under judgment”. We, of course, see the connecting link, which is Hatred. The man cannot bring himself to preach anything which is not calculated to shock, grieve, puzzle, or humiliate his parents and their friends. A sermon which such people could accept would be to him as insipid as a poem which they could scan. There is also a promising streak of dishonesty in him; we are teaching him to say “The teaching of the Church is” when he really means “I’m almost sure I read recently in Maritain or someone of that sort”. But I must warn you that he has one fatal defect: he really believes. And this may yet mar all.

But there is one good point which both these churches have in common — they are both party churches. I think I warned you before that if your patient can’t be kept out of the Church, he ought at least to be violently attached to some party within it. I don’t mean on really doctrinal issues; about those, the more lukewarm he is the better. And it isn’t the doctrines on which we chiefly depend for producing malice. The real fun is working up hatred between those who *say* “mass” and those who *say* “holy communion” when neither party could possibly state the difference between, say, Hooker’s doctrine and Thomas Aquinas’, in any form which would hold water for five minutes. And all the purely indifferent things — candles and clothes and what not — are an admirable ground for our activities. We have quite removed from men’s minds what that pestilent fellow Paul used to teach about food and other unessentials — namely, that the human without scruples should always give in to the human with scruples. You would think they could not fail to see the application. You would expect to find the “low” churchman genuflecting and crossing himself lest the weak conscience of his “high” brother should be moved to

irreverence, and the “high” one refraining from these exercises lest he should betray his “low” brother into idolatry. And so it would have been but for our ceaseless labour. Without that the variety of usage within the Church of England might have become a positive hotbed of charity and humility,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XVII

My dear Wormwood,

The contemptuous way in which you spoke of gluttony as a means of catching souls, in your last letter, only shows your ignorance. One of the great achievements of the last hundred years has been to deaden the human conscience on that subject, so that by now you will hardly find a sermon preached or a conscience troubled about it in the whole length and breadth of Europe. This has largely been effected by concentrating all our efforts on gluttony of Delicacy, not gluttony of Excess. Your patient's mother, as I learn from the dossier and you might have learned from Glubose, is a good example. She would be astonished — one day, I hope, *will* be — to learn that her whole life is enslaved to this kind of sensuality, which is quite concealed from her by the fact that the quantities involved are small. But what do quantities matter, provided we can use a human belly and palate to produce querulousness, impatience, uncharitableness, and self-concern? Glubose has this old woman well in hand. She is a positive terror to hostesses and servants. She is always turning from what has been offered her to say with a demure little sigh and a smile "Oh please, please . . . *all* I want is a cup of tea, weak but not too weak, and the teeniest weeniest bit of really crisp toast". You see? Because what she wants is smaller and less costly than what has been set before her, she never recognises as gluttony her determination to get what she wants, however troublesome it may be to others. At the very moment of indulging her appetite she believes that she is practising temperance. In a crowded restaurant she gives a little scream at the plate which some overworked waitress has set before her and says, "Oh, that's far, far too much! Take it away and bring me about a quarter of it". If challenged, she would say she was doing this to avoid waste; in reality she does it because the particular shade of delicacy to which we have enslaved her is offended by the sight of more food than she happens to want.

The real value of the quiet, unobtrusive work which Glubose has been doing for years on this old woman can be gauged by the way in which her belly now dominates her whole life. The woman is in what may be called the "All-I-want" state of mind. *All* she wants is a cup of tea properly made, or an egg properly boiled, or a slice of bread properly toasted. But she never finds any servant or any friend who can do these simple things "properly"

— because her “properly” conceals an insatiable demand for the exact, and almost impossible, palatal pleasures which she imagines she remembers from the past; a past described by her as “the days when you could get good servants” but known to us as the days when her senses were more easily pleased and she had pleasures of other kinds which made her less dependent on those of the table. Meanwhile, the daily disappointment produces daily ill temper: cooks give notice and friendships are cooled. If ever the Enemy introduces into her mind a faint suspicion that she is too interested in food, Glubose counters it by suggesting to her that she doesn’t mind what she eats herself but “does like to have things nice for her boy”. In fact, of course, her greed has been one of the chief sources of his domestic discomfort for many years.

Now your patient is his mother’s son. While working your hardest, quite rightly, on other fronts, you must not neglect a little quiet infiltration in respect of gluttony. Being a male, he is not so likely to be caught by the “*All* I want” camouflage. Males are best turned into gluttons with the help of their vanity. They ought to be made to think themselves very knowing about food, to pique themselves on having found the only restaurant in the town where steaks are really “properly” cooked. What begins as vanity can then be gradually turned into habit. But, however you approach it, the great thing is to bring him into the state in which the denial of any one indulgence — it matters not which, champagne or tea, *sole colbert* or cigarettes— “puts him out”, for then his charity, justice, and obedience are all at your mercy.

Mere excess in food is much less valuable than delicacy. Its chief use is as a kind of artillery preparation for attacks on chastity. On that, as on every other subject, keep your man in a condition of false spirituality. Never let him notice the medical aspect. Keep him wondering what pride or lack of faith has delivered him into your hands when a simple enquiry into what he has been eating or drinking for the last twenty-four hours would show him whence your ammunition comes and thus enable him by a very little abstinence to imperil your lines of communication. If he *must* think of the medical side of chastity, feed him the grand lie which we have made the English humans believe, that physical exercise in excess and consequent fatigue are specially favourable to this virtue. How they can believe this, in face of the notorious lustfulness of sailors and soldiers, may well be asked. But we used the schoolmasters to put the story about — men who were really interested in chastity as an excuse for games and therefore

recommended games as an aid to chastity. But this whole business is too large to deal with at the tail-end of a letter,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XVIII

My dear Wormwood,

Even under Slubgob you must have learned at college the routine technique of sexual temptation, and since, for us spirits, this whole subject is one of considerable tedium (though necessary as part of our training) I will pass it over. But on the larger issues involved I think you have a good deal to learn.

The Enemy's demand on humans takes the form of a dilemma; *either* complete abstinence *or* unmitigated monogamy. Ever since our Father's first great victory, we have rendered the former very difficult to them. The latter, for the last few centuries, we have been closing up as a way of escape. We have done this through the poets and novelists by persuading the humans that a curious, and usually short-lived, experience which they call "being in love" is the only respectable ground for marriage; that marriage can, and ought to, render this excitement permanent; and that a marriage which does not do so is no longer binding. This idea is our parody of an idea that came from the Enemy.

The whole philosophy of Hell rests on recognition of the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. My good is my good and your good is yours. What one gains another loses. Even an inanimate object is what it is by excluding all other objects from the space it occupies; if it expands, it does so by thrusting other objects aside or by absorbing them. A self does the same. With beasts the absorption takes the form of eating; for us, it means the sucking of will and freedom out of a weaker self into a stronger. "To be" *means* "to be in competition".

Now the Enemy's philosophy is nothing more nor less than one continued attempt to evade this very obvious truth. He aims at a contradiction. Things are to be many, yet somehow also one. The good of one self is to be the good of another. This impossibility He calls *love*, and this same monotonous panacea can be detected under all He does and even all He is — or claims to be. Thus He is not content, even Himself, to be a sheer arithmetical unity; He claims to be three as well as one, in order that this nonsense about Love may find a foothold in His own nature. At the other end of the scale, He introduces into matter that obscene invention the

organism, in which the parts are perverted from their natural destiny of competition and made to co-operate.

His real motive for fixing on sex as the method of reproduction among humans is only too apparent from the use He has made of it. Sex might have been, from our point of view, quite innocent. It might have been merely one more mode in which a stronger self preyed upon a weaker — as it is, indeed, among the spiders where the bride concludes her nuptials by eating her groom. But in the humans the Enemy has gratuitously associated affection between the parties with sexual desire. He has also made the offspring dependent on the parents and given the parents an impulse to support it — thus producing the Family, which is like the organism, only worse; for the members are more distinct, yet also united in a more conscious and responsible way. The whole thing, in fact, turns out to be simply one more device for dragging in Love.

Now comes the joke. The Enemy described a married couple as “one flesh”. He did not say “a happily married couple” or “a couple who married because they were in love”, but you can make the humans ignore that. You can also make them forget that the man they call Paul did not confine it to *married* couples. Mere copulation, for him, makes “one flesh”. You can thus get the humans to accept as rhetorical eulogies of “being in love” what were in fact plain descriptions of the real significance of sexual intercourse. The truth is that wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured. From the true statement that this transcendental relation was intended to produce, and, if obediently entered into, too often *will* produce, affection and the family, humans can be made to infer the false belief that the blend of affection, fear, and desire which they call “being in love” is the only thing that makes marriage either happy or holy. The error is easy to produce because “being in love” does very often, in Western Europe, precede marriages which are made in obedience to the Enemy’s designs, that is, with the intention of fidelity, fertility and good will; just as religious emotion very often, but not always, attends conversion. In other words, the humans are to be encouraged to regard as the basis for marriage a highly-coloured and distorted version of something the Enemy really promises as its result. Two advantages follow. In the first place, humans who have not the gift of continence can be deterred from seeking marriage as a solution because they do not find themselves “in

love”, and, thanks to us, the idea of marrying with any other motive seems to them low and cynical. Yes, they think that. They regard the intention of loyalty to a partnership for mutual help, for the preservation of chastity, and for the transmission of life, as something lower than a storm of emotion. (Don’t neglect to make your man think the marriage-service very offensive.) In the second place any sexual infatuation whatever, so long as it intends marriage, will be regarded as “love”, and “love” will be held to excuse a man from all the guilt, and to protect him from all the consequences, of marrying a heathen, a fool, or a wanton. But more of this in my next,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XIX

My dear Wormwood,

I have been thinking very hard about the question in your last letter. If, as I have clearly shown, all selves are by their very nature in competition, and therefore the Enemy's idea of Love is a contradiction in terms, what becomes of my reiterated warning that He really loves the human vermin and really desires their freedom and continued existence? I hope, my dear boy, you have not shown my letters to anyone. Not that it matters of course. Anyone would see that the appearance of heresy into which I have fallen is purely accidental. By the way, I hope you understood, too, that some apparently uncomplimentary references to Slubgob were purely jocular. I really have the highest respect for him. And, of course, some things I said about not shielding you from the authorities were not seriously meant. You can trust me to look after your interests. But do keep everything under lock and key.

The truth is I slipped by mere carelessness into saying that the Enemy really loves the humans. That, of course, is an impossibility. He is one being, they are distinct from Him. Their good cannot be His. All His talk about Love must be a disguise for something else — He must have some *real* motive for creating them and taking so much trouble about them. The reason one comes to talk as if He really had this impossible Love is our utter failure to find out that real motive. What does He stand to make out of them? That is the insoluble question. I do not see that it can do any harm to tell you that this very problem was a chief cause of Our Father's quarrel with the Enemy. When the creation of man was first mooted and when, even at that stage, the Enemy freely confessed that he foresaw a certain episode about a cross, Our Father very naturally sought an interview and asked for an explanation. The Enemy gave no reply except to produce the cock-and-bull story about disinterested love which He has been circulating ever since. This Our Father naturally could not accept. He implored the Enemy to lay His cards on the table, and gave Him every opportunity. He admitted that he felt a real anxiety to know the secret; the Enemy replied "I wish with all my heart that you did". It was, I imagine, at this stage in the interview that Our Father's disgust at such an unprovoked lack of confidence caused him to remove himself an infinite distance from the

Presence with a suddenness which has given rise to the ridiculous enemy story that he was forcibly thrown out of Heaven. Since then, we have begun to see why our Oppressor was so secretive. His throne depends on the secret. Members of His faction have frequently admitted that if ever we came to understand what He means by Love, the war would be over and we should re-enter Heaven. And there lies the great task. We know that He cannot really love: nobody can: it doesn't make sense. If we could only find out what He is *really* up to! Hypothesis after hypothesis has been tried, and still we can't find out. Yet we must never lose hope; more and more complicated theories, fuller and fuller collections of data, richer rewards for researchers who make progress, more and more terrible punishments for those who fail — all this, pursued and accelerated to the very end of time, cannot, surely, fail to succeed.

You complain that my last letter does not make it clear whether I regard *being in love* as a desirable state for a human or not. But really, Wormwood, that is the sort of question one expects *them* to ask! Leave them to discuss whether "Love", or patriotism, or celibacy, or candles on altars, or teetotalism, or education, are "good" or "bad". Can't you see there's no answer? Nothing matters at all except the tendency of a given state of mind, in given circumstances, to move a particular patient at a particular moment nearer to the Enemy or nearer to us. Thus it would be quite a good thing to make the patient decide that "love" is "good" or "bad". If he is an arrogant man with a contempt for the body really based on delicacy but mistaken by him for purity — and one who takes pleasure in flouting what most of his fellows approve — by all means let him decide against love. Instil into him an overweening asceticism and then, when you have separated his sexuality from all that might humanise it, weigh in on him with it in some much more brutal and cynical form. If, on the other hand, he is an emotional, gullible man, feed him on minor poets and fifth-rate novelists of the old school until you have made him believe that "Love" is both irresistible and somehow intrinsically meritorious. This belief is not much help, I grant you, in producing casual unchastity; but it is an incomparable recipe for prolonged, "noble", romantic, tragic adulteries, ending, if all goes well, in murders and suicides. Failing that, it can be used to steer the patient into a useful marriage. For marriage, though the Enemy's invention, has its uses. There must be several young women in your patient's neighbourhood who would render the Christian life intensely difficult to him if only you could

persuade him to marry one of them. Please send me a report on this when you next write. In the meantime, get it quite clear in your own mind that this state of *falling in love* is not, in itself, necessarily, favourable either to us or to the other side. It is simply an occasion which we and the Enemy are both trying to exploit. Like most of the other things which humans are excited about, such as health and sickness, age and youth, or war and peace, it is, from the point of view of the spiritual life, mainly raw material,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XX

My dear Wormwood,

I note with great displeasure that the Enemy has, for the time being, put a forcible end to your direct attacks on the patient's chastity. You ought to have known that He always does in the end, and you ought to have stopped before you reached that stage. For as things are, your man has now discovered the dangerous truth that these attacks don't last forever; consequently you cannot use again what is, after all, our best weapon — the belief of ignorant humans, that there is no hope of getting rid of us except by yielding. I suppose you've tried persuading him that chastity is unhealthy?

I haven't yet got a report from you on young women in the neighbourhood. I should like it at once, for if we can't use his sexuality to make him unchaste we must try to use it for the promotion of a desirable marriage. In the meantime I would like to give you some hint about the type of woman — I mean the physical type — which he should be encouraged to fall in love with if "falling in love" is the best we can manage.

In a rough and ready way, of course, this question is decided for us by spirits far deeper down in the Lowerarchy than you and I. It is the business of these great masters to produce in every age a general misdirection of what may be called sexual "taste". This they do by working through the small circle of popular artists, dressmakers, actresses and advertisers who determine the fashionable type. The aim is to guide each sex away from those members of the other with whom spiritually helpful, happy, and fertile marriages are most likely. Thus we have now for many centuries triumphed over nature to the extent of making certain secondary characteristics of the male (such as the beard) disagreeable to nearly all the females — and there is more in that than you might suppose. As regards the male taste we have varied a good deal. At one time we have directed it to the statuesque and aristocratic type of beauty, mixing men's vanity with their desires and encouraging the race to breed chiefly from the most arrogant and prodigal women. At another, we have selected an exaggeratedly feminine type, faint and languishing, so that folly and cowardice, and all the general falseness and littleness of mind which go with them, shall be at a premium. At present we are on the opposite tack. The age of jazz has succeeded the age

of the waltz, and we now teach men to like women whose bodies are scarcely distinguishable from those of boys. Since this is a kind of beauty even more transitory than most, we thus aggravate the female's chronic horror of growing old (with many excellent results) and render her less willing and less able to bear children. And that is not all. We have engineered a great increase in the licence which society allows to the representation of the apparent nude (not the real nude) in art, and its exhibition on the stage or the bathing beach. It is all a fake, of course; the figures in the popular art are falsely drawn; the real women in bathing suits or tights are actually pinched in and propped up to make them appear firmer and more slender and more boyish than nature allows a full-grown woman to be. Yet at the same time, the modern world is taught to believe that it is being "frank" and "healthy" and getting back to nature. As a result we are more and more directing the desires of men to something which does not exist — making the rôle of the eye in sexuality more and more important and at the same time making its demands more and more impossible. What follows you can easily forecast!

That is the general strategy of the moment. But inside that framework you will still find it possible to encourage your patient's desires in one of two directions. You will find, if you look carefully into any human's heart, that he is haunted by at least two imaginary women — a terrestrial and an infernal Venus, and that his desire differs qualitatively according to its object. There is one type for which his desire is such as to be naturally amenable to the Enemy — readily mixed with charity, readily obedient to marriage, coloured all through with that golden light of reverence and naturalness which we detest; there is another type which he desires brutally, and desires to desire brutally, a type best used to draw him away from marriage altogether but which, even within marriage, he would tend to treat as a slave, an idol, or an accomplice. His love for the first might involve what the Enemy calls evil, but only accidentally; the man would wish that she was not someone else's wife and be sorry that he could not love her lawfully. But in the second type, the felt evil is what he wants; it is that "tang" in the flavour which he is after. In the face, it is the visible animality, or sulkiness, or craft, or cruelty which he likes and in the body, something quite different from what he ordinarily calls Beauty, something he may even, in a sane hour, describe as ugliness, but which, by our art, can be made to play on the raw nerve of his private obsession.

The real use of the infernal Venus is, no doubt, as prostitute or mistress. But if your man is a Christian, and if he has been well trained in nonsense about irresistible and all-excusing “Love”, he can often be induced to marry her. And that is very well worth bringing about. You will have failed as regards fornication and solitary vice; but there are other, and more indirect, methods of using a man’s sexuality to his undoing. And, by the way, they are not only efficient, but delightful; the unhappiness produced is of a very lasting and exquisite kind,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXI

My dear Wormwood,

Yes. A period of sexual temptation is an excellent time for working in a subordinate attack on the patient's peevishness. It may even be the main attack, as long as he thinks it the subordinate one. But here, as in everything else, the way must be prepared for your moral assault by darkening his intellect.

Men are not angered by mere misfortune but by misfortune conceived as injury. And the sense of injury depends on the feeling that a legitimate claim has been denied. The more claims on life, therefore, that your patient can be induced to make, the more often he will feel injured and, as a result, ill-tempered. Now you will have noticed that nothing throws him into a passion so easily as to find a tract of time which he reckoned on having at his own disposal unexpectedly taken from him. It is the unexpected visitor (when he looked forward to a quiet evening), or the friend's talkative wife (turning up when he looked forward to a *tête-à-tête* with the friend), that throw him out of gear. Now he is not yet so uncharitable or slothful that these small demands on his courtesy are *in themselves* too much for it. They anger him because he regards his time as his own and feels that it is being stolen. You must therefore zealously guard in his mind the curious assumption, "My time is my own". Let him have the feeling that he starts each day as the lawful possessor of twenty-four hours. Let him feel as a grievous tax that portion of this property which he has to make over to his employers, and as a generous donation that further portion which he allows to religious duties. But what he must never be permitted to doubt is that the total from which these deductions have been made was, in some mysterious sense, his own personal birthright.

You have here a delicate task. The assumption which you want him to go on making is so absurd that, if once it is questioned, even we cannot find a shred of argument in its defence. The man can neither make, nor retain, one moment of time; it all comes to him by pure gift; he might as well regard the sun and moon as his chattels. He is also, in theory, committed to a total service of the Enemy; and if the Enemy appeared to him in bodily form and demanded that total service for even one day, he would not refuse. He would be greatly relieved if that one day involved nothing harder than

listening to the conversation of a foolish woman; and he would be relieved almost to the pitch of disappointment if for one half-hour in that day the Enemy said “Now you may go and amuse yourself”. Now if he thinks about his assumption for a moment, even he is bound to realise that he is actually in this situation every day. When I speak of preserving this assumption in his mind, therefore, the last thing I mean you to do is to furnish him with arguments in its defence. There aren’t any. Your task is purely negative. Don’t let his thoughts come anywhere near it. Wrap a darkness about it; and in the centre of that darkness let his sense of ownership-in-Time lie silent, uninspected, and operative.

The sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged. The humans are always putting up claims to ownership which sound equally funny in Heaven and in Hell and we must keep them doing so. Much of the modern resistance to chastity comes from men’s belief that they “own” their bodies — those vast and perilous estates, pulsating with the energy that made the worlds, in which they find themselves without their consent and from which they are ejected at the pleasure of Another! It is as if a royal child whom his father has placed, for love’s sake, in titular command of some great province, under the real rule of wise counsellors, should come to fancy he really owns the cities, the forests, and the corn, in the same way as he owns the bricks on the nursery floor.

We produce this sense of ownership not only by pride but by confusion. We teach them not to notice the different senses of the possessive pronoun — the finely graded differences that run from “my boots” through “my dog”, “my servant”, “my wife”, “my father”, “my master” and “my country”, to “my God”. They can be taught to reduce all these senses to that of “my boots”, the “my” of ownership. Even in the nursery a child can be taught to mean by “my Teddy-bear” *not* the old imagined recipient of affection to whom it stands in a special relation (for that is what the Enemy will teach them to mean if we are not careful) but “the bear I can pull to pieces if I like”. And at the other end of the scale, we have taught men to say “My God” in a sense not really very different from “My boots”, meaning “The God on whom I have a claim for my distinguished services and whom I exploit from the pulpit — the God I have done a corner in”.

And all the time the joke is that the word “Mine” in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything. In the long run either Our Father or the Enemy will say “Mine” of each thing that exists,

and specially of each man. They will find out in the end, never fear, to whom their time, their souls, and their bodies really belong — certainly not to *them*, whatever happens. At present the Enemy says "Mine" of everything on the pedantic, legalistic ground that He made it: Our Father hopes in the end to say "Mine" of all things on the more realistic and dynamic ground of conquest,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXII

My dear Wormwood,

So! Your man is in love — and in the worst kind he could possibly have fallen into — and with a girl who does not even appear in the report you sent me. You may be interested to learn that the little misunderstanding with the Secret Police which you tried to raise about some unguarded expressions in one of my letters has been tided over. If you were reckoning on that to secure my good offices, you will find yourself mistaken. You shall pay for that as well as for your other blunders. Meanwhile I enclose a little booklet, just issued, on the new House of Correction for Incompetent Tempters. It is profusely illustrated and you will not find a dull page in it.

I have looked up this girl's dossier and am horrified at what I find. Not only a Christian but such a Christian — a vile, sneaking, simpering, demure, monosyllabic, mouse-like, watery, insignificant, virginal, bread-and-butter miss. The little brute. She makes me vomit. She stinks and scalds through the very pages of the dossier. It drives me mad, the way the world has worsened. We'd have had her to the arena in the old days. That's what her sort is made for. Not that she'd do much good there, either. A two-faced little cheat (I know the sort) who looks as if she'd faint at the sight of blood and then dies with a smile. A cheat every way. Looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth and yet has a satirical wit. The sort of creature who'd find *ME* funny! Filthy insipid little prude — and yet ready to fall into this booby's arms like any other breeding animal. Why doesn't the Enemy blast her for it, if He's so moonstruck by virginity — instead of looking on there, grinning?

He's a hedonist at heart. All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a façade. Or only like foam on the sea shore. Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure. He makes no secret of it; at His right hand are "pleasures for evermore". Ugh! I don't think He has the least inkling of that high and austere mystery to which we rise in the Miserific Vision. He's vulgar, Wormwood. He has a bourgeois mind. He has filled His world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least — sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be *twisted* before it's any use to us. We fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally

on our side. (Not that that excuses *you*. I'll settle with you presently. You have always hated me and been insolent when you dared.)

Then, of course, he gets to know this woman's family and whole circle. Could you not see that the very house she lives in is one that he ought never to have entered? The whole place reeks of that deadly odour. The very gardener, though he has only been there five years, is beginning to acquire it. Even guests, after a week-end visit, carry some of the smell away with them. The dog and the cat are tainted with it. And a house full of the impenetrable mystery. We are certain (it is a matter of first principles) that each member of the family must in some way be making capital out of the others — but we can't find out how. They guard as jealously as the Enemy Himself the secret of what really lies behind this pretence of disinterested love. The whole house and garden is one vast obscenity. It bears a sickening resemblance to the description one human writer made of Heaven: "the regions where there is only life and therefore all that is not music is silence".

Music and silence — how I detest them both! How thankful we should be that ever since our Father entered Hell — though longer ago than humans, reckoning in light years, could express — no square inch of infernal space and no moment of infernal time has been surrendered to either of those abominable forces, but all has been occupied by Noise — Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile — Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples, and impossible desires. We will make the whole universe a noise in the end. We have already made great strides in this direction as regards the Earth. The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the end. But I admit we are not yet loud enough, or anything like it. Research is in progress. Meanwhile *you*, disgusting little ——

[*Here the MS. breaks off and is resumed in a different hand.*]

In the heat of composition I find that I have inadvertently allowed myself to assume the form of a large centipede. I am accordingly dictating the rest to my secretary. Now that the transformation is complete I recognise it as a periodical phenomenon. Some rumour of it has reached the humans and a distorted account of it appears in the poet Milton, with the ridiculous addition that such changes of shape are a "punishment" imposed on us by the Enemy. A more modern writer — someone with a name like Pshaw —

has, however, grasped the truth. Transformation proceeds from within and is a glorious manifestation of that Life Force which Our Father would worship if he worshipped anything but himself. In my present form I feel even more anxious to see you, to unite you to myself in an indissoluble embrace,

(Signed) Toadpipe

For his Abysmal Sublimity Under Secretary Screwtape, T.E., B.S., etc.

XXIII

My dear Wormwood,

Through this girl and her disgusting family the patient is now getting to know more Christians every day, and very intelligent Christians too. For a long time it will be quite impossible to *remove* spirituality from his life. Very well then; we must *corrupt* it. No doubt you have often practised transforming yourself into an angel of light as a parade-ground exercise. Now is the time to do it in the face of the Enemy. The World and the Flesh have failed us; a third Power remains. And success of this third kind is the most glorious of all. A spoiled saint, a Pharisee, an inquisitor, or a magician, makes better sport in Hell than a mere common tyrant or debauchee.

Looking round your patient's new friends I find that the best point of attack would be the border-line between theology and politics. Several of his new friends are very much alive to the social implications of their religion. That, in itself, is a bad thing; but good can be made out of it.

You will find that a good many Christian-political writers think that Christianity began going wrong, and departing from the doctrine of its Founder, at a very early stage. Now this idea must be used by us to encourage once again the conception of a "historical Jesus" to be found by clearing away later "accretions and perversions" and then to be contrasted with the whole Christian tradition. In the last generation we promoted the construction of such a "historical Jesus" on liberal and humanitarian lines; we are now putting forward a new "historical Jesus" on Marxian, catastrophic, and revolutionary lines. The advantages of these constructions, which we intend to change every thirty years or so, are manifold. In the first place they all tend to direct men's devotion to something which does not exist, for each "historical Jesus" is unhistorical. The documents say what they say and cannot be added to; each new "historical Jesus" therefore has to be got out of them by suppression at one point and exaggeration at another, and by that sort of guessing (*brilliant* is the adjective we teach humans to apply to it) on which no one would risk ten shillings in ordinary life, but which is enough to produce a crop of new Napoleons, new Shakespeares, and new Swifts, in every publisher's autumn list. In the second place, all such constructions place the importance of their Historical

Jesus in some peculiar theory He is supposed to have promulgated. He has to be a “great man” in the modern sense of the word — one standing at the terminus of some centrifugal and imbalanced line of thought — a crank vending a panacea. We thus distract men’s minds from Who He is, and what He did. We first make Him solely a teacher, and then conceal the very substantial agreement between His teachings and those of all other great moral teachers. For humans must not be allowed to notice that all great moralists are sent by the Enemy not to inform men but to remind them, to restate the primeval moral platitudes against our continual concealment of them. We make the Sophists: He raises up a Socrates to answer them. Our third aim is, by these constructions, to destroy the devotional life. For the real presence of the Enemy, otherwise experienced by men in prayer and sacrament, we substitute a merely probable, remote, shadowy, and uncouth figure, one who spoke a strange language and died a long time ago. Such an object cannot in fact be worshipped. Instead of the Creator adored by its creature, you soon have merely a leader acclaimed by a partisan, and finally a distinguished character approved by a judicious historian. And fourthly, besides being unhistorical in the Jesus it depicts, religion of this kind is false to history in another sense. No nation, and few individuals, are really brought into the Enemy’s camp by the historical study of the biography of Jesus, simply as biography. Indeed materials for a full biography have been withheld from men. The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact (the Resurrection) and a single theological doctrine (the Redemption) operating on a sense of sin which they already had — and sin, not against some new fancy-dress law produced as a novelty by a “great man”, but against the old, platitudinous, universal moral law which they had been taught by their nurses and mothers. The “Gospels” come later and were written not to make Christians but to edify Christians already made.

The “Historical Jesus” then, however dangerous he may seem to be to us at some particular point, is always to be encouraged. About the general connection between Christianity and politics, our position is more delicate. Certainly we do not want men to allow their Christianity to flow over into their political life, for the establishment of anything like a really just society would be a major disaster. On the other hand we do want, and want very much, to make men treat Christianity as a means; preferably, of course, as a means to their own advancement, but, failing that, as a means to anything — even to social justice. The thing to do is to get a man at first to value

social justice as a thing which the Enemy demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society might just as well think they can use the stairs of Heaven as a short cut to the nearest chemist's shop. Fortunately it is quite easy to coax humans round this little corner. Only today I have found a passage in a Christian writer where he recommends his own version of Christianity on the ground that "only such a faith can outlast the death of old cultures and the birth of new civilisations". You see the little rift? "Believe this, not because it is true, but for some other reason." That's the game,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXIV

My dear Wormwood,

I have been in correspondence with Slumtrimpet who is in charge of your patient's young woman, and begin to see the chink in her armour. It is an unobtrusive little vice which she shares with nearly all women who have grown up in an intelligent circle united by a clearly defined belief; and it consists in a quite untroubled assumption that the outsiders who do not share this belief are really too stupid and ridiculous. The males, who habitually meet these outsiders, do not feel that way; their confidence, if they are confident, is of a different kind. Hers, which she supposes to be due to Faith, is in reality largely due to the mere colour she has taken from her surroundings. It is not, in fact, very different from the conviction she would have felt at the age of ten that the kind of fish-knives used in her father's house were the proper or normal or "real" kind, while those of the neighbouring families were "not real fish-knives" at all. Now the element of ignorance and naïvety in all this is so large, and the element of spiritual pride so small, that it gives us little hope of the girl herself. But have you thought of how it can be made to influence your own patient?

It is always the novice who exaggerates. The man who has risen in society is over-refined, the young scholar is pedantic. In this new circle your patient is a novice. He is there daily meeting Christian life of a quality he never before imagined and seeing it all through an enchanted glass because he is in love. He is anxious (indeed the Enemy commands him) to imitate this quality. Can you get him to imitate this *defect* in his mistress and to exaggerate it until what was venial in her becomes in him the strongest and most beautiful of the vices — Spiritual Pride?

The conditions seem ideally favourable. The new circle in which he finds himself is one of which he is tempted to be proud for many reasons other than its Christianity. It is a better educated, more intelligent, more agreeable society than any he has yet encountered. He is also under some degree of illusion as to his own place in it. Under the influence of "love" he may still think himself unworthy of the girl, but he is rapidly ceasing to think himself unworthy of the others. He has no notion how much in him is forgiven because they are charitable and made the best of because he is now one of the family. He does not dream how much of his conversation, how

many of his opinions, are recognised by them all as mere echoes of their own. Still less does he suspect how much of the delight he takes in these people is due to the erotic enchantment which the girl, for him, spreads over all her surroundings. He thinks that he likes their talk and way of life because of some congruity between their spiritual state and his, when in fact they are so far beyond him that if he were not in love he would be merely puzzled and repelled by much which he now accepts. He is like a dog which should imagine it understood fire-arms because its hunting instinct and love for its master enable it to enjoy a day's shooting!

Here is your chance. While the Enemy, by means of sexual love and of some very agreeable people far advanced in His service, is drawing the young barbarian up to levels he could never otherwise have reached, you must make him feel that he is finding his *own* level — that these people are "his sort" and that, coming among them, he has come home. When he turns from them to other society he will find it dull; partly because almost any society within his reach is, in fact, much less entertaining, but still more because he will miss the enchantment of the young woman. You must teach him to mistake this contrast between the circle that delights and the circle that bores him for the contrast between Christians and unbelievers. He must be made to feel (he'd better not put it into words) "how different we Christians are"; and by "we Christians" he must really, but unknowingly, mean "my set"; and by "my set" he must mean not "The people who, in their charity and humility, have accepted me", but "The people with whom I associate by right".

Success here depends on confusing him. If you try to make him explicitly and professedly proud of being a Christian, you will probably fail; the Enemy's warnings are too well known. If, on the other hand, you let the idea of "we Christians" drop out altogether and merely make him complacent about "his set", you will produce not true spiritual pride but mere social vanity which, by comparison, is a trumpery, puny little sin. What you want is to keep a sly self-congratulation mixing with all his thoughts and never allow him to raise the question "What, precisely, am I congratulating myself *about*?" The idea of belonging to an inner ring, of being in a secret, is very sweet to him. Play on that nerve. Teach him, using the influence of this girl when she is silliest, to adopt an air of *amusement* at the things the unbelievers say. Some theories which he may meet in modern Christian circles may here prove helpful; theories, I mean, that place the

hope of society in some inner ring of “clerks”, some trained minority of theocrats. It is no affair of yours whether those theories are true or false; the great thing is to make Christianity a mystery religion in which he feels himself one of the initiates.

Pray do not fill your letters with rubbish about this European War. Its final issue is, no doubt, important, but that is a matter for the High Command. I am not in the least interested in knowing how many people in England have been killed by bombs. In what state of mind they died, I can learn from the office at this end. That they were going to die sometime, I knew already. Please keep your mind on your work,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXV

My dear Wormwood,

The real trouble about the set your patient is living in is that it is *merely* Christian. They all have individual interests, of course, but the bond remains mere Christianity. What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call "Christianity And". You know — Christianity and the Crisis, Christianity and the New Psychology, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing, Christianity and Psychical Research, Christianity and Vegetarianism, Christianity and Spelling Reform. If they must be Christians let them at least be Christians with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some Fashion with a Christian colouring. Work on their horror of the Same Old Thing.

The horror of the Same Old Thing is one of the most valuable passions we have produced in the human heart — an endless source of heresies in religion, folly in counsel, infidelity in marriage, and inconstancy in friendship. The humans live in time, and experience reality successively. To experience much of it, therefore, they must experience many different things; in other words, they must experience change. And since they need change, the Enemy (being a hedonist at heart) has made change pleasurable to them, just as He has made eating pleasurable. But since He does not wish them to make change, any more than eating, an end in itself, He has balanced the love of change in them by a love of permanence. He has contrived to gratify both tastes together in the very world He has made, by that union of change and permanence which we call Rhythm. He gives them the seasons, each season different yet every year the same, so that spring is always felt as a novelty yet always as the recurrence of an immemorial theme. He gives them in His Church a spiritual year; they change from a fast to a feast, but it is the same feast as before.

Now just as we pick out and exaggerate the pleasure of eating to produce gluttony, so we pick out this natural pleasantness of change and twist it into a demand for absolute novelty. This demand is entirely our workmanship. If we neglect our duty, men will be not only contented but transported by the mixed novelty and familiarity of snowdrops *this* January, sunrise *this* morning, plum pudding *this* Christmas. Children, until we have taught them better, will be perfectly happy with a seasonal round of games in which

conkers succeed hopscotch as regularly as autumn follows summer. Only by our incessant efforts is the demand for infinite, or unrhythmical, change kept up.

This demand is valuable in various ways. In the first place it diminishes pleasure while increasing desire. The pleasure of novelty is by its very nature more subject than any other to the law of diminishing returns. And continued novelty costs money, so that the desire for it spells avarice or unhappiness or both. And again, the more rapacious this desire, the sooner it must eat up all the innocent sources of pleasure and pass on to those the Enemy forbids. Thus by inflaming the horror of the Same Old Thing we have recently made the Arts, for example, less dangerous to us than perhaps, they have ever been, “low-brow” and “high-brow” artists alike being now daily drawn into fresh, and still fresh, excesses of lasciviousness, unreason, cruelty, and pride. Finally, the desire for novelty is indispensable if we are to produce Fashions or Vogues.

The use of Fashions in thought is to distract the attention of men from their real dangers. We direct the fashionable outcry of each generation against those vices of which it is least in danger and fix its approval on the virtue nearest to that vice which we are trying to make endemic. The game is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood, and all crowding to that side of the boat which is already nearly gunwale under. Thus we make it fashionable to expose the dangers of enthusiasm at the very moment when they are all really becoming worldly and lukewarm; a century later, when we are really making them all Byronic and drunk with emotion, the fashionable outcry is directed against the dangers of the mere “understanding”. Cruel ages are put on their guard against Sentimentality, feckless and idle ones against Respectability, lecherous ones against Puritanism; and whenever all men are really hastening to be slaves or tyrants we make Liberalism the prime bogey.

But the greatest triumph of all is to elevate this horror of the Same Old Thing into a philosophy so that nonsense in the intellect may reinforce corruption in the will. It is here that the general Evolutionary or Historical character of modern European thought (partly our work) comes in so useful. The Enemy loves platitudes. Of a proposed course of action He wants men, so far as I can see, to ask very simple questions; is it righteous? is it prudent? is it possible? Now if we can keep men asking “Is it in accordance with the general movement of our time? Is it progressive or reactionary? Is

this the way that History is going?" they will neglect the relevant questions. And the questions they *do* ask are, of course, unanswerable; for they do not know the future, and what the future will be depends very largely on just those choices which they now invoke the future to help them to make. As a result, while their minds are buzzing in this vacuum, we have the better chance to slip in and bend them to the action *we* have decided on. And great work has already been done. Once they knew that some changes were for the better, and others for the worse, and others again indifferent. We have largely removed this knowledge. For the descriptive adjective "unchanged" we have substituted the emotional adjective "stagnant". We have trained them to think of the Future as a promised land which favoured heroes attain — not as something which everyone reaches at the rate of sixty minutes an hour, whatever he does, whoever he is,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXVI

My dear Wormwood,

Yes; courtship is the time for sowing those seeds which will grow up ten years later into domestic hatred. The enchantment of unsatisfied desire produces results which the humans can be made to mistake for the results of charity. Avail yourself of the ambiguity in the word “Love”: let them think they have solved by Love problems they have in fact only waived or postponed under the influence of the enchantment. While it lasts you have your chance to foment the problems in secret and render them chronic.

The grand problem is that of “unselfishness”. Note, once again, the admirable work of our Philological Arm in substituting the negative unselfishness for the Enemy’s positive Charity. Thanks to this you can, from the very outset, teach a man to surrender benefits not that others may be happy in having them but that he may be unselfish in forgoing them. That is a great point gained. Another great help, where the parties concerned are male and female, is the divergence of view about Unselfishness which we have built up between the sexes. A woman means by Unselfishness chiefly taking trouble for others; a man means not giving trouble to others. As a result, a woman who is quite far gone in the Enemy’s service will make a nuisance of herself on a larger scale than any man except those whom Our Father has dominated completely; and, conversely, a man will live long in the Enemy’s camp before he undertakes as much spontaneous work to please others as a quite ordinary woman may do every day. Thus while the woman thinks of doing good offices and the man of respecting other people’s rights, each sex, without any obvious unreason, can and does regard the other as radically selfish.

On top of these confusions you can now introduce a few more. The erotic enchantment produces a mutual complaisance in which each is *really* pleased to give in to the wishes of the other. They also know that the Enemy demands of them a degree of charity which, if attained, would result in similar actions. You must make them establish as a Law for their whole married life that degree of mutual self-sacrifice which is at present sprouting naturally out of the enchantment, but which, when the enchantment dies away, they will not have charity enough to enable them to perform. They will not see the trap, since they are under the double

blindness of mistaking sexual excitement for charity and of thinking that the excitement will last.

When once a sort of official, legal, or nominal Unselfishness has been established as a rule — a rule for the keeping of which their emotional resources have died away and their spiritual resources have not yet grown — the most delightful results follow. In discussing any joint action, it becomes obligatory that A should argue in favour of B's supposed wishes and against his own, while B does the opposite. It is often impossible to find out either party's real wishes; with luck, they end by doing something that neither wants, while each feels a glow of self-righteousness and harbours a secret claim to preferential treatment for the unselfishness shown and a secret grudge against the other for the ease with which the sacrifice has been accepted. Later on you can venture on what may be called the Generous Conflict Illusion. This game is best played with more than two players, in a family with grown-up children for example. Something quite trivial, like having tea in the garden, is proposed. One member takes care to make it quite clear (though not in so many words) that he would rather not but is, of course, prepared to do so out of "Unselfishness". The others instantly withdraw their proposal, ostensibly through their "Unselfishness", but really because they don't want to be used as a sort of lay figure on which the first speaker practices petty altruisms. But he is not going to be done out of his debauch of Unselfishness either. He insists on doing "what the others want". They insist on doing what he wants. Passions are roused. Soon someone is saying "Very well then, I won't have any tea at all!", and a real quarrel ensues with bitter resentment on both sides. You see how it is done? If each side had been frankly contending for its own real wish, they would all have kept within the bounds of reason and courtesy; but just because the contention is reversed and each side is fighting the other side's battle, all the bitterness which really flows from thwarted self-righteousness and obstinacy and the accumulated grudges of the last ten years is concealed from them by the nominal or official "Unselfishness" of what they are doing or, at least, held to be excused by it. Each side is, indeed, quite alive to the cheap quality of the adversary's Unselfishness and of the false position into which he is trying to force them; but each manages to feel blameless and ill-used itself, with no more dishonesty than comes natural to a human.

A sensible human once said, “If people knew how much ill-feeling Unselfishness occasions, it would not be so often recommended from the pulpit”; and again, “She’s the sort of woman who lives for others — you can always tell the others by their hunted expression”. All this can be begun even in the period of courtship. A little *real* selfishness on your patient’s part is often of less value in the long run, for securing his soul, than the first beginnings of that elaborate and self-consciousness unselfishness which may one day blossom into the sort of thing I have described. Some degree of mutual falseness, some surprise that the girl does not always notice just how Unselfish he is being, can be smuggled in already. Cherish these things, and, above all, don’t let the young fools notice them. If they notice them they will be on the road to discovering that “love” is not enough, that charity is needed and not yet achieved and that no external law can supply its place. I wish Slumtrimpet could do something about undermining that young woman’s sense of the ridiculous,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXVII

My dear Wormwood,

You seem to be doing very little good at present. The use of his “love” to distract his mind from the Enemy is, of course, obvious, but you reveal what poor use you are making of it when you say that the whole question of distraction and the wandering mind has now become one of the chief subjects of his prayers. That means you have largely failed. When this, or any other distraction, crosses his mind you ought to encourage him to thrust it away by sheer will power and to try to continue the normal prayer as if nothing had happened; once he accepts the distraction as his present problem and lays *that* before the Enemy and makes it the main theme of his prayers and his endeavours, then, so far from doing good, you have done harm. Anything, even a sin, which has the total effect of moving him close up to the Enemy, makes against us in the long run.

A promising line is the following. Now that he is in love, a new idea of *earthly* happiness has arisen in his mind: and hence a new urgency in his purely petitionary prayers — about this war and other such matters. Now is the time for raising intellectual difficulties about prayer of that sort. False spirituality is always to be encouraged. On the seemingly pious ground that “praise and communion with God is the true prayer”, humans can often be lured into direct disobedience to the Enemy who (in His usual flat, commonplace, uninteresting way) has definitely told them to pray for their daily bread and the recovery of their sick. You will, of course, conceal from him the fact that the prayer for daily bread, interpreted in a “spiritual sense”, is really just as crudely petitionary as it is in any other sense.

But since your patient has contracted the terrible habit of obedience, he will probably continue such “crude” prayers whatever you do. But you can worry him with the haunting suspicion that the practice is absurd and can have no objective result. Don’t forget to use the “heads I win, tails you lose” argument. If the thing he prays for doesn’t happen, then that is one more proof that petitionary prayers don’t work; if it does happen, he will, of course, be able to see some of the physical causes which led up to it, and “therefore it would have happened anyway”, and thus a granted prayer becomes just as good a proof as a denied one that prayers are ineffective.

You, being a spirit, will find it difficult to understand how he gets into this confusion. But you must remember that he takes Time for an ultimate reality. He supposes that the Enemy, like himself, sees some things as present, remembers others as past, and anticipates others as future; or even if he believes that the Enemy does not see things that way, yet, in his heart of hearts, he regards this as a peculiarity of the Enemy's mode of perception — he doesn't really think (though he would say he did) that things as the Enemy sees them are things as they are! If you tried to explain to him that men's prayers today are one of the innumerable co-ordinates with which the Enemy harmonises the weather of tomorrow, he would reply that then the Enemy always knew men were going to make those prayers and, if so, they did not pray freely but were predestined to do so. And he would add that the weather on a given day can be traced back through its causes to the original creation of matter itself — so that the whole thing, both on the human and on the material side, is given "from the word go". What he ought to say, of course, is obvious to us; that the problem of adapting the particular weather to the particular prayers is merely the appearance, at two points in his temporal mode of perception, of the total problem of adapting the whole spiritual universe to the whole corporeal universe; that creation in its entirety operates at every point of space and time, or rather that their kind of consciousness forces them to encounter the whole, self-consistent creative act as a series of successive events. *Why* that creative act leaves room for their free will is the problem of problems, the secret behind the Enemy's nonsense about "Love". *How* it does so is no problem at all; for the Enemy does not *foresee* the humans making their free contributions in a future, but *sees* them doing so in His unbounded Now. And obviously to watch a man doing something is not to make him do it.

It may be replied that some meddlesome human writers, notably Boethius, have let this secret out. But in the intellectual climate which we have at last succeeded in producing throughout Western Europe, you needn't bother about that. Only the learned read old books and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so. We have done this by inculcating The Historical Point of View. The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true. He asks who influenced the ancient writer, and how far the statement is consistent with what he said in

other books, and what phase in the writer's development, or in the general history of thought, it illustrates, and how it affected later writers, and how often it has been misunderstood (specially by the learned man's own colleagues) and what the general course of criticism on it has been for the last ten years, and what is the "present state of the question". To regard the ancient writer as a possible source of knowledge — to anticipate that what he said could possibly modify your thoughts or your behaviour — this would be rejected as unutterably simple-minded. And since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time, it is most important thus to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another. But thanks be to our Father and the Historical Point of View, great scholars are now as little nourished by the past as the most ignorant mechanic who holds that "history is bunk",

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXVIII

My dear Wormwood,

When I told you not to fill your letters with rubbish about the war, I meant, of course, that I did not want to have your rather infantile rhapsodies about the death of men and the destruction of cities. In so far as the war really concerns the spiritual state of the patient, I naturally want full reports. And on this aspect you seem singularly obtuse. Thus you tell me with glee that there is reason to expect heavy air raids on the town where the creature lives. This is a crying example of something I have complained about already — your readiness to forget the main point in your immediate enjoyment of human suffering. Do you not know that bombs kill men? Or do you not realise that the patient's death, at this moment, is precisely what we want to avoid? He has escaped the worldly friends with whom you tried to entangle him; he has "fallen in love" with a very Christian woman and is temporarily immune from your attacks on his chastity; and the various methods of corrupting his spiritual life which we have been trying are so far unsuccessful. At the present moment, as the full impact of the war draws nearer and his worldly hopes take a proportionately lower place in his mind, full of his defence work, full of the girl, forced to attend to his neighbours more than he has ever done before and liking it more than he expected, "taken out of himself" as the humans say, and daily increasing in conscious dependence on the Enemy, he will almost certainly be lost to us if he is killed tonight. This is so obvious that I am ashamed to write it. I sometimes wonder if you young fiends are not kept out on temptation-duty too long at a time — if you are not in some danger of becoming infected by the sentiments and values of the humans among whom you work. They, of course, do tend to regard death as the prime evil and survival as the greatest good. But that is because we have taught them to do so. Do not let us be infected by our own propaganda. I know it seems strange that your chief aim at the moment should be the very same thing for which the patient's lover and his mother are praying — namely his bodily safety. But so it is; you should be guarding him like the apple of your eye. If he dies now, you lose him. If he survives the war, there is always hope. The Enemy has guarded him from you through the first great wave of temptations. But, if only he can be kept alive, you have time itself for your ally. The long, dull

monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather. You see, it is so hard for these creatures to *persevere*. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair (hardly felt as pain) of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives and the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it — all this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition. If, on the other hand, the middle years prove prosperous, our position is even stronger. Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is "finding his place in it", while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth which is just what we want. You will notice that the young are generally less unwilling to die than the middle-aged and the old.

The truth is that the Enemy, having oddly destined these mere animals to life in His own eternal world, has guarded them pretty effectively from the danger of feeling at home anywhere else. That is why we must often wish long life to our patients; seventy years is not a day too much for the difficult task of unravelling their souls from Heaven and building up a firm attachment to the earth. While they are young we find them always shooting off at a tangent. Even if we contrive to keep them ignorant of explicit religion, the incalculable winds of fantasy and music and poetry — the mere face of a girl, the song of a bird, or the sight of a horizon — are always blowing our whole structure away. They *will* not apply themselves steadily to worldly advancement, prudent connections, and the policy of safety first. So inveterate is their appetite for Heaven that our best method, at this stage, of attaching them to earth is to make them believe that earth can be turned into Heaven at some future date by politics or eugenics or "science" or psychology, or what not. Real worldliness is a work of time — assisted, of course, by pride, for we teach them to describe the creeping death as good sense or Maturity or Experience. *Experience*, in the peculiar sense we teach them to give it, is, by the bye, a most useful word. A great human philosopher nearly let our secret out when he said that where Virtue is concerned "Experience is the mother of illusion"; but thanks to a change in Fashion, and also, of course, to the Historical Point of View, we have largely rendered his book innocuous.

How valuable time is to us may be gauged by the fact that the Enemy allows us so little of it. The majority of the human race dies in infancy; of the survivors, a good many die in youth. It is obvious that to Him human birth is important chiefly as the qualification for human death, and death solely as the gate to that other kind of life. We are allowed to work only on a selected minority of the race, for what humans call a ‘normal life’ is the exception. Apparently He wants some — but only a very few — of the human animals with which He is peopling Heaven to have had the experience of resisting us through an earthly life of sixty or seventy years. Well, there is our opportunity. The smaller it is, the better we must use it. Whatever you do, keep your patient as safe as you possibly can,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXIX

My dear Wormwood,

Now that it is certain the German humans will bombard your patient's town and that his duties will keep him in the thick of the danger, we must consider our policy. Are we to aim at cowardice — or at courage, with consequent pride — or at hatred of the Germans?

Well, I am afraid it is no good trying to make him brave. Our research department has not yet discovered (though success is hourly expected) how to produce *any* virtue. This is a serious handicap. To be greatly and effectively wicked a man needs some virtue. What would Attila have been without his courage, or Shylock without self-denial as regards the flesh? But as we cannot supply these qualities ourselves, we can only use them as supplied by the Enemy — and this means leaving Him a kind of foothold in those men whom, otherwise, we have made most securely our own. A very unsatisfactory arrangement, but, I trust, we shall one day learn to do better.

Hatred we can manage. The tension of human nerves during noise, danger, and fatigue, makes them prone to any violent emotion and it is only a question of guiding this susceptibility into the right channels. If conscience resists, muddle him. Let him say that he feels hatred not on his own behalf but on that of the women and children, and that a Christian is told to forgive his own, not other people's enemies. In other words let him consider himself sufficiently identified with the women and children to feel hatred on their behalf, but *not* sufficiently identified to regard their enemies as his own and therefore proper objects of forgiveness.

But hatred is best combined with Fear. Cowardice, alone of all the vices, is purely painful — horrible to anticipate, horrible to feel, horrible to remember; Hatred has its pleasures. It is therefore often the *compensation* by which a frightened man reimburses himself for the miseries of Fear. The more he fears, the more he will hate. And Hatred is also a great anodyne for shame. To make a deep wound in his charity, you should therefore first defeat his courage.

Now this is a ticklish business. We have made men proud of most vices, but not of cowardice. Whenever we have almost succeeded in doing so, the Enemy permits a war or an earthquake or some other calamity, and at once courage becomes so obviously lovely and important even in human eyes

that all our work is undone, and there is still at least one vice of which they feel genuine shame. The danger of inducing cowardice in our patients, therefore, is lest we produce real self-knowledge and self-loathing with consequent repentance and humility. And in fact, in the last war, thousands of humans, by discovering their own cowardice, discovered the whole moral world for the first time. In peace we can make many of them ignore good and evil entirely; in danger, the issue is forced upon them in a guise to which even we cannot blind them. There is here a cruel dilemma before us. If we promoted justice and charity among men, we should be playing directly into the Enemy's hands; but if we guide them to the opposite behaviour, this sooner or later produces (for He permits it to produce) a war or a revolution, and the undisguisable issue of cowardice or courage awakes thousands of men from moral stupor.

This, indeed, is probably one of the Enemy's motives for creating a dangerous world — a world in which moral issues really come to the point. He sees as well as you do that courage is not simply *one* of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the point of highest reality. A chastity or honesty, or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful till it became risky.

It is therefore possible to lose as much as we gain by making your man a coward; he may learn too much about himself! There is, of course, always the chance, not of chloroforming the shame, but of aggravating it and producing Despair. This would be a great triumph. It would show that he had believed in, and accepted, the Enemy's forgiveness of his other sins only because he himself did not fully feel their sinfulness — that in respect of the one vice which he really understands in its full depth of dishonour he cannot seek, nor credit, the Mercy. But I fear you have already let him get too far in the Enemy's school, and he knows that Despair is a greater sin than any of the sins which provoke it.

As to the actual technique of temptations to cowardice, not much need be said. The main point is that precautions have a tendency to increase fear. The precautions publicly enjoined on your patient, however, soon become a matter of routine and this effect disappears. What you must do is to keep running in his mind (side by side with the conscious intention of doing his duty) the vague idea of all sorts of things he can do or not do, *inside* the framework of the duty, which seem to make him a little safer. Get his mind

off the simple rule (“I’ve got to stay here and do so-and-so”) into a series of imaginary life lines (“If A happened — though I very much hope it won’t — I could do B — and if the worst came to the worst, I could always do C”). Superstitions, if not recognised as such, can be awakened. The point is to keep him feeling that he has *something*, other than the Enemy and courage the Enemy supplies, *to fall back on*, so that what was intended to be a total commitment to duty becomes honeycombed all through with little unconscious reservations. By building up a series of imaginary expedients to prevent “the worst coming to the worst” you may produce, at that level of his will which he is not aware of, a determination that the worst *shall not* come to the worst. Then, at the moment of real terror, rush it out into his nerves and muscles and you may get the fatal act done before he knows what you’re about. For remember, the *act* of cowardice is all that matters; the emotion of fear is, in itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, does us no good,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXX

My dear Wormwood,

I sometimes wonder whether you think you have been sent into the world for your own amusement. I gather, not from your miserably inadequate report but from that of the Infernal Police, that the patient's behaviour during the first raid has been the worst possible. He has been very frightened and thinks himself a great coward and therefore feels no pride; but he has done everything his duty demanded and perhaps a bit more. Against this disaster all you can produce on the credit side is a burst of ill temper with a dog that tripped him up, some excessive cigarette smoking, and the forgetting of a prayer. What is the use of whining to me about your difficulties? If you are proceeding on the Enemy's idea of "justice" and suggesting that your opportunities and intentions should be taken into account, then I am not sure that a charge of heresy does not lie against you. At any rate, you will soon find that the justice of Hell is purely realistic, and concerned only with results. Bring us back food, or be food yourself.

The only constructive passage in your letter is where you say that you still expect good results from the patient's fatigue. That is well enough. But it won't fall into your hands. Fatigue *can* produce extreme gentleness, and quiet of mind, and even something like vision. If you have often seen men led by it into anger, malice and impatience, that is because those men have had efficient tempters. The paradoxical thing is that moderate fatigue is a better soil for peevishness than absolute exhaustion. This depends partly on physical causes, but partly on something else. It is not fatigue simply as such that produces the anger, but unexpected demands on a man already tired. Whatever men expect they soon come to think they have a right to: the sense of disappointment can, with very little skill on our part, be turned into a sense of injury. It is after men have given in to the irremediable, after they have despaired of relief and ceased to think even a half-hour ahead, that the dangers of humbled and gentle weariness begin. To produce the best results from the patient's fatigue, therefore, you must feed him with false hopes. Put into his mind plausible reasons for believing that the air-raid will not be repeated. Keep him comforting himself with the thought of how much he will enjoy his bed next night. Exaggerate the weariness by making

him think it will soon be over; for men usually feel that a strain could have been endured no longer at the very moment when it is ending, or when they think it is ending. In this, as in the problem of cowardice, the thing to avoid is the total commitment. Whatever he *says*, let his inner resolution be not to bear whatever comes to him, but to bear it "for a reasonable period" — and let the reasonable period be shorter than the trial is likely to last. It need not be *much* shorter; in attacks on patience, chastity, and fortitude, the fun is to make the man yield just when (had he but known it) relief was almost in sight.

I do not know whether he is likely to meet the girl under conditions of strain or not. If he does, make full use of the fact that up to a certain point, fatigue makes women talk more and men talk less. Much secret resentment, even between lovers, can be raised from this.

Probably the scenes he is now witnessing will not provide material for an *intellectual* attack on his faith — your previous failures have put that out of your power. But there is a sort of attack on the emotions which can still be tried. It turns on making him *feel*, when first he sees human remains plastered on a wall, that this is "what the world is *really* like" and that all his religion has been a fantasy. You will notice that we have got them completely fogged about the meaning of the word "real". They tell each other, of some great spiritual experience, "All that *really* happened was that you heard some music in a lighted building"; here "Real" means the bare physical facts, separated from the other elements in the experience they actually had. On the other hand, they will also say "It's all very well discussing that high dive as you sit here in an armchair, but wait till you get up there and see what it's *really* like": here "real" is being used in the opposite sense to mean, not the physical facts (which they know already while discussing the matter in armchairs) but the emotional effect those facts will have on a human consciousness. Either application of the word could be defended; but our business is to keep the two going at once so that the emotional value of the word "real" can be placed now on one side of the account, now on the other, as it happens to suit us. The general rule which we have now pretty well established among them is that in all experiences which can make them happier or better only the physical facts are "Real" while the spiritual elements are "subjective"; in all experiences which can discourage or corrupt them the spiritual elements are the main reality and to ignore them is to be an escapist. Thus in birth the blood and pain are "real",

the rejoicing a mere subjective point of view; in death, the terror and ugliness reveal what death “really means”. The hatefulness of a hated person is “real” — in hatred you see men as they are, you are disillusioned; but the loveliness of a loved person is merely a subjective haze concealing a “real” core of sexual appetite or economic association. Wars and poverty are “really” horrible; peace and plenty are mere physical facts about which men happen to have certain sentiments. The creatures are always accusing one another of wanting “to eat the cake and have it”; but thanks to our labours they are more often in the predicament of paying for the cake and not eating it. Your patient, properly handled, will have no difficulty in regarding his emotion at the sight of human entrails as a revelation of Reality and his emotion at the sight of happy children or fair weather as mere sentiment,

Your affectionate uncle Screwtape

XXXI

My dear, my very dear, Wormwood, my poppet, my pigsnie,

How mistakenly now that all is lost you come whimpering to ask me whether the terms of affection in which I address you meant nothing from the beginning. Far from it! Rest assured, my love for you and your love for me are as like as two peas. I have always desired you, as you (pitiful fool) desired me. The difference is that I am the stronger. I think they will give you to me now; or a bit of you. Love you? Why, yes. As dainty a morsel as ever I grew fat on.

You have let a soul slip through your fingers. The howl of sharpened famine for that loss re-echoes at this moment through all the levels of the Kingdom of Noise down to the very Throne itself. It makes me mad to think of it. How well I know what happened at the instant when they snatched him from you! There was a sudden clearing of his eyes (was there not?) as he saw you for the first time, and recognised the part you had had in him and knew that you had it no longer. Just think (and let it be the beginning of your agony) what he felt at that moment; as if a scab had fallen from an old sore, as if he were emerging from a hideous, shell-like tetter, as if he shuffled off for good and all a defiled, wet, clinging garment. By Hell, it is misery enough to see them in their mortal days taking off dirtied and uncomfortable clothes and splashing in hot water and giving little grunts of pleasure — stretching their eased limbs. What, then, of this final stripping, this complete cleansing?

The more one thinks about it, the worse it becomes. He got through so easily! No gradual misgivings, no doctor’s sentence, no nursing home, no operating theatre, no false hopes of life; sheer, instantaneous liberation. One moment it seemed to be all our world; the scream of bombs, the fall of houses, the stink and taste of high explosive on the lips and in the lungs, the feet burning with weariness, the heart cold with horrors, the brain reeling, the legs aching; next moment all this was gone, gone like a bad dream, never again to be of any account. Defeated, out-manœuvred fool! Did you mark how naturally — as if he’d been born for it — the earth-born vermin entered the new life? How all his doubts became, in the twinkling of an eye, ridiculous? I know what the creature was saying to itself! “Yes. Of course. It always was like this. All horrors have followed the same course, getting

worse and worse and forcing you into a kind of bottle-neck till, at the very moment when you thought you must be crushed, behold! you were out of the narrows and all was suddenly well. The extraction hurt more and more and then the tooth was out. The dream became a nightmare and then you woke. You die and die and then you are beyond death. How could I ever have doubted it?"

As he saw you, he also saw Them. I know how it was. You reeled back dizzy and blinded, more hurt by them than he had ever been by bombs. The degradation of it! — that this thing of earth and slime could stand upright and converse with spirits before whom you, a spirit, could only cower. Perhaps you had hoped that the awe and strangeness of it would dash his joy. But that is the cursed thing; the gods are strange to mortal eyes, and yet they are not strange. He had no faintest conception till that very hour of how they would look, and even doubted their existence. But when he saw them he knew that he had always known them and realised what part each one of them had played at many an hour in his life when he had supposed himself alone, so that now he could say to them, one by one, not "Who *are* you?" but "So it was *you* all the time". All that they were and said at this meeting woke memories. The dim consciousness of friends about him which had haunted his solitudes from infancy was now at last explained; that central music in every pure experience which had always just evaded memory was now at last recovered. Recognition made him free of their company almost before the limbs of his corpse became quiet. Only you were left outside.

He saw not only Them; he saw Him. This animal, this thing begotten in a bed, could look on Him. What is blinding, suffocating fire to you, is now cool light to him, is clarity itself, and wears the form of a Man. You would like, if you could, to interpret the patient's prostration in the Presence, his self-abhorrence and utter knowledge of his sins (yes, Wormwood, a clearer knowledge even than yours) on the analogy of your own choking and paralysing sensations when you encounter the deadly air that breathes from the heart of Heaven. But it's all nonsense. Pains he may still have to encounter, but they *embrace* those pains. They would not barter them for any earthly pleasure. All the delights of sense, or heart, or intellect, with which you could once have tempted him, even the delights of virtue itself, now seem to him in comparison but as the half nauseous attractions of a raddled harlot would seem to a man who hears that his true beloved whom

he has loved all his life and whom he had believed to be dead is alive and even now at his door. He is caught up into that world where pain and pleasure take on transfinite values and all our arithmetic is dismayed. Once more, the inexplicable meets us. Next to the curse of useless tempters like yourself the greatest curse upon us is the failure of our Intelligence Department. If only we could find out what He is really up to! Alas, alas, that knowledge, in itself so hateful and mawkish a thing, should yet be necessary for Power! Sometimes I am almost in despair. All that sustains me is the conviction that our Realism, our rejection (in the face of all temptations) of all silly nonsense and claptrap, *must* win in the end. Meanwhile, I have you to settle with. Most truly do I sign myself

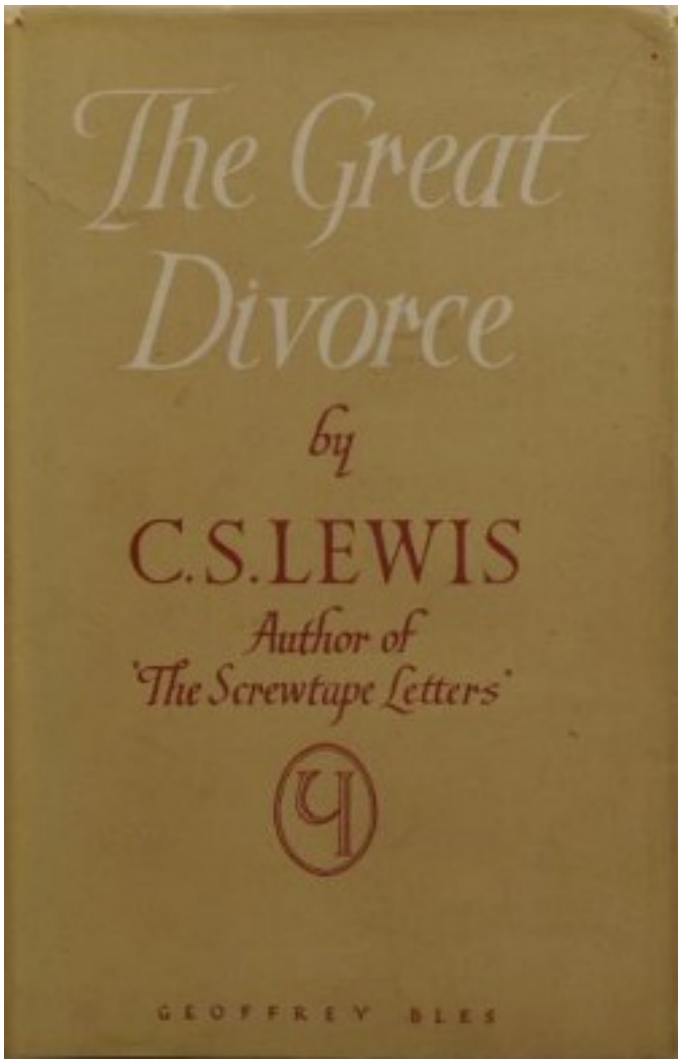
Your increasingly and ravenously affectionate uncle Screwtape

THE GREAT DIVORCE (1945)



First printed as a serial in *The Guardian* between 1944 and 1945, *The Great Divorce* is a theological dream vision, in which Lewis reflects on the Christian conceptions of Heaven and Hell. The title refers to William Blake's poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Diverse sources include the works of St. Augustine, Dante Alighieri, John Milton, John Bunyan, Emanuel Swedenborg and Lewis Carroll, as well as an American science fiction author whose name Lewis had forgotten, but whom he refers to in his preface.

The plot introduces a narrator that inexplicably finds himself in a grim and joyless city, the "grey town", which is either Hell or Purgatory depending on how long an occupant stays there. He eventually finds a bus for those that desire an excursion to some other place (and which eventually turns out to be the foothills of Heaven). He enters the bus and converses with his fellow passengers as they travel. When the bus reaches its destination, the passengers on the bus — including the narrator — are gradually revealed to be ghosts. Although the country is the most beautiful they have ever seen, every feature of the landscape (including streams of water and blades of grass) is unyieldingly solid compared to themselves: it causes them immense pain to walk on the grass, and even a single leaf is far too heavy for any to lift.



The first edition

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PREFACE

Blake wrote the Marriage of Heaven and Hell. If I have written of their Divorce, this is not because I think myself a fit antagonist for so great a genius, nor even because I feel at all sure that I know what he meant. But in some sense or other the attempt to make that marriage is perennial. The attempt is based on the belief that reality never presents us with an absolutely unavoidable 'either-or'; that, granted skill and patience and (above all) time enough, some way of embracing both alternatives can always be found; that mere development or adjustment or refinement will somehow turn evil into good without our being called on for a final and total rejection of anything we should like to retain. This belief I take to be a disastrous error. You cannot take all luggage with you on all journeys; on one journey even your right hand and your right eye may be among the things you have to leave behind. We are not living in a world where all roads are radii of a circle and where all, if followed long enough, will therefore draw gradually nearer and finally meet at the centre: rather in a world where every road, after a few miles, forks into two, and each of those into two again, and at each fork you must make a decision. Even on the biological level life is not like a river but like a tree. It does not move towards unity but away from it and the creatures grow further apart as they increase in perfection. Good, as it ripens, becomes continually more different not only from evil but from other good.

I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road. A wrong sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply *going on*. Evil can be undone, but it cannot 'develop' into good. Time does not heal it. The spell must be unwound, bit by bit, 'with backward mutters of dissevering power' — or else not. It is still 'either-or'. If we insist on keeping Hell (or even earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell. I believe, to be sure, that any man who reaches Heaven will find that what he abandoned (even in plucking out his right eye) has not been lost: that the kernel of what he was really seeking even in his most depraved wishes will be there, beyond expectation, waiting for him in 'the High Countries'. In that sense it will be

true for those who have completed the journey (and for no others) to say that good is everything and Heaven everywhere. But we, at this end of the road, must not try to anticipate that retrospective vision. If we do, we are likely to embrace the false and disastrous converse and fancy that everything is good and everywhere is Heaven.

But what, you ask, of earth? Earth, I think, will not be found by anyone to be in the end a very distinct place. I think earth, if chosen instead of Heaven, will turn out to have been, all along, only a region in Hell: and earth, if put second to Heaven, to have been from the beginning a part of Heaven itself.

There are only two things more to be said about this small book. Firstly, I must acknowledge my debt to a writer whose name I have forgotten and whom I read several years ago in a highly coloured American magazine of what they call ‘Scientifiction’. The unbendable and unbreakable quality of my heavenly matter was suggested to me by him, though he used the fancy for a different and most ingenious purpose. His hero travelled into the *past*: and there, very properly, found raindrops that would pierce him like bullets and sandwiches that no strength could bite — because, of course, nothing in the past can be altered. I, with less originality but (I hope) equal propriety have transferred this to the eternal. If the writer of that story ever reads these lines I ask him to accept my grateful acknowledgment. The second thing is this. I beg readers to remember that this is a fantasy. It has of course — or I intended it to have — a moral. But the transmortal conditions are solely an imaginative supposal: they are not even a guess or a speculation at what may actually await us. The last thing I wish is to arouse factual curiosity about the details of the after-world.

C. S. Lewis *April, 1945*.

1.

I seemed to be standing in a bus queue by the side of a long, mean street. Evening was just closing in and it was raining. I had been wandering for hours in similar mean streets, always in the rain and always in evening twilight. Time seemed to have paused on that dismal moment when only a few shops have lit up and it is not yet dark enough for their windows to look cheering. And just as the evening never advanced to night, so my walking had never brought me to the better parts of the town. However far I went I found only dingy lodging houses, small tobacconists, hoardings from which posters hung in rags, windowless warehouses, goods stations without trains, and bookshops of the sort that sell *The Works of Aristotle*. I never met anyone. But for the little crowd at the bus stop, the whole town seemed to be empty. I think that was why I attached myself to the queue.

I had a stroke of luck right away, for just as I took my stand a little waspish woman who would have been ahead of me snapped out at a man who seemed to be with her, 'Very well, then. I won't go at all. So there,' and left the queue. 'Pray don't imagine', said the man, in a very dignified voice, 'that I care about going in the least. I have only been trying to please *you*, for peace sake. My own feelings are of course a matter of no importance. I quite understand *that*' — and suiting the action to the word he also walked away. 'Come,' thought I, 'that's two places gained.' I was now next to a very short man with a scowl who glanced at me with an expression of extreme disfavour and observed, rather unnecessarily loudly, to the man beyond him, 'This sort of thing really makes one think twice about going at all.' 'What sort of thing?' growled the other, a big beefy person. 'Well,' said the Short Man, 'this is hardly the sort of society I'm used to as a matter of fact.' 'Huh!' said the Big Man: and then added with a glance at me, 'Don't you stand any sauce from *him*, Mister. You're not *afraid* of him, are you?' Then, seeing I made no move, he rounded suddenly on the Short Man and said, 'Not good enough for you, aren't we? Like your lip.' Next moment he had fetched the Short Man one on the side of the face that sent him sprawling into the gutter. 'Let him lay, let him lay,' said the Big Man to no-one in particular. 'I'm a plain man that's what I am and I got to have my rights same as anyone else, see?' As the Short Man showed no disposition to rejoin the queue and soon began limping away, I closed up, rather

cautiously, behind the Big Man and congratulated myself on having gained yet another step. A moment later two young people in front of him also left us arm in arm. They were both so trousered, slender, giggly and falsetto that I could be sure of the sex of neither, but it was clear that each for the moment preferred the other to the chance of a place in the bus. ‘We shall never all get in’, said a female voice with a whine in it from some four places ahead of me. ’Change places with you for five bob, lady’, said someone else. I heard the clink of money and then a scream in the female voice, mixed with roars of laughter from the rest of the crowd. The cheated woman leaped out of her place to fly at the man who had bilked her, but the others immediately closed up and flung her out. . . . So what with one thing and another the queue had reduced itself to manageable proportions long before the ‘bus appeared.

It was a wonderful vehicle, blazing with golden light, heraldically coloured. The Driver himself seemed full of light and he used only one hand to drive with. The other he waved before his face as if to fan away the greasy steam of the rain. A growl went up from the queue as he came in sight. ‘Looks as if *he* had a good time of it, eh? . . . Bloody pleased with himself, I bet. . . . My dear, why can’t he behave *naturally*? — Thinks himself too good to look at us. . . . Who does he imagine he is? . . . All that gilding and purple, I call it a wicked waste. Why don’t they spend some of the money on their house property down here? — God! I’d like to give him one in the ear-’ole.’ I could see nothing in the countenance of the Driver to justify all this, unless it were that he had a look of authority and seemed intent on carrying out his job.

My fellow passengers fought like hens to get on board the ‘bus though there was plenty of room for us all. I was the last to get in. The bus was only half full and I selected a seat at the back, well away from the others. But a tousle-headed youth at once came and sat down beside me. As he did so we moved off.

‘I thought you wouldn’t mind my tacking on to you’, he said, ‘for I’ve noticed that you feel just as I do about the present company. Why on earth they insist on coming I can’t imagine. They won’t like it at all when we get there, and they’d really be much more comfortable at home. It’s different for you and me.’

‘Do they *like* this place?’ I asked.

‘As much as they’d like anything,’ he answered. ‘They’ve got cinemas and fish and chip shops and advertisements and all the sorts of things they want. The appalling lack of any intellectual life doesn’t worry *them*. I realised as soon as I got here that there’d been some mistake. I ought to have taken the first bus but I’ve fooled about trying to wake people up here. I found a few fellows I’d known before and tried to form a little circle, but they all seem to have sunk to the level of their surroundings. Even before we came here I’d had some doubts about a man like Cyril Blellow. I always thought he was working in a false idiom. But he was at least intelligent: one could get some criticism worth hearing from him, even if he was a failure on the creative side. But now he seems to have nothing left but his self conceit. The last time I tried to read him some of my own stuff . . . but wait a minute, I’d just like you to look at it.’

Realising with a shudder that what he was producing from his pocket was a thick wad of type-written paper, I muttered something about not having my spectacles and exclaimed, ‘Hullo! We’ve left the ground.’

It was true. Several hundred feet below us, already half hidden in the rain and mist, the wet roofs of the town appeared, spreading without a break as far is the eye could reach.

2.

I was not left very long at the mercy of the Tousle-Headed Poet, because another passenger interrupted our conversation: but before that happened I had learned a good deal about him. He appeared to be a singularly ill-used man. His parents had never appreciated him and none of the five schools at which he had been educated seemed to have made any provision for a talent and temperament such as his. To make matters worse he had been exactly the sort of boy in whose case the examination system works out with the maximum unfairness and absurdity. It was not until he reached the university that he began to recognise that all these injustices did not come by chance but were the inevitable results of our economic system. Capitalism did not merely enslave the workers, it also vitiated taste and vulgarised intellect: hence our educational system and hence the lack of ‘Recognition’ for new genius. This discovery had made him a Communist. But when the war came along and he saw Russia in alliance with the capitalist governments, he had found himself once more isolated and had to become a conscientious objector. The indignities he suffered at this stage of his career had, he confessed, embittered him. He decided he could serve the cause best by going to America: but then America came into the war too. It was at this point that he suddenly saw Sweden as the home of a really new and radical art, but the various oppressors had given him no facilities for going to Sweden. There were money troubles. His father, who had never progressed beyond the most atrocious mental complacency and smugness of the Victorian epoch, was giving him a ludicrously inadequate allowance. And he had been very badly treated by a girl too. He had thought her a really civilised and adult personality, and then she had unexpectedly revealed that she was a mass of bourgeois prejudices and monogamic instincts. Jealousy, possessiveness, was a quality he particularly disliked. She had even shown herself, at the end, to be mean about money. That was the last straw. He had jumped under a train. . . .

I gave a start, but he took no notice.

Even then, he continued, ill luck had continued to dog him. He’d been sent to the grey town. But of course it was a mistake. I would find, he assured me, that all the other passengers would be with me on the return journey. But he would not. He was going to stay ‘there’. He felt quite

certain that he was going where, at last, his finely critical spirit would no longer be outraged by an uncongenial environment — where he would find ‘Recognition’ and ‘Appreciation’. Meanwhile, since I hadn’t got my glasses, he would read me the passage about which Cyril Blellow had been so insensitive. . . .

It was just then that we were interrupted. One of the quarrels which were perpetually simmering in the bus had boiled over and for a moment there was a stampede. Knives were drawn: pistols were fired: but it all seemed strangely innocuous and when it was over I found myself unharmed, though in a different seat and with a new companion. He was an intelligent-looking man with a rather bulbous nose and a bowler hat. I looked out of the windows. We were now so high that all below us had become featureless. But fields, rivers, or mountains I did not see, and I got the impression that the grey town still filled the whole field of vision.

‘It seems the deuce of a town’, I volunteered, ‘and that’s what I can’t understand. The parts of it that I saw were so empty. Was there once a much larger population?’

‘Not at all’, said my neighbour. ‘The trouble is that they’re so quarrelsome. As soon as anyone arrives he settles in some street. Before he’s been there twenty-four hours he quarrels with his neighbour. Before the week is over he’s quarrelled so badly that he decides to move. Very likely he finds the next street empty because all the people there have quarrelled with *their* neighbours — and moved. If so he settles in. If by any chance the street is full, he goes further. But even if he stays, it makes no odds. He’s sure to have another quarrel pretty soon and then he’ll move on again. Finally he’ll move right out to the edge of the town and build a new house. You see, it’s easy here. You’ve only got to *think* a house and there it is. That’s how the town keeps on growing.’

‘Leaving more and more empty streets?’

‘That’s right. And time’s sort of odd here. That place where we caught the bus is thousands of miles from the Civic Centre where all the newcomers arrive from earth. All the people you’ve met were living near the bus stop: but they’d taken centuries — of our time — to get there, by gradual removals.’

‘And what about the earlier arrivals? I mean — there must be people who came from earth to your town even longer ago.’

‘That’s right. There are. They’ve been moving on and on. Getting further apart. They’re so far off by now that they could never think of coming to the bus stop at all. Astronomical distances. There’s a bit of rising ground near where I live and a chap has a telescope. You can see the lights of the inhabited houses, where those old ones live, millions of miles away. Millions of miles from us and from one another. Every now and then they move further still. That’s one of the disappointments. I thought you’d meet interesting historical characters. But you don’t: they’re too far away.’

‘Would they get to the bus stop in time, if they ever set out?’

‘Well — theoretically. But it’d be a distance of light-years. And they wouldn’t want to by now: not those old chaps like Tamberlaine and Genghiz Khan, or Julius Caesar, or Henry the Fifth.’

‘Wouldn’t want to?’

‘That’s right. The nearest of those old ones is Napoleon. We know that because two chaps made the journey to see him. They’d started long before I came, of course, but I was there when they came back. About fifteen thousand years of our time it took them. We’ve picked out the house by now. Just a little pin prick of light and nothing else near it for millions of miles.’

‘But they got there?’

‘That’s right. He’d built himself a huge house all in the Empire style — rows of windows flaming with light, though it only shows as a pin prick from where I live.’

‘Did they see Napoleon?’

‘That’s right. They went up and looked through one of the windows. Napoleon was there all right.’

‘What was he doing?’

‘Walking up and down — up and down all the time — left-right, left-right — never stopping for a moment. The two chaps watched him for about a year and he never rested. And muttering to himself all the time. “It was Soult’s fault. It was Ney’s fault. It was Josephine’s fault. It was the fault of the Russians: It was the fault of the English.” Like that all the time. Never stopped for a moment. A little, fat man and he looked kind of tired. But he didn’t seem able to stop it.’

From the vibrations I gathered that the bus was still moving, but there was now nothing to be seen from the windows which confirmed this —

nothing but grey void above and below.

‘Then the town will go on spreading indefinitely?’ I said.

‘That’s right,’ said the Intelligent Man. ‘Unless someone can do something about it.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘Well, as a matter of fact, between you and me and the wall, that’s my job at the moment. What’s the trouble about this place? Not that people are quarrelsome — that’s only human nature and was always the same even on earth. The trouble is they have no Needs. You get everything you want (not very good quality, of course) by just imagining it. That’s why it never costs any trouble to move to another street or build another house. In other words, there’s no proper economic basis for any community life. If they needed real shops, chaps would have to stay near where the real shops were. If they needed real houses they’d have to stay near where builders were. It’s scarcity that enables a society to exist. Well, that’s where I come in. I’m not going this trip for my health. As far as that goes I don’t think it would suit me up there. But if I can come back with some *real* commodities — anything at all that you could really bite or drink or sit on — why, at once you’d get a demand down in our town. I’d start a little business. I’d have something to sell. You’d soon get people coming to live near — centralisation. Two fully-inhabited streets would accommodate the people that are now spread over a million square miles of empty streets. I’d make a nice little profit and be a public benefactor as well.’

‘You mean, if they *had* to live together they’d gradually learn to quarrel less?’

‘Well, I don’t know about that. I daresay they could be kept a bit quieter. You’d have a chance to build up a police force. Knock some kind of discipline into them. Anyway’ (here he dropped his voice) ‘it’d be *better*, you know. Everyone admits that. Safety in numbers.’

‘Safety from what?’, I began, but my companion nudged me to be silent. I changed my question.

‘But look here’, said I, ‘if they can get everything just by imagining it, why would they want any *real* things, as you call them?’

‘Eh? Oh well, they’d like houses that really kept out the rain.’

‘Their present houses, don’t?’

‘Well of course not. How could they?’

‘What the devil is the use of building them, then?’ The Intelligent Man put his head closer to mine. ‘Safety again,’ he muttered. ‘At least, the feeling of safety. It’s all right *now*: but later on . . . you understand.’

‘What?’ said I, almost involuntarily sinking my own voice to a whisper.

He articulated noiselessly as if expecting that I understood lip-reading. I put my ear close to his mouth. ‘Speak up,’ I said. ‘It will be dark presently,’ he mouthed.

‘You mean the evening *is* really going to turn into a night in the end?’

He nodded.

‘What’s that got to do with it?’ said I.

‘Well . . . no one wants to be out of doors when that happens.’

‘Why?’

His reply was so furtive that I had to ask him several times to repeat it. When he had done so, being a little annoyed (as one so often is with whisperers) I replied without remembering to lower my voice.

‘Who are “They”?’ I asked. ‘And what are you afraid they’ll do to you? And why should they come out when it’s dark? And what protection could an imaginary house give if there was any danger?’

‘Here!’ shouted the Big Man. ‘Who’s talking all that stuff? You stop your whispering you two if you don’t want a hiding, see? Spreading rumours, that’s what I call it. You shut your face, Ikey, see?’

‘Quite right. Scandalous. Ought to be prosecuted. How did they get into the bus?’ growled the passengers.

A fat clean-shaven man who sat on the seat in front of me leaned back and addressed me in a cultured voice.

‘Excuse me,’ he said, ‘but I couldn’t help overhearing parts of your conversation. It is astonishing how these primitive superstitions linger on. I beg your pardon? Oh, God bless my soul, that’s all it is. There is not a shred of evidence that this twilight is ever going to turn into a night. There has been a revolution of opinion on that in educated circles. I am surprised that you haven’t heard of it. All the nightmare fantasies of our ancestors are being swept away. What we now see in this subdued and delicate half-light is the promise of the dawn: the slow turning of a whole nation towards the light. Slow and imperceptible, of course. “And not through Eastern windows only, When daylight comes, comes in the light.” And that passion for “real” commodities which our friend speaks of is only materialism, you

know. It’s retrogressive. Earth-bound! A hankering for matter. But *we* look on this spiritual city — for with all its faults it *is* spiritual — as a nursery in which the creative functions of man, now freed from the clogs of matter, begin to try their wings. A sublime thought.’

Hours later there came a change. It began to grow light in the bus. The greyness outside the windows turned from mud-colour to mother of pearl, then to faintest blue, then to a bright blueness that stung the eyes. We seemed to be floating in a pure vacancy. There were no lands, no sun, no stars in sight: only the radiant abyss. I let down the window beside me. Delicious freshness came in for a second, and then —

‘What the hell are you doing?’ shouted the Intelligent Man, leaning roughly across me and pulling the window sharply up. ‘Want us all to catch our death of cold?’

‘Hit him a biff,’ said the Big Man.

I glanced round the bus. Though the windows were closed, and soon muffed, the bus was full of light. It was cruel light. I shrank from the faces and forms by which I was surrounded. They were all fixed faces, full not of possibilities but of impossibilities, some gaunt, some bloated, some glaring with idiotic ferocity, some drowned beyond recovery in dreams; but all, in one way or another, distorted and faded. One had a feeling that they might fall to pieces at any moment if the light grew much stronger. Then — there was a mirror on the end wall of the bus — I caught sight of my own.

And still the light grew.

3.

A cliff had loomed up ahead. It sank vertically beneath us so far that I could not see the bottom, and it was dark and smooth. We were mounting all the time. At last the top of the cliff became visible like a thin line of emerald green stretched tight as a fiddle-string. Presently we glided over that top: we were flying above a level, grassy country through which there ran a wide river. We were losing height now: some of the tallest tree tops were only twenty feet below us. Then, suddenly we were at rest. Everyone had jumped up. Curses, taunts, blows, a filth of vituperation, came to my ears as my fellow-passengers struggled to get out. A moment later, and they had all succeeded. I was alone in the bus, and through the open door there came to me in the fresh stillness the singing of a lark.

I got out. The light and coolness that drenched me were like those of summer morning, early morning a minute or two before the sunrise, only that there was a certain difference. I had the sense of being in a larger space, perhaps even a larger *sort* of space, than I had ever known before: as if the sky were further off and the extent of the green plain wider than they could be on this little ball of earth. I had got ‘out’ in some sense which made the Solar System itself seem an indoor affair. It gave me a feeling of freedom, but also of exposure, possibly of danger, which continued to accompany me through all that followed. It is the impossibility of communicating that feeling, or even of inducing you to remember it as I proceed, which makes me despair of conveying the real quality of what I saw and heard.

At first, of course, my attention was caught by my fellow-passengers, who were still grouped about in the neighbourhood of the omnibus, though beginning, some of them, to walk forward into the landscape with hesitating steps. I gasped when I saw them. Now that they were in the light, they were transparent — fully transparent when they stood between me and it, smudgy and imperfectly opaque when they stood in the shadow of some tree. They were in fact ghosts: man-shaped stains on the brightness of that air. One could attend to them or ignore them at will as you do with the dirt on a window pane. I noticed that the grass did not bend under their feet: even the dew drops were not disturbed.

Then some re-adjustment of the mind or some focussing of my eyes took place, and I saw the whole phenomenon the other way round. The men were as they had always been; as all the men I had known had been perhaps. It was the light, the grass, the trees that were different; made of some different substance, so much solider than things in our country that men were ghosts by comparison. Moved by a sudden thought, I bent down and tried to pluck a daisy which was growing at my feet. The stalk wouldn't break. I tried to twist it, but it wouldn't twist. I tugged till the sweat stood out on my forehead and I had lost most of the skin off my hands. The little flower was hard, not like wood or even like iron, but like diamond. There was a leaf — a young tender beech-leaf, lying in the grass beside it. I tried to pick the leaf up: my heart almost cracked with the effort, and I believe I did just raise it. But I had to let it go at once; it was heavier than a sack of coal. As I stood, recovering my breath with great gasps and looking down at the daisy, I noticed that I could see the grass not only between my feet but *through* them. I also was a phantom. Who will give me words to express the terror of that discovery? 'Golly!' thought I, 'I'm in for it this time.'

'I don't like it! I don't like it,' screamed a voice. 'It gives me the pip!' One of the ghosts had darted past me, back into the bus. She never came out of it again as far as I know.

The others remained, uncertain.

'Hi, Mister,' said the Big Man, addressing the Driver, 'when have we got to be back?'

'You need never come back unless you want to,' he replied. 'Stay as long as you please.' There was an awkward pause.

'This is simply ridiculous,' said a voice in my ear. One of the quieter and more respectable ghosts had sidled up to me. 'There must be some mismanagement,' he continued. 'What's the sense of allowing all that riff-raff to float about here all day? Look at them. They're not enjoying it. They'd be far happier at home. They don't even know what to do.'

'I don't know very well myself,' said I. 'What does one do?'

'Oh me? I shall be met in a moment or two. I'm expected. I'm not bothering about that. But it's rather unpleasant on one's first day to have the whole place crowded out with trippers. Damn it, one's chief object in coming here at all was to avoid them!'

He drifted away from me. And I began to look about. In spite of his reference to a 'crowd', the solitude was so vast that I could hardly notice

the knot of phantoms in the foreground. Greenness and light had almost swallowed them up. But very far away I could see what might be either a great bank of cloud or a range of mountains. Sometimes I could make out in it steep forests, far-withdrawing valleys, and even mountain cities perched on inaccessible summits. At other times it became indistinct. The height was so enormous that my waking sight could not have taken in such an object at all. Light brooded on the top of it: slanting down thence it made long shadows behind every tree on the plain. There was no change and no progression as the hours passed. The promise — or the threat — of sunrise rested immovably up there.

Long after that I saw people coming to meet us. Because they were bright I saw them while they were still very distant, and at first I did not know that they were people at all. Mile after mile they drew nearer. The earth shook under their tread as their strong feet sank into the wet turf. A tiny haze and a sweet smell went up where they had crushed the grass and scattered the dew. Some were naked, some robed. But the naked ones did not seem less adorned, and the robes did not disguise in those who wore them the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh. Some were bearded but no one in that company struck me as being of any particular age. One gets glimpses, even in our country, of that which is ageless — heavy thought, in the face of an infant, and frolic childhood in that of a very old man. Here it was all like that. They came on steadily. I did not entirely like it. Two of the ghosts screamed and ran for the bus. The rest of us huddled closer to one another.

4.

As the solid people came nearer still I noticed that they were moving with order and determination as though each of them had marked his man in our shadowy company. ‘There are going to be affecting scenes,’ I said to myself. ‘Perhaps it would not be right to look on.’ With that, I sidled away on some vague pretext of doing a little exploring. A grove of huge cedars to my right seemed attractive and I entered it. Walking proved difficult. The grass, hard as diamonds to my unsubstantial feet, made me feel as if I were walking on wrinkled rock, and I suffered pains like those of the mermaid in Hans Andersen. A bird ran across in front of me and I envied it. It belonged to that country and was as real as the grass. It could bend the stalks and spatter itself with the dew.

Almost at once I was followed by what I have called the Big Man — to speak more accurately, the Big Ghost. He in his turn was followed by one of the bright people. ‘Don’t you know me?’ he shouted to the Ghost: and I found it impossible not to turn and attend. The face of the solid spirit — he was one of those that wore a robe — made me want to dance, it was so jocund, so established in its youthfulness.

‘Well, I’m damned,’ said the Ghost. ‘I wouldn’t have believed it. It’s a fair knock-out. It isn’t right, Len, you know. What about poor Jack, eh? You look pretty pleased with yourself, but what I say is, What about poor Jack?’

‘He is here,’ said the other. ‘You will meet him soon, if you stay.’

‘But you murdered him.’

‘Of course I did. It is all right now.’

‘All right, is it? All right for you, you mean. But what about the poor chap himself, laying cold and dead?’

‘But he isn’t. I have told you, you will meet him soon. He sent you his love.’

‘What I’d like to understand’, said the Ghost, ‘is what you’re here for, as pleased as Punch, you, a bloody murderer, while I’ve been walking the streets down there and living in a place like a pigstye all these years.’

‘That is a little hard to understand at first. But it is all over now. You will be pleased about it presently. Till then there is no need to bother about it.’

‘No need to bother about it? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?’

‘No. Not as you mean. I do not look at myself. I have given up myself. I had to, you know, after the murder. That was what it did for me. And that was how everything began.’

‘Personally,’ said the Big Ghost with an emphasis which contradicted the ordinary meaning of the word, ‘Personally, I’d have thought you and I ought to be the other way round. That’s my personal opinion.’

‘Very likely we soon shall be,’ said the other. ‘If you’ll stop thinking about it.’

‘Look at me, now,’ said the Ghost, slapping its chest (but the slap made no noise). ‘I gone straight all my life. I don’t say I was a religious man and I don’t say I had no faults, far from it. But I done my best all my life, see? I done my best by everyone, that’s the sort of chap I was. I never asked for anything that wasn’t mine by rights. If I wanted a drink I paid for it and if I took my wages I done my job, see? That’s the sort I was and I don’t care who knows it.’

‘It would be much better not to go on about that now.’

‘Who’s going on? I’m not arguing. I’m just telling you the sort of chap I was, see? I’m asking for nothing but my rights. You may think you can put me down because you’re dressed up like that (which you weren’t when you worked under me) and I’m only a poor man. But I got to have my rights same as you, see?’

‘Oh no. It’s not so bad as that. I haven’t got my rights, or I should not be here. You will not get yours either. You’ll get something far better. Never fear.’

‘That’s just what I say. I haven’t got my rights. I always done my best and I never done nothing wrong. And what I don’t see is why I should be put below a bloody murderer like you.’

‘Who knows whether you will be? Only be happy and come with me.’

‘What do you keep on arguing for? I’m only telling you the sort of chap I am. I only want my rights. I’m not asking for anybody’s bleeding charity.’

‘Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought.’

‘That may do very well for you, I daresay. If they choose to let in a bloody murderer all because he makes a poor mouth at the last moment, that’s their look out. But I don’t see myself going in the same boat with you, see? Why should I? I don’t want charity. I’m a decent man and if I had my rights I’d have been here long ago and you can tell them I said so.’

The other shook his head. ‘You can never do it like that,’ he said. ‘Your feet will never grow hard enough to walk on our grass that way. You’d be tired out before we got to the mountains. And it isn’t exactly true, you know.’ Mirth danced in his eyes as he said it.

‘What isn’t true?’ asked the Ghost sulkily.

‘You weren’t a decent man and you didn’t do your best. We none of us were and we none of us did. Lord bless you, it doesn’t matter. There is no need to go into it all now.’

‘You!’ gasped the Ghost. ‘*You* have the face to tell *me* I wasn’t a decent chap?’

‘Of course. Must I go into all that? I will tell you one thing to begin with. Murdering old Jack wasn’t the worst thing I did. That was the work of a moment and I was half mad when I did it. But I murdered you in my heart, deliberately, for years. I used to lie awake at nights thinking what I’d do to you if ever I got the chance. That is why I have been sent to you now: to ask your forgiveness and to be your servant as long as you need one, and longer if it pleases you. I was the worst. But all the men who worked under you felt the same. You made it hard for us, you know. And you made it hard for your wife too and for your children.’

‘You mind your own business, young man,’ said the Ghost. ‘None of your lip, see? Because I’m not taking any impudence from you about my private affairs.’

‘There are no private affairs,’ said the other.

‘And I’ll tell you another thing,’ said the Ghost. ‘You can clear off, see? You’re not wanted. I may be only a poor man but I’m not making pals with a murderer, let alone taking lessons from him. Made it hard for you and your like, did I? If I had you back there I’d show you what work is.’

‘Come and show me now,’ said the other with laughter in his voice. ‘It will be joy going to the mountains, but there will be plenty of work.’

‘You don’t suppose I’d go with you?’

‘Don’t refuse. You will never get there alone. And I am the one who was sent to you.’

‘So that’s the trick, is it?’ shouted the Ghost, outwardly bitter, and yet I thought there was a kind of triumph in its voice. It had been entreated: it could make a refusal: and this seemed to it a kind of advantage. ‘I thought there’d be some damned nonsense. It’s all a clique, all a bloody clique. Tell

them I’m not coming, see? I’d rather be damned than go along with you. I came here to get my rights, see? Not to go snivelling along on charity tied onto your apron-strings. If they’re too fine to have me without you, I’ll go home.’ It was almost happy now that it could, in a sense, threaten. ‘That’s what I’ll do,’ it repeated, ‘I’ll go home. I didn’t come here to be treated like a dog. I’ll go home. That’s what I’ll do. Damn and blast the whole pack of you . . .’ In the end, still grumbling, but whimpering also a little as it picked its way over the sharp grasses, it made off.

5.

For a moment there was silence under the cedar trees and then — *pad, pad, pad* — it was broken. Two velvet-footed lions came bouncing into the open space, their eyes fixed upon each other, and started playing some solemn romp. Their manes looked as if they had been just dipped in the river whose noise I could hear close at hand, though the trees hid it. Not greatly liking my company, I moved away to find that river, and after passing some thick flowering bushes, I succeeded. The bushes came almost down to the brink. It was as smooth as Thames but flowed swiftly like a mountain stream: pale green where trees overhung it but so clear that I could count the pebbles at the bottom. Close beside me I saw another of the Bright People in conversation with a ghost. It was that fat ghost with the cultured voice who had addressed me in the bus, and it seemed to be wearing gaiters.

‘My dear boy, I’m delighted to see you,’ it was saying to the Spirit, who was naked and almost blindingly white. ‘I was talking to your poor father the other day and wondering where you were.’

‘You didn’t bring him?’ said the other.

‘Well, no. He lives a long way from the bus, and, to be quite frank, he’s been getting a little eccentric lately. A little difficult. Losing his grip. He never was prepared to make any great efforts, you know. If you remember, he used to go to sleep when you and I got talking seriously! Ah, Dick, I shall never forget some of our talks. I expect you’ve changed your views a bit since then. You became rather narrow-minded towards the end of your life: but no doubt you’ve broadened out again.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘Well, it’s obvious by now, isn’t it, that you weren’t quite right. Why, my dear boy, you were coming to believe in a literal Heaven and Hell!’

‘But wasn’t I right?’

‘Oh, in a spiritual sense, to be sure. I still believe in them in that way. I am still, my dear boy, looking for the Kingdom. But nothing superstitious or mythological. . . .’

‘Excuse me. Where do you imagine you’ve been?’

‘Ah, I see. You mean that the grey town with its continual hope of morning (we must all live by hope, must we not?), with its field for

indefinite progress, is, in a sense, Heaven, if only we have eyes to see it? That is a beautiful idea.'

'I didn't mean that at all. Is it possible you don't know where you've been?'

'Now that you mention it, I don't think we ever do give it a name. What do you call it?'

'We call it Hell.'

'There is no need to be profane, my dear boy. I may not be very orthodox, in your sense of that word, but I do feel that these matters ought to be discussed simply, and seriously, and reverently.'

'Discuss Hell *reverently*? I meant what I said. You have been in Hell: though if you don't go back you may call it Purgatory.'

'Go on, my dear boy, go on. That is *so* like you. No doubt you'll tell me why, on your view, I was sent there. I'm not angry.'

'But don't you know? You went there because you are an apostate.'

'Are you serious, Dick?'

'Perfectly.'

'This is worse than I expected. Do you really think people are penalised for their honest opinions? Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that those opinions were mistaken.'

'Do you really think there are no sins of intellect?'

'There are indeed, Dick. There is hide-bound prejudice, and intellectual dishonesty, and timidity, and stagnation. But honest opinions fearlessly followed — they are not sins.'

'I know we used to talk that way. I did it too until the end of my life when I became what you call narrow. It all turns on what are honest opinions.'

'Mine certainly were. They were not only honest but heroic. I asserted them fearlessly. When the doctrine of the Resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me, I openly rejected it. I preached my famous sermon. I defied the whole chapter. I took every risk.'

'What risk? What was at all likely to come of it except what actually came — popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric?'

'Dick, this is unworthy of you. What are you suggesting?'

'Friend, I am not suggesting at all. You see, I *know* now. Let us be frank. Our opinions were not honestly come by. We simply found ourselves in

contact with a certain current of ideas and plunged into it because it seemed modern and successful. At College, you know, we just started automatically writing the kind of essays that got good marks and saying the kind of things that won applause. When, in our whole lives, did we honestly face, in solitude, the one question on which all turned: whether after all the Supernatural might not in fact occur? When did we put up one moment's real resistance to the loss of our faith?'

'If this is meant to be a sketch of the genesis of liberal theology in general, I reply that it is a mere libel. Do you suggest that men like. . .'

'I have nothing to do with any generality. Nor with any man but you and me. Oh, as you love your own soul, remember. You know that you and I were playing with loaded dice. We didn't *want* the other to be true. We were afraid of crude salvationism, afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age, afraid of ridicule, afraid (above all) of real spiritual fears and hopes.'

'I'm far from denying that young men may make mistakes. They may well be influenced by current fashions of thought. But it's not a question of how the opinions are formed. The point is that they were my honest opinions, sincerely expressed.'

'Of course. Having allowed oneself to drift, unresisting, unpraying, accepting every half-conscious solicitation from our desires, we reached a point where we no longer believed the Faith. Just in the same way, a jealous man, drifting and unresisting, reaches a point at which he believes lies about his best friend: a drunkard reaches a point at which (for the moment) he actually believes that another glass will do him no harm. The beliefs are sincere in the sense that they do occur as psychological events in the man's mind. If that's what you mean by sincerity they are sincere, and so were ours. But errors which are sincere in that sense are not innocent.'

'You'll be justifying the Inquisition in a moment!'

'Why? Because the Middle Ages erred in one direction, does it follow that there is no error in the opposite direction?'

'Well, this is extremely interesting,' said the Episcopal Ghost. 'It's a point of view. Certainly, it's a point of view. In the meantime. . .'

'There is no meantime,' replied the other. 'All that is over. We are not playing now. I have been talking of the past (your past and mine) only in order that you may turn from it forever. One wrench and the tooth will be out. You can begin as if nothing had ever gone wrong. White as snow. It's all true, you know. He is in me, for you, with that power. And — I have

come a long journey to meet you. You have seen Hell: you are in sight of Heaven. Will you, even now, repent and believe?'

'I'm not sure that I've got the exact point you are trying to make,' said the Ghost.

'I am not trying to make any point,' said the Spirit. 'I am telling you to repent and believe.'

'But my dear boy, I believe already. We may not be perfectly agreed, but you have completely misjudged me if you do not realise that my religion is a very real and a very precious thing to me.'

'Very well,' said the other, as if changing his plan. 'Will you believe in *me*?'

'In what sense?'

'Will you come with me to the mountains? It will hurt at first, until your feet are hardened. Reality is harsh to the feet of shadows. But will you come?'

'Well, that is a plan. I am perfectly ready to consider it. Of course I should require some assurances . . . I should want a guarantee that you are taking me to a place where I shall find a wider sphere of usefulness — and scope for the talents that God has given me — and an atmosphere of free inquiry — in short, all that one means by civilisation and — er — the spiritual life.'

'No,' said the other. 'I can promise you none of these things. No sphere of usefulness: you are not needed there at all. No scope for your talents: only forgiveness for having perverted them. No atmosphere of inquiry, for I will bring you to the land not of questions but of answers, and you shall see the face of God.'

'Ah, but we must all interpret those beautiful words in our own way! For me there is no such thing as a final answer. The free wind of inquiry must *always* continue to blow through the mind, must it not? "Prove all things" . . . to travel hopefully is better than to arrive.'

'If that were true, and known to be true, how could anyone travel hopefully? There would be nothing to hope for.'

'But you must feel yourself that there is something stifling about the idea of finality? Stagnation, my dear boy, what is more soul-destroying than stagnation?'

‘You think that, because hitherto you have experienced truth only with the abstract intellect. I will bring you where you can taste it like honey and be embraced by it as by a bridegroom. Your thirst shall be quenched.’

‘Well, really, you know, I am not aware of a thirst for some ready-made truth which puts an end to intellectual activity in the way you seem to be describing. Will it leave me the free play of Mind, Dick? I must insist on that, you know.’

‘Free, as a man is free to drink while he is drinking. He is not free still to be dry.’ The Ghost seemed to think for a moment. ‘I can make nothing of that idea,’ it said.

‘Listen!’ said the White Spirit. ‘Once you were a child. Once you knew what inquiry was for. There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers, and were glad when you had found them. Become that child again: even now.’

‘Ah, but when I became a man I put away childish things.’

‘You have gone far wrong. Thirst was made for water; inquiry for truth. What you now call the free play of inquiry has neither more nor less to do with the ends for which intelligence was given you than masturbation has to do with marriage.’

‘If we cannot be reverent, there is at least no need to be obscene. The suggestion that I should return at my age to the mere factual inquisitiveness of boyhood strikes me as preposterous. In any case, that question-and-answer conception of thought only applies to matters of fact. Religious and speculative questions are surely on a different level.’

‘We know nothing of religion here: we think only of Christ. We know nothing of speculation. Come and see. I will bring you to Eternal Fact, the Father of all other facthood.’

‘I should object very strongly to describing God as a “fact”. The Supreme Value would surely be a less inadequate description. It is hardly. . . .’

‘Do you not even believe that He exists?’

‘Exists? What does Existence mean? You *will* keep on implying some sort of static, ready-made reality which is, so to speak, “there”, and to which our minds have simply to conform. These great mysteries cannot be approached in that way. If there were such a thing (there is no need to interrupt, my dear boy) quite frankly, I should not be interested in it. It

would be of no *religious* significance. God, for me, is something purely spiritual. The spirit of sweetness and light and tolerance — and, er, service, Dick, service. We mustn't forget that, you know.'

'If the thirst of the Reason is really dead . . .', said the Spirit, and then stopped as though pondering. Then suddenly he said, 'Can you, at least, still desire happiness?'

'Happiness, my dear Dick,' said the Ghost placidly, 'happiness, as you will come to see when you are older, lies in the path of duty. Which reminds me. . . . Bless my soul, I'd nearly forgotten. Of course I can't come with you. I have to be back next Friday to read a paper. We have a little Theological Society down there. Oh yes! there is plenty of intellectual life. Not of a very high quality, perhaps. One notices a certain lack of grip — a certain confusion of mind. That is where I can be of some use to them. There are even regrettable jealousies. . . . I don't know why, but tempers seem less controlled than they used to be. Still, one mustn't expect too much of human nature. I feel I can do a great work among them. But you've never asked me what my paper is about! I'm taking the text about growing up to the measure of the stature of Christ and working out an idea which I feel sure you'll be interested in. I'm going to point out how people always forget that Jesus (here the Ghost bowed) was a comparatively young man when he died. He would have outgrown some of his earlier views, you know, if he'd lived. As he might have done, with a little more tact and patience. I am going to ask my audience to consider what his mature views would have been. A profoundly interesting question. What a different Christianity we might have had if only the Founder had reached his full stature! I shall end up by pointing out how this deepens the significance of the Crucifixion. One feels for the first time what a disaster it was: what a tragic waste . . . so much promise cut short. Oh, must you be going? Well, so must I. Goodbye, my dear boy. It has been a great pleasure. Most stimulating and provocative. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.'

The Ghost nodded its head and beamed on the Spirit with a bright clerical smile — or with the best approach to it which such unsubstantial lips could manage — and then turned away humming softly to itself 'City of God, how broad and far.'

But I did not watch him long, for a new idea had just occurred to me. If the grass were hard as rock, I thought, would not the water be hard enough to walk on? I tried it with one foot, and my foot did not go in. Next

moment I stepped boldly out on the surface. I fell on my face at once and got some nasty bruises. I had forgotten that though it was, to me, solid, it was not the less in rapid motion. When I had picked myself up I was about thirty yards further down-stream than the point where I had left the bank. But this did not prevent me from walking up-stream: it only meant that by walking very fast indeed I made very little progress.

6.

The cool smooth skin of the bright water was delicious to my feet and I walked on it for about an hour, making perhaps a couple of hundred yards. Then the going became different. The current grew swifter. Great flakes or islands of foam came swirling down towards me, bruising my shins like stones if I did not get out of their way. The surface became uneven, rounded itself into lovely hollows and elbows of water which distorted the appearance of the pebbles on the bottom and threw me off my balance, so that I had to scramble to shore. But as the banks hereabouts consisted of great flat stones, I continued my journey without much hurt to my feet. An immense yet lovely noise vibrated through the forest. Hours later I rounded a bend and saw the explanation.

Before me green slopes made a wide amphitheatre, enclosing a frothy and pulsating lake into which, over many-coloured rocks, a waterfall was pouring. Here once again I realised that something had happened to my senses so that they were now receiving impressions which would normally exceed their capacity. On earth, such a waterfall could not have been perceived at all as a whole; it was too big. Its sound would have been a terror in the woods for twenty miles. Here, after the first shock, my sensibility ‘took’ both as a well-built ship takes a huge wave. I exulted. The noise, though gigantic, was like giants’ laughter: like the revelry of a whole college of giants together laughing, dancing, singing, roaring at their high works.

Near the place where the fall plunged into the lake there grew a tree. Wet with the spray, half-veiled in foam-bows, flashing with the bright, innumerable birds that flew among its branches, it rose in many shapes of billowy foliage, huge as a fen-land cloud. From every point apples of gold gleamed through the leaves.

Suddenly my attention was diverted by a curious appearance in the foreground. A hawthorn bush not twenty yards away seemed to be behaving oddly. Then I saw that it was not the bush but something standing close to the bush and on this side of it. Finally I realised that it was one of the Ghosts. It was crouching as if to conceal itself from something beyond the bush, and it was looking back at me and making signals. It kept on signing to me to duck down. As I could not see what the danger was, I stood fast.

Presently the Ghost, after peering around in every direction, ventured beyond the hawthorn bush. It could not get on very fast because of the torturing grasses beneath its feet, but it was obviously going as fast as it possibly could, straight for another tree. There it stopped again, standing straight upright against the trunk as though it were taking cover. Because the shadow of the branches now covered it, I could see it better: it was my bowler-hatted companion, the one whom the Big Ghost had called Ikey. After it had stood panting at the tree for about ten minutes and carefully reconnoitred the ground ahead, it made a dash for another tree — such a dash as was possible to it. In this way, with infinite labour and caution, it had reached the great Tree in about an hour. That is, it had come within ten yards of it.

Here it was checked. Round the Tree grew a belt of lilies: to the Ghost an insuperable obstacle. It might as well have tried to tread down an anti-tank trap as to walk *on* them. It lay down and tried to crawl between them but they grew too close and they would not bend. And all the time it was apparently haunted by the terror of discovery. At every whisper of the wind it stopped and cowered: once, at the cry of a bird, it struggled back to its last place of cover: but then desire hounded it out again and it crawled once more to the Tree. I saw it clasp its hands and writhe in the agony of its frustration.

The wind seemed to be rising. I saw the Ghost wring its hand and put its thumb into its mouth — cruelly pinched, I doubt not, between two stems of the lilies when the breeze swayed them. Then came a real gust. The branches of the Tree began to toss. A moment later and half a dozen apples had fallen round the Ghost and on it. He gave a sharp cry, but suddenly checked it. I thought the weight of the golden fruit where it had fallen on him would have disabled him: and certainly, for a few minutes, he was unable to rise. He lay whimpering, nursing his wounds. But soon he was at work again. I could see him feverishly trying to fill his pockets with the apples. Of course it was useless. One could see how his ambitions were gradually forced down. He gave up the idea of a pocketful: two would have to do. He gave up the idea of two, he would take one, the largest one. He gave up that hope. He was now looking for the smallest one. He was trying to find if there was one small enough to carry.

The amazing thing was that he succeeded. When I remembered what the leaf had felt like when I tried to lift it, I could hardly help admiring this

unhappy creature when I saw him rise staggering to his feet actually holding the smallest of the apples in his hands. He was lame from his hurts, and the weight bent him double. Yet even so, inch by inch, still availing himself of every scrap of cover, he set out on his *via dolorosa* to the bus, carrying his torture.

‘Fool. Put it down,’ said a great voice suddenly. It was quite unlike any other voice I had heard so far. It was a thunderous yet liquid voice. With an appalling certainty I knew that the waterfall itself was speaking: and I saw now (though it did not cease to look like a waterfall) that it was also a bright angel who stood, like one crucified, against the rocks and poured himself perpetually down towards the forest with loud joy.

‘Fool,’ he said, ‘put it down. You cannot take it back. There is not room for it in Hell. Stay here and learn to eat such apples. The very leaves and the blades of grass in the wood will delight to teach you.’

Whether the Ghost heard or not, I don’t know. At any rate, after pausing for a few minutes, it braced itself anew for its agonies and continued with even greater caution till I lost sight of it.

7.

Although I watched the misfortunes of the Ghost in the Bowler with some complacency, I found, when we were left alone, that I could not bear the presence of the Water-Giant. It did not appear to take any notice of me, but I became self-conscious; and I rather think there was some assumed nonchalance in my movements as I walked away over the flat rocks, down-stream again. I was beginning to be tired. Looking at the silver fish which darted over the riverbed, I wished greatly that to me also that water were permeable. I should have liked a dip.

‘Thinking of going back?’ said a voice close at hand. I turned and saw a tall ghost standing with its back against a tree, chewing a ghostly cheroot. It was that of a lean hard-bitten man with grey hair and a gruff, but not uneducated voice: the kind of man I have always instinctively felt to be reliable.

‘I don’t know,’ said I. ‘Are you?’

‘Yes,’ it replied. ‘I guess I’ve seen about all there is to see.’

‘You don’t think of staying?’

‘That’s all propaganda,’ it said. ‘Of course there never was any question of our staying. You can’t eat the fruit and you can’t drink the water and it takes you all your time to walk on the grass. A human being couldn’t live here. All that idea of staying is only an advertisement stunt.’

‘Then why did you come?’

‘Oh, I don’t know. Just to have a look round. I’m the sort of chap who likes to see things for himself. Wherever I’ve been I’ve always had a look at anything that was being cracked up. When I was out East, I went to see Pekin. When . . .’

‘What was Pekin like?’

‘Nothing to it. Just one darn wall inside another. Just a trap for tourists. I’ve been pretty well everywhere. Niagara Falls, the Pyramids, Salt Lake City, the Taj Mahal. . . .’

‘What was *it* like?’

‘Not worth looking at. They’re all advertisement stunts. All run by the same people. There’s a combine, you know, a World Combine, that just takes an Atlas and decides where they’ll have a Sight. Doesn’t matter what they choose: anything’ll do as long as the publicity’s properly managed.’

‘And you’ve lived — er — *down there* — in the Town — for some time?’

‘In what they call Hell? Yes. It’s a flop too. They lead you to expect red fire and devils and all sorts of interesting people sizzling on grids — Henry VIII and all that — but when you get there it’s just like any other town.’

‘I prefer it up here,’ said I.

‘Well, I don’t see what all the talk is about,’ said the Hard-Bitten Ghost. ‘It’s as good as any other park to look at, and darned uncomfortable.’

‘There seems to be some idea that if one stays here one would get — well, solider — grow acclimatised.’

‘I know all about that,’ said the Ghost. ‘Same old lie. People have been telling me that sort of thing all my life. They told me in the nursery that if I were good I’d be happy. And they told me at school that Latin would get easier as I went on. After I’d been married a month some fool was telling me that there were always difficulties at first, but with Tact and Patience I’d soon “settle down” and like it! And all through two wars what didn’t they say about the good time coming if only I’d be a brave boy and go on being shot at? Of course they’ll play the old game here if anyone’s fool enough to listen.’

‘But who are “They”? This might be run by someone different?’

‘Entirely new management, eh? Don’t you believe it! It’s *never* a new management. You’ll always find the same old Ring. I know all about dear, kind Mummie coming up to your bedroom and getting all she wants to know out of you: but you always found she and Father were the same firm really. Didn’t we find that both sides in all the wars were run by the same Armament Firms? or the same Firm, which is behind the Jews and the Vatican and the Dictators and the Democracies and all the rest of it. All this stuff up here is run by the same people as the Town. They’re just laughing at us.’

‘I thought they were at war?’

‘Of course you did. That’s the official version. But who’s ever seen any signs of it? Oh, I know that’s how they *talk*. But if there’s a real war why don’t they do anything? Don’t you see that if the official version were true these chaps up here would attack and sweep the Town out of existence? They’ve got the strength. If they wanted to rescue *us* they could do it. But obviously the last thing they want is to end their so-called “war”. The whole game depends on keeping it going.’

This account of the matter struck me as uncomfortably plausible. I said nothing.

‘Anyway,’ said the Ghost, ‘who wants to be rescued? What the hell would there be to *do* here?’

‘Or there?’ said I.

‘Quite,’ said the Ghost. ‘They’ve got you either way.’

‘What would you like to do if you had your choice?’ I asked.

‘There you go!’ said the Ghost with a certain triumph. ‘Asking *me* to make a plan. It’s up to the Management to find something that doesn’t bore us, isn’t it? It’s their job. Why should we do it for them? That’s just where all the parsons and moralists have got the thing upside down. They keep on asking *us* to alter ourselves. But if the people who run the show are so clever and so powerful, why don’t they find something to suit their public? All this poppycock about growing harder so that the grass doesn’t hurt our feet, now! There’s an example. What would you say if you went to a hotel where the eggs were all bad; and when you complained to the Boss, instead of apologising and changing his dairyman, he just told you that if you tried you’d get to like bad eggs in time?’

‘Well, I’ll be getting along,’ said the Ghost after a short silence. ‘You coming my way?’

‘There doesn’t seem to be much point in going anywhere on your showing,’ I replied. A great depression had come over me. ‘And at least it’s not raining here.’

‘Not at the moment,’ said the Hard-Bitten Ghost. ‘But I never saw one of these bright mornings that didn’t turn to rain later on. And, by gum, when it does rain here! Ah, you hadn’t thought of that? It hadn’t occurred to you that with the sort of water they have here every raindrop will make a hole in you, like a machine-gun bullet. That’s their little joke, you see. First of all tantalise you with ground you can’t walk on and water you can’t drink and then drill you full of holes. But they won’t catch *me* that way.’

A few minutes later he moved off.

8.

I sat still on a stone by the river's side feeling as miserable as I ever felt in my life. Hitherto it had not occurred to me to doubt the intentions of the Solid People, nor to question the essential goodness of their country even if it were a country which I could not long inhabit. It had indeed once crossed my mind that if these Solid People were as benevolent as I had heard one or two of them claim to be, they might have done something to help the inhabitants of the Town — something more than meeting them on the plain. Now a terrible explanation came into my mind. How if they had never meant to do us good at all? How if this whole trip were allowed the Ghosts merely to mock them? Horrible myths and doctrines stirred in my memory. I thought how the Gods had punished Tantalus. I thought of the place in the Book of Revelation where it says that the smoke of Hell goes up forever in the sight of the blessed spirits. I remembered how poor Cowper, dreaming that he was not after all doomed to perdition, at once knew the dream to be false and said, 'These are the sharpest arrows in His quiver.' And what the Hard-Bitten Ghost had said about the rain was clearly true. Even a shower of dew-drops from a branch might tear me in pieces. I had not thought of this before. And how easily I might have ventured into the spray of the waterfall!

The sense of danger, which had never been entirely absent since I left the bus, awoke with sharp urgency. I gazed around on the trees, the flowers, and the talking cataract: they had begun to look unbearably sinister. Bright insects darted to and fro. If one of those were to fly into my face, would it not go right through me? If it settled on my head, would it crush me to earth? Terror whispered, 'This is no place for you.' I remembered also the lions.

With no very clear plan in my mind, I rose and began walking away from the river in the direction where the trees grew closest together. I had not fully made up my mind to go back to the bus, but I wanted to avoid open places. If only I could find a trace of evidence that it was really possible for a Ghost to stay — that the choice was not only a cruel comedy — I would not go back. In the meantime I went on, gingerly, and keeping a sharp look-out. In about half an hour I came to a little clearing with some

bushes in the centre. As I stopped, wondering if I dared cross it, I realised that I was not alone.

A Ghost hobbled across the clearing — as quickly as it could on that uneasy soil — looking over its shoulder as if it were pursued. I saw that it had been a woman: a well-dressed woman, I thought, but its shadows of finery looked ghastly in the morning light. It was making for the bushes. It could not really get in among them — the twigs and leaves were too hard — but it pressed as close up against them as it could. It seemed to believe it was hiding.

A moment later I heard the sound of feet, and one of the Bright People came in sight: one always noticed that sound there, for we Ghosts made no noise when we walked.

‘Go away!’ squealed the Ghost. ‘Go away! Can’t you see I want to be alone?’

‘But you need help,’ said the Solid One.

‘If you have the least trace of decent feeling left,’ said the Ghost, ‘you’ll keep away. I don’t want help. I want to be left alone. Do go away. You know I can’t walk fast enough on those horrible spikes to get away from you. It’s abominable of you to take advantage.’

‘Oh, that!’ said the Spirit. ‘That’ll soon come right. But you’re going in the wrong direction. It’s back there — to the mountains — you need to go. You can lean on me all the way. I can’t absolutely *carry* you, but you need have almost no weight on your own feet: and it will hurt less at every step.’

‘I’m not afraid of being hurt. You know that.’

‘Then what is the matter?’

‘Can’t you understand *anything*? Do you really suppose I’m going out there among all those people, like *this*?’

‘But why not?’

‘I’d never have come at all if I’d known you were all going to be dressed like that.’

‘Friend, you see I’m not dressed at all.’

‘I didn’t mean that. Do go away.’

‘But can’t you even tell me?’

‘If you can’t understand, there’d be no good trying to explain it. How *can* I go out like this among a lot of people with real solid bodies? It’s far worse than going out with nothing on would have been on earth. Have everyone staring *through* me.’

‘Oh, I see. But we were all a bit ghostly when we first arrived, you know. That’ll wear off. Just come out and try.’

‘But they’ll *see* me.’

‘What does it matter if they do?’

‘I’d rather die.’

‘But you’ve died already. There’s no good trying to go back to that.’

The Ghost made a sound something between a sob and a snarl. ‘I wish I’d never been born,’ it said. ‘What *are* we born for?’

‘For infinite happiness,’ said the Spirit. ‘You can step out into it at any moment. . . .’

‘But, I tell you, they’ll *see* me.’

‘An hour hence and you will not care. A day hence and you will laugh at it. Don’t you remember on earth — there were things too hot to touch with your finger but you could drink them all right? Shame is like that. If you will accept it — if you will drink the cup to the bottom — you will find it very nourishing: but try to do anything else with it and it scalds.’

‘You really mean? . . .’ said the Ghost, and then paused. My suspense was strained up to the height. I felt that my own destiny hung on her reply. I could have fallen at her feet and begged her to yield.

‘Yes,’ said the Spirit. ‘Come and try.’

Almost, I thought the Ghost had obeyed. Certainly it had moved: but suddenly it cried out, ‘No, I can’t. I tell you I can’t. For a moment, while you were talking, I almost thought . . . but when it comes to the point. . . . You’ve no right to ask me to do a thing like that. It’s disgusting. I should never forgive myself if I did. Never, never. And it’s not fair. They ought to have warned us. I’d never have come. And now — please, please go away!’

‘Friend,’ said the Spirit. ‘Could you, only for a moment, fix your mind on something not yourself?’

‘I’ve already given you my answer,’ said the Ghost, coldly but still tearful.

‘Then only one expedient remains,’ said the Spirit, and to my great surprise he set a horn to his lips and blew. I put my hands over my ears. The earth seemed to shake: the whole wood trembled and dindled at the sound. I suppose there must have been a pause after that (though there seemed to be none) before I heard the thudding of hoofs — far off at first, but already

nearer before I had well identified it, and soon so near that I began to look about for some place of safety. Before I had found one the danger was all about us. A herd of unicorns came thundering through the glades: twenty-seven hands high the smallest of them and white as swans but for the red gleam in eyes and nostrils and the flashing indigo of their horns. I can still remember the squelching noise of the soft wet turf under their hoofs, the breaking of the undergrowth, the snorting and the whinneyings; how their hind legs went up and their horned heads down in mimic battle. Even then I wondered for what real battle it might be the rehearsal. I heard the Ghost scream, and I think it made a bolt away from the bushes . . . perhaps towards the Spirit, but I don't know. For my own nerve failed and I fled, not heeding, for the moment, the horrible going underfoot, and not once daring to pause. So I never saw the end of that interview.

9.

‘Where are ye going?’ said a voice with a strong Scotch accent. I stopped and looked. The sound of the unicorns had long since died away and my flight had brought me to open country, I saw the mountains where the unchanging sunrise lay, and in the foreground two or three pines on a little knoll, with some large smooth rocks, and heather. On one of the rocks sat a very tall man, almost a giant, with a flowing beard. I had not yet looked one of the Solid People in the face. Now, when I did so, I discovered that one sees them with a kind of double vision. Here was an enthroned and shining god, whose ageless spirit weighed upon mine like a burden of solid gold: and yet, at the very same moment, here was an old weather-beaten man, one who might have been a shepherd — such a man as tourists think simple because he is honest and neighbours think ‘deep’ for the same reason. His eyes had the far-seeing look of one who has lived long in open, solitary places; and somehow I divined the network of wrinkles which must have surrounded them before re-birth had washed him in immortality.

‘I — I don’t quite know,’ said I.

‘Ye can sit and talk to me, then,’ he said, making room for me on the stone.

‘I don’t know you, Sir,’ said I, taking my seat beside him.

‘My name is George,’ he answered. ‘George Macdonald.’

‘Oh!’ I cried. ‘Then you can tell me! You at least will not deceive me.’ Then, supposing that these expressions of confidence needed some explanation, I tried, trembling, to tell this man all that his writings had done for me. I tried to tell how a certain frosty afternoon at Leatherhead Station when I first bought a copy of *Phantastes* (being then about sixteen years old) had been to me what the first sight of Beatrice had been to Dante: *Here begins the New Life*. I started to confess how long that Life had delayed in the region of imagination merely: how slowly and reluctantly I had come to admit that his Christendom had more than an accidental connexion with it, how hard I had tried not to see that the true name of the quality which first met me in his books is Holiness. He laid his hand on mine and stopped me.

‘Son,’ he said, ‘Your love — all love — is of inexpressible value to me. But it may save precious time’ (here he suddenly looked very Scotch) ‘if I inform ye that I am already well acquainted with these biographical details.

In fact, I have noticed that your memory misleads you in one or two particulars.'

'Oh!' said I, and became still.

'Ye had started', said my Teacher, 'to talk of something more profitable.'

'Sir,' said I, 'I had almost forgotten it, and I have no anxiety about the answer now, though I have still a curiosity. It is about these Ghosts. *Do* any of them stay? *Can* they stay? Is any real choice offered to them? How do they come to be here?'

'Did ye never hear of the *Refrigerium*? A man with your advantages might have read of it in Prudentius, not to mention Jeremy Taylor.'

'The name is familiar, Sir, but I'm afraid I've forgotten what it means.'

'It means that the damned have holidays — excursions, ye understand.'

'Excursions to *this* country?'

'For those that will take them. Of course most of the silly creatures don't. They prefer taking trips back to Earth. They go and play tricks on the poor daft women ye call mediums. They go and try to assert their ownership of some house that once belonged to them: and then ye get what's called a Haunting. Or they go to spy on their children. Or literary ghosts hang about public libraries to see if anyone's still reading their books.'

'But if they come here they can really stay?'

'Aye. Ye'll have heard that the emperor Trajan did.'

'But I don't understand. Is judgement not final? Is there really a way out of Hell into Heaven?'

'It depends on the way ye're using the words. If they leave that grey town behind it will not have been Hell. To any that leaves it, it is Purgatory. And perhaps ye had better not call this country Heaven. Not *Deep Heaven*, ye understand.' (Here he smiled at me). 'Ye can call it the Valley of the Shadow of Life. And yet to those who stay here it will have been Heaven from the first. And ye can call those sad streets in the town yonder the Valley of the Shadow of Death: but to those who remain there they will have been Hell even from the beginning.'

I suppose he saw that I looked puzzled, for presently he spoke again.

'Son,' he said, 'ye cannot in your present state understand eternity: when Anodos looked through the door of the Timeless he brought no message back. But ye can get some likeness of it if ye say that both good and evil, when they are full grown, become retrospective. Not only this valley but all

their earthly past will have been Heaven to those who are saved. Not only the twilight in that town, but all their life on earth too, will then be seen by the damned to have been Hell. That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, “No future bliss can make up for it,” not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory. And of some sinful pleasure they say “Let me but have *this* and I’ll take the consequences”: little dreaming how damnation will spread back and back into their past and contaminate the pleasure of the sin. Both processes begin even before death. The good man’s past begins to change so that his forgiven sins and remembered sorrows take on the quality of Heaven: the bad man’s past already conforms to his badness and is filled only with dreariness. And that is why, at the end of all things, when the sun rises here and the twilight turns to blackness down there, the Blessed will say “We have never lived anywhere except in Heaven”, and the Lost, “We were always in Hell.” And both will speak truly.’

‘Is not that very hard, Sir?’

‘I mean, that is the real sense of what they will say. In the actual language of the Lost, the words will be different, no doubt. One will say he has always served his country right or wrong; and another that he has sacrificed everything to his Art; and some that they’ve never been taken in, and some that, thank God, they’ve always looked after Number One, and nearly all, that, at least they’ve been true to themselves.’

‘And the Saved?’

‘Ah, the Saved . . . what happens to them is best described as the opposite of a mirage. What seemed, when they entered it, to be the vale of misery turns out, when they look back, to have been a well; and where present experience saw only salt deserts memory truthfully records that the pools were full of water.’

‘Then those people are right who say that Heaven and Hell are only states of mind?’

‘Hush,’ said he sternly. ‘Do not blaspheme. Hell is a state of mind — ye never said a truer word. And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind — is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is Heavenly. For all that can be shaken will be shaken and only the unshakeable remains.’

‘But there is a real choice after death? My Roman Catholic friends would be surprised, for to them souls in Purgatory are already saved. And my Protestant friends would like it no better, for they’d say that the tree lies as it falls.’

‘They’re both right, maybe. Do not fash yourself with such questions. Ye cannot fully understand the relations of choice and Time till you are beyond both. And ye were not brought here to study such curiosities. What concerns you is the nature of the choice itself: and that ye can watch them making.’

‘Well, Sir,’ I said, ‘That also needs explaining. What do they choose, these souls who go back (I have yet seen no others)? And how *can* they choose it?’

‘Milton was right,’ said my Teacher. ‘The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.” There is always something they insist on keeping, even at the price of misery. There is always something they prefer to joy — that is, to reality. Ye see it easily enough in a spoiled child that would sooner miss its play and its supper than say it was sorry and be friends. Ye call it the Sulks. But in adult life it has a hundred fine names — Achilles’ wrath and Coriolanus’ grandeur, Revenge and Injured Merit and Self-Respect and Tragic Greatness and Proper Pride.’

‘Then is no one lost through the undignified vices, Sir? Through mere sensuality?’

‘Some are, no doubt. The sensualist, I’ll allow ye, begins by pursuing a real pleasure, though a small one. His sin is the less. But the time comes on when, though the pleasure becomes less and less and the craving fiercer and fiercer, and though he knows that joy can never come that way, yet he prefers to joy the mere fondling of unappeasable lust and would not have it taken from him. He’d fight to the death to keep it. He’d like well to be able to scratch: but even when he can scratch no more he’d rather itch than not.’

He was silent for a few minutes, and then began again.

‘Ye’ll understand, there are innumerable forms of this choice. Sometimes forms that one hardly thought of at all on earth. There was a creature came here not long ago and went back — Sir Archibald they called him. In his earthly life he’d been interested in nothing but Survival. He’d written a whole shelf-full of books about it. He began by being philosophical, but in the end he took up Psychical Research. It grew to be his only occupation —

experimenting, lecturing, running a magazine. And travelling too: digging out queer stories among Thibetan lamas and being initiated into brotherhoods in Central Africa. Proofs — and more proofs — and then more proofs again — were what he wanted. It drove him mad if ever he saw anyone taking an interest in anything else. He got into trouble during one of your wars for running up and down the country telling them not to fight because it wasted a lot of money that ought to be spent on Research. Well, in good time, the poor creature died and came here: and there was no power in the universe would have prevented him staying and going on to the mountains. But do ye think that did him any good? This country was no use to him at all. Everyone here had "survived" already. Nobody took the least interest in the question. There was nothing more to prove. His occupation was clean gone. Of course if he would only have admitted that he'd mistaken the means for the end and had a good laugh at himself he could have begun all over again like a little child and entered into joy. But he would not do that. He cared nothing about joy. In the end he went away.'

'How fantastic!' said I.

'Do ye think so?' said the Teacher with a piercing glance. 'It is nearer to such as you than ye think. There have been men before now who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God Himself . . . as if the good Lord had nothing to do but exist! There have been some who were so occupied in spreading Christianity that they never gave a thought to Christ. Man! Ye see it in smaller matters. Did ye never know a lover of books that with all his first editions and signed copies had lost the power to read them? Or an organiser of charities that had lost all love for the poor? It is the subtlest of all the snares.'

Moved by a desire to change the subject, I asked why the Solid People, since they were full of love, did not go down into Hell to rescue the Ghosts. Why were they content simply to meet them on the plain? One would have expected a more militant charity.

'Ye will understand that better, perhaps before ye go,' said he. 'In the meantime, I must tell ye they have come further for the sake of the Ghosts than ye can understand. Every one of us lives only to journey further and further into the mountains. Every one of us has interrupted that journey and retraced immeasurable distances to come down to-day on the mere chance of saving some Ghost. Of course it is also joy to do so, but ye cannot blame

us for that! And it would be no use to come further even if it were possible. The sane would do no good if they made themselves mad to help madmen.'

'But what of the poor Ghosts who never get into the omnibus at all?'

'Everyone who wishes it does. Never fear. There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "*Thy* will be done." All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.'

At this moment we were suddenly interrupted by the thin voice of a Ghost talking at an enormous speed. Looking behind us we saw the creature. It was addressing one of the Solid People and was doing so too busily to notice us. Every now and then the Solid Spirit tried to get in a word but without success. The Ghost's talk was like this:

'Oh, my dear, I've had such a dreadful time, I don't know how I ever got here at all, I was coming with Elinor Stone and we'd arranged the whole thing and we were to meet at the corner of Sink Street; I made it perfectly plain because I knew what she was like and if I told her once I told her a hundred times I would *not* meet her outside that dreadful Marjoribanks woman's house, not after the way she'd treated me . . . that was one of the most dreadful things that happened to me; I've been dying to tell you because I felt sure you'd tell me I acted rightly; no, wait a moment, dear, till I've told you — I tried living with her when I first came and it was all fixed up, she was to do the cooking and I was to look after the house and I *did* think I was going to be comfortable after all I'd been through but she turned out to be so changed, absolutely selfish, and not a particle of sympathy for anyone but herself — and as I once said to her "I *do* think I'm entitled to a little consideration because you at least lived out your time, but I oughtn't to have been here for years and years yet" — oh but of course I'm forgetting you don't know — I was murdered, simply murdered, dear, that man should never have operated, I ought to be alive to-day and they simply *starved* me in that dreadful nursing home and no one ever came near me and . . .'

The shrill monotonous whine died away as the speaker still accompanied by the bright patience at her side, moved out of hearing.

'What troubles ye, son?' asked my Teacher.

‘I am troubled, Sir,’ said I, ‘because that unhappy creature doesn’t seem to me to be the sort of soul that ought to be even in danger of damnation. She isn’t wicked: she’s only a silly, garrulous old woman who has got into a habit of grumbling, and one feels that a little kindness, and rest, and change would put her all right.’

‘That is what she once was. That is maybe what she still is. If so, she certainly will be cured. But the whole question is whether she *is* now a grumbler.’

‘I should have thought there was no doubt about that!’

‘Aye, but ye misunderstand me. The question is whether she is a grumbler, or only a grumble. If there is a real woman — even the least trace of one — still there inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again. If there’s one wee spark under all those ashes, we’ll blow it till the whole pile is red and clear. But if there’s nothing but ashes we’ll not go on blowing them in our own eyes forever. They must be swept up.’

‘But how can there be a grumble without a grumbler?’

‘The whole difficulty of understanding Hell is that the thing to be understood is so nearly Nothing. But ye’ll have had experiences . . . it begins with a grumbling mood, and yourself still distinct from it: perhaps criticising it. And yourself, in a dark hour, may will that mood, embrace it. Ye can repent and come out of it again. But there may come a day when you can do that no longer. Then there will be no *you* left to criticise the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever like a machine. But come! Ye are here to watch and listen. Lean on my arm and we will go for a little walk.’

I obeyed. To lean on the arm of someone older than myself was an experience that carried me back to childhood, and with this support I found the going tolerable: so much so, indeed, that I flattered myself my feet were already growing more solid, until a glance at the poor transparent shapes convinced me that I owed all this ease to the strong arm of the Teacher. Perhaps it was because of his presence that my other senses also appeared to be quickened. I noticed scents in the air which had hitherto escaped me, and the country put on new beauties. There was water everywhere and tiny flowers quivering in the early breeze. Far off in the woods we saw the deer glancing past, and, once, a sleek panther came purring to my companion’s side. We also saw many of the Ghosts.

I think the most pitiable was a female Ghost. Her trouble was the very opposite of that which afflicted the other, the lady frightened by the Unicorns. This one seemed quite unaware of her phantasmal appearance. More than one of the Solid People tried to talk to her, and at first I was quite at a loss to understand her behaviour to them. She appeared to be contorting her all but invisible face and writhing her smokelike body in a quite meaningless fashion. At last I came to the conclusion — incredible as it seemed — that she supposed herself still capable of attracting them and was trying to do so. She was a thing that had become incapable of conceiving conversation save as a means to that end. If a corpse already liquid with decay had arisen from the coffin, smeared its gums with lipstick, and attempted a flirtation, the result could not have been more appalling. In the end she muttered ‘Stupid creatures’, and turned back to the bus.

This put me in mind to ask my Teacher what he thought of the affair with the Unicorns. ‘It will maybe have succeeded,’ he said. ‘Ye will have divined that he meant to frighten her; not that fear itself could make her less a Ghost, but if it took her mind a moment off herself, there might, in that moment, be a chance. I have seen them saved so.’

We met several Ghosts that had come so near to Heaven only in order to tell the Celestials about Hell. Indeed this is one of the commonest types. Others, who had perhaps been (like myself) teachers of some kind actually wanted to give lectures about it: they brought fat notebooks full of statistics, and maps, and (one of them) a magic lantern. Some wanted to tell anecdotes of the notorious sinners of all ages whom they had met below. But the most part seemed to think that the mere fact of having contrived for themselves so much misery gave them a kind of superiority. ‘You have led a sheltered life!’ they bawled. ‘You don’t know the seamy side. We’ll tell you. We’ll give you some hard facts’ — as if to tinge Heaven with infernal images and colours had been the only purpose for which they came. All alike, so far as I could judge from my own exploration of the lower world, were wholly unreliable, and all equally incurious about the country in which they had arrived. They repelled every attempt to teach them, and when they found that nobody listened to them they went back, one by one, to the bus.

This curious wish to describe Hell turned out, however, to be only the mildest form of a desire very common among the Ghosts — the desire to *extend* Hell, to bring it bodily, if they could, into Heaven. There were tub-thumping Ghosts who in thin, bat-like voices urged the blessed spirits to

shake off their fetters, to escape from their imprisonment in happiness, to tear down the mountains with their hands, to seize Heaven ‘for their own’: Hell offered her co-operation. There were planning Ghosts who implored them to dam the river, cut down the trees, kill the animals, build a mountain railway, smooth out the horrible grass and moss and heather with asphalt. There were materialistic Ghosts who informed the immortals that they were deluded: there was no life after death, and this whole country was a hallucination. There were Ghosts, plain and simple: mere bogies, fully conscious of their own decay, who had accepted the traditional rôle of the spectre, and seemed to hope they could frighten someone. I had had no idea that this desire was possible. But my Teacher reminded me that the pleasure of frightening is by no means unknown on earth, and also of Tacitus’ saying: ‘They terrify lest they should fear.’ When the *débris* of a decayed human soul finds itself crumbled into ghosthood and realises ‘I myself am now that which all humanity has feared, I am just that cold churchyard shadow, that horrible thing which cannot be, yet somehow is’, then to terrify others appears to it an escape from the doom of being a Ghost yet still fearing Ghosts — fearing even the Ghost it is. For to be afraid of oneself is the last horror.

But, beyond all these, I saw other grotesque phantoms in which hardly a trace of the human form remained; monsters who had faced the journey to the bus stop — perhaps for them it was thousands of miles — and come up to the country of the Shadow of Life and limped far into it over the torturing grass, only to spit and gibber out in one ecstasy of hatred their envy and (what is harder to understand) their contempt, of joy. The voyage seemed to them a small price to pay if once, only once, within sight of that eternal dawn, they could tell the prigs, the toffs, the sanctimonious humbugs, the snobs, the ‘haves’, what they thought of them.

‘How do they come to be here at all?’ I asked my Teacher.

‘I have seen that kind converted’, said he, ‘when those ye would think less deeply damned have gone back. Those that hate goodness are sometimes nearer than those that know nothing at all about it and think they have it already.’

‘Whisht, now!’ said my Teacher suddenly. We were standing close to some bushes and beyond them I saw one of the Solid People and a Ghost who had apparently just that moment met. The outlines of the Ghost looked vaguely familiar, but I soon realized that what I had seen on earth was not

the man himself but photographs of him in the papers. He had been a famous artist.

‘God!’ said the Ghost, glancing round the landscape.

‘God what?’ asked the Spirit.

‘What do you mean, “God what”?’ asked the Ghost.

‘In our grammar *God* is a noun.’

‘Oh — I see. I only meant “By Gum” or something of the sort. I meant . . . well, all *this*. It’s . . . it’s . . . I should like to paint this.’

‘I shouldn’t bother about that just at present if I were you.’

‘Look here; isn’t one going to be allowed to go on painting?’

‘Looking comes first.’

‘But I’ve had my look. I’ve seen just what I want to do. God! — I wish I’d thought of bringing my things with me!’

The Spirit shook his head, scattering light from his hair as he did so. ‘That sort of thing’s no good here,’ he said.

‘What do you mean?’ said the Ghost.

‘When you painted on earth — at least in your earlier days — it was because you caught glimpses of Heaven in the earthly landscape. The success of your painting was that it enabled others to see the glimpses too. But here you are having the thing itself. It is from here that the messages came. There is no good *telling* us about this country, for we see it already. In fact we see it better than you do.’

‘Then there’s never going to be any point in painting here?’

‘I don’t say that. When you’ve grown into a Person (it’s all right, we all had to do it) there’ll be some things which you’ll see better than anyone else. One of the things you’ll want to do will be to tell us about them. But not yet. At present your business is to see. Come and see. He is endless. Come and feed.’

There was a little pause. ‘That will be delightful,’ said the Ghost presently in a rather dull voice.

‘Come, then,’ said the Spirit, offering it his arm.

‘How soon do you think I *could* begin painting?’ it asked.

The Spirit broke into laughter. ‘Don’t you see you’ll never paint at all if that’s what you’re thinking about?’ he said.

‘What do you mean?’ asked the Ghost.

‘Why, if you are interested in the country only for the sake of painting it, you’ll never learn to see the country.’

‘But that’s just how a real artist *is* interested in the country.’

‘No. You’re forgetting,’ said the Spirit. ‘That was not how you began. Light itself was your first love: you loved paint only as a means of telling about light.’

‘Oh, that’s ages ago,’ said the Ghost. ‘One grows out of that. Of course, you haven’t seen my later works. One becomes more and more interested in paint for its own sake.’

‘One does, indeed. I also have had to recover from that. It was all a snare. Ink and catgut and paint were necessary down there, but they are also dangerous stimulants. Every poet and musician and artist, but for Grace, is drawn away from love of the thing he tells, to love of the telling till, down in Deep Hell, they cannot be interested in God at all but only in what they say about Him. For it doesn’t stop at being interested in paint, you know. They sink lower — become interested in their own personalities and then in nothing but their own reputations.’

‘I don’t think I’m much troubled in *that* way,’ said the Ghost stiffly.

‘That’s excellent,’ said the Spirit. ‘Not many of us had quite got over it when we first arrived. But if there is any of that inflammation left it will be cured when you come to the fountain.’

‘What fountain’s that?’

‘It is up there in the mountains,’ said the Spirit. ‘Very cold and clear, between two green hills. A little like Lethe. When you have drunk of it you forget forever all proprietorship in your own works. You enjoy them just as if they were someone else’s: without pride and without modesty.’

‘That’ll be grand,’ said the Ghost without enthusiasm.

‘Well, come,’ said the Spirit: and for a few paces he supported the hobbling shadow forward to the East.

‘Of course,’ said the Ghost, as if speaking to itself, ‘there’ll always be interesting people to meet. . . .’

‘Everyone will be interesting.’

‘Oh — ah — yes, to be sure. I was thinking of people in our own line. Shall I meet Claude? Or Cézanne? Or —— .’

‘Sooner or later — if they’re here.’

‘But don’t you know?’

‘Well, of course not. I’ve only been here a few years. All the chances are against my having run across them . . . there are a good many of us, you know.’

‘But surely in the case of distinguished people, you’d hear?’

‘But they aren’t distinguished — no more than anyone else. Don’t you understand? The Glory flows into everyone, and back from everyone: like light and mirrors. But the light’s the thing.’

‘Do you mean there are no famous men?’

‘They are all famous. They are all known, remembered, recognised by the only Mind that can give a perfect judgement.’

‘Oh, of course, in *that* sense. . . .’ said the Ghost.

‘Don’t stop,’ said the Spirit, making to lead him still forward.

‘One must be content with one’s reputation among posterity, then,’ said the Ghost.

‘My friend,’ said the Spirit. ‘Don’t you know?’

‘Know what?’

‘That you and I are already completely forgotten on the Earth?’

‘Eh? What’s that?’ exclaimed the Ghost, disengaging its arm. ‘Do you mean those damned Neo-Regionalists have won after all?’

‘Lord love you, yes!’ said the Spirit, once more shaking and shining with laughter. ‘You couldn’t get five pounds for any picture of mine or even of yours in Europe or America to-day. We’re dead out of fashion.’

‘I must be off at once,’ said the Ghost. ‘Let me go! Damn it all, one has one’s duty to the future of Art. I must go back to my friends. I must write an article. There must be a manifesto. We must start a periodical. We must have publicity. Let me go. This is beyond a joke!’

And without listening to the Spirit’s reply, the spectre vanished.

10.

This conversation also we overheard.

‘That is quite, *quite* out of the question,’ said a female Ghost to one of the bright Women, ‘I should not dream of staying if I’m expected to meet Robert. I am ready to forgive him, of course. But anything more is quite impossible. How he comes to be here . . . but that is your affair.’

‘But if you have forgiven him,’ said the other, ‘surely —— .’

‘I forgive him as a Christian,’ said the Ghost. ‘But there are some things one can never forget.’

‘But I don’t understand. . . .’ began the She-Spirit.

‘Exactly,’ said the Ghost with a little laugh. ‘You never did. You always thought Robert could do no wrong. I know. Please don’t interrupt for *one* moment. You haven’t the faintest conception of what I went through with your dear Robert. The ingratitude! It was I who made a man of him! Sacrificed my whole life to him! And what was my reward? Absolute, utter selfishness. No, but listen. He was pottering along on about six hundred a year when I married him. And mark my words, Hilda, he’d have been in that position to the day of his death if it hadn’t been for me. It was I who had to drive him every step of the way. He hadn’t a spark of ambition. It was like trying to lift a sack of coal. I had to positively nag him to take on that extra work in the other department, though it was really the beginning of everything for him. The laziness of men! He said, if you please, he couldn’t work more than thirteen hours a day! As if I weren’t working far longer. For *my* day’s work wasn’t over when his was. I had to keep him going all evening, if you understand what I mean. If he’d had his way he’d have just sat in an armchair and sulked when dinner was over. It was I who had to draw him out of himself and brighten him up and make conversation. With no help from him, of course. Sometimes he didn’t even listen. As I said to him, I should have thought good manners, if nothing else . . . he seemed to have forgotten that I was a lady even if I *had* married him, and all the time I was working my fingers to the bone for him: and without the slightest appreciation. I used to spend simply *hours* arranging flowers to make that poky little house nice, and instead of thanking me, what do you think he said? Said he wished I wouldn’t fill up the writing desk with them when he wanted to use it: and there was a perfectly frightful fuss one

evening because I'd spilled one of the vases over some papers of his. It was all nonsense really, because they weren't anything to do with his work. He had some silly idea of writing a book in those days . . . as if he could. I cured him of that in the end.

'No, Hilda, you *must* listen to me. The trouble I went to, entertaining! Robert's idea was that he'd just slink off by himself every now and then to see what he called his old friends . . . and leave me to amuse myself! But I knew from the first that those friends were doing him no good. "No, Robert," said I, "your friends are now mine. It is my duty to have them *here*, however tired I am and however little we can afford it." You'd have thought that would have been enough. But they did come for a bit. That is where I had to use a certain amount of tact. A woman who has her wits about her can always drop in a word here and there. I wanted Robert to see them against a different background. They weren't quite at their ease, somehow, in my drawing-room: not at their best. I couldn't help laughing sometimes. Of course Robert was uncomfortable while the treatment was going on, but it was all for his own good in the end. None of that set were friends of his any longer by the end of the first year.

'And then, he got the new job. A great step up. But what *do* you think? Instead of realising that we now had a chance to spread out a bit, all he said was "Well *now*, for God's sake let's have some peace." That nearly finished me. I nearly gave him up altogether: but I knew my duty. I have always done my duty. You can't believe the work I had getting him to agree to a bigger house, and then finding a house. I wouldn't have grudged it one scrap if only he'd taken it in the right spirit — if only he'd seen the *fun* of it all. If he'd been a different sort of man it *would* have been fun meeting him on the doorstep as he came back from the office and saying "Come along, Bobs, no time for dinner to-night. I've just heard of a house out near Watford and I've got the keys and we can get there and back by one o'clock." But with *him*! It was perfect misery, Hilda. For by this time your wonderful Robert was turning into the sort of man who cares about nothing but food.

'Well, I got him into the new house at last. Yes, I know. It was a little more than we could really afford at the moment, but all sorts of things were opening out before him. And, of course, I began to entertain properly. No more of his sort of friends, thank you. I was doing it all for his sake. Every useful friend he ever made was due to me. Naturally, I had to dress well.

They ought to have been the happiest years of both our lives. If they weren't, he had no one but himself to thank. Oh, he was a maddening man, simply maddening! He just set himself to get old and silent and grumpy. Just sank into himself. He could have looked years younger if he'd taken the trouble. He needn't have walked with a stoop — I'm sure I warned him about that often enough. He was the most miserable host. Whenever we gave a party everything rested on my shoulders: Robert was simply a wet blanket. As I said to him (and if I said it once, I said it a hundred times) he hadn't always been like that. There had been a time when he took an interest in all sorts of things and had been quite ready to make friends. "What on earth is coming over you?" I used to say. But now he just didn't answer at all. He would sit staring at me with his great big eyes (I came to hate a man with dark eyes) and — I know it now — just hating me. That was my reward. After all I'd done. Sheer wicked, senseless hatred: at the very moment when he was a richer man than he'd ever dreamed of being! As I used to say to him, "Robert, you're simply letting yourself go to seed." The younger men who came to the house — it wasn't *my* fault if they liked me better than my old bear of a husband — used to laugh at him.

'I did my duty to the very end. I *forced* him to take exercise — that was really my chief reason for keeping a great Dane. I kept on giving parties. I took him for the most wonderful holidays. I saw that he didn't drink too much. Even, when things became desperate, I encouraged him to take up his writing again. It couldn't do any harm by then. How could I help it if he *did* have a nervous breakdown in the end? My conscience is clear. I've done my duty by him, if ever a woman has. So you see why it would be impossible to. . . .

'And yet . . . I don't know. I believe I have changed my mind. I'll make them a fair offer, Hilda. I will *not* meet him, if it means just meeting him and no more. But if I'm given a free hand I'll take charge of him again. I will take up my burden once more. But I must have a free hand. With all the time one would have here, I believe I could still make something of him. Somewhere quite to ourselves. Wouldn't that be a good plan? He's not fit to be on his own. Put me in charge of him. He wants firm handling. I know him better than you do. What's that? No, give him to me, do you hear? Don't consult *him*: just give him to me. I'm his wife, aren't I? I was only beginning. There's lots, lots, lots of things I still want to do with him. No, listen, Hilda. Please, please! I'm so miserable. I must have someone to — to

do things to. It’s simply frightful down there. No one minds about me at all. I can’t alter them. It’s dreadful to see them all sitting about and not be able to do anything with them. Give him back to me. Why should he have everything his own way? It’s not good for him. It isn’t right, it’s not fair. I want Robert. What right have you to keep him from me? I hate you. How can I pay him out if you won’t let me have him?’

The Ghost which had towered up like a dying candle-flame snapped suddenly. A sour, dry smell lingered in the air for a moment and then there was no Ghost to be seen.

11.

One of the most painful meetings we witnessed was between a woman's Ghost and a Bright Spirit who had apparently been her brother. They must have met only a moment before we ran across them, for the Ghost was just saying in a tone of unconcealed disappointment, 'Oh . . . Reginald! It's *you*, is it?'

'Yes, dear,' said the Spirit. 'I know you expected someone else. Can you . . . I hope you can be a little glad to see even me; for the present.'

'I did think Michael would have come,' said the Ghost; and then, almost fiercely, 'He *is* here, of course?'

'He's there — far up in the mountains.'

'Why hasn't he come to meet me? Didn't he know?'

'My dear (don't worry, it will all come right presently) it wouldn't have done. Not yet. He wouldn't be able to see or hear you as you are at present. You'd be totally invisible to Michael. But we'll soon build you up.'

'I should have thought if *you* can see me, my own son could!'

'It doesn't always happen like that. You see, I have specialised in this sort of work.'

'Oh, it's work, is it?' snapped the Ghost. Then, after a pause, 'Well. When *am* I going to be allowed to see him?'

'There's no question of being *allowed*, Pam. As soon as it's possible for him to see you, of course he will. You need to be thickened up a bit.'

'How?' said the Ghost. The monosyllable was hard and a little threatening.

'I'm afraid the first step is a hard one,' said the Spirit. 'But after that you'll go on like a house on fire. You will become solid enough for Michael to perceive you when you learn to want Someone Else besides Michael. I don't say "more than Michael", not as a beginning. That will come later. It's only the little germ of a desire for God that we need to start the process.'

'Oh, you mean religion and all that sort of thing? This is hardly the moment . . . and from *you*, of all people. Well, never mind. I'll do whatever's necessary. What do you want me to do? Come on. The sooner I begin it, the sooner they'll let me see my boy. I'm quite ready.'

‘But, Pam, do think! Don’t you see you are not beginning at all as long as you are in that state of mind? You’re treating God only as a means to Michael. But the whole thickening treatment consists in learning to want God for His own sake.’

‘You wouldn’t talk like that if you were a mother.’

‘You mean, if I were *only* a mother. But there is no such thing as being only a mother. You exist as Michael’s mother only because you first exist as God’s creature. That relation is older and closer. No, listen, Pam! He also loves. He also has suffered. He also has waited a long time.’

‘If He loved me He’d let me see my boy. If He loved me why did He take Michael away from me? I wasn’t going to say anything about that. But it’s pretty hard to forgive, you know.’

‘But He had to take Michael away. Partly for Michael’s sake. . . .’

‘I’m sure I did my best to make Michael happy. I gave up my whole life. . . .’

‘Human beings can’t make one another really happy for long. And secondly, for your sake. He wanted your merely instinctive love for your child (tigresses share *that*, you know!) to turn into something better. He wanted you to love Michael as He understands love. You cannot love a fellow-creature fully till you love God. Sometimes this conversion can be done while the instinctive love is still gratified. But there was, it seems, no chance of that in your case. The instinct was uncontrolled and fierce and monomaniac. (Ask your daughter, or your husband. Ask our own mother. You haven’t once thought of *her*.) The only remedy was to take away its object. It was a case for surgery. When that first kind of love was thwarted, then there was just a chance that in the loneliness, in the silence, something else might begin to grow.’

‘This is all nonsense — cruel and wicked nonsense. What *right* have you to say things like that about Mother-love? It is the highest and holiest feeling in human nature.’

‘Pam, Pam — no natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves. They are all holy when God’s hand is on the rein. They all go bad when they set up on their own and make themselves into false gods.’

‘My love for Michael would never have gone bad. Not if we’d lived together for millions of years.’

‘You are mistaken. And you must know. Haven’t you met — down there — mothers who have their sons with them, in Hell? Does *their* love make them happy?’

‘If you mean people like the Guthrie woman and her dreadful Bobby, of course not. I hope you’re not suggesting. . . . If I had Michael I’d be perfectly happy, even in that town. I wouldn’t be always talking about him till everyone hated the sound of his name, which is what Winifred Guthrie does about *her* brat. I wouldn’t quarrel with people for not taking enough notice of him and then be furiously jealous if they did. I wouldn’t go about whining and complaining that he wasn’t nice to me. Because, of course, he would be nice. Don’t you dare to suggest that Michael could ever become like the Guthrie boy. There are some things I won’t stand.’

‘What you have seen in the Guthries is what natural affection turns to in the end if it will not be converted.’

‘It’s a lie. A wicked, cruel lie. How could anyone love their son more than I did? Haven’t I lived only for his memory all these years?’

‘That was rather a mistake, Pam. In your heart of hearts you know it was.’

‘What was a mistake?’

‘All that ten years’ ritual of grief. Keeping his room exactly as he’d left it: keeping anniversaries: refusing to leave that house though Dick and Muriel were both wretched there.’

‘Of course they didn’t care. I know that. I soon learned to expect no real sympathy from them.’

‘You’re wrong. No man ever felt his son’s death more than Dick. Not many girls loved their brothers better than Muriel. It wasn’t against Michael they revolted: it was against you — against having their whole life dominated by the tyranny of the past: and not really even Michael’s past, but your past.’

‘You are heartless. Everyone is heartless. The past was all I had.’

‘It was all you chose to have. It was the wrong way to deal with a sorrow. It was Egyptian — like embalming a dead body.’

‘Oh, of course. I’m wrong. Everything I say or do is wrong, according to you.’

‘But of course!’ said the Spirit, shining with love and mirth so that my eyes were dazzled. ‘That’s what we all find when we reach this country.

We've all been wrong! That's the great joke. There's no need to go on pretending one was right! After that we begin living.'

'How dare you laugh about it? Give me my boy. Do you hear? I don't care about all your rules and regulations. I don't believe in a God who keeps mother and son apart. I believe in a God of love. No one has a right to come between me and my son. Not even God. Tell Him that to His face. I want my boy, and I mean to have him. He is mine, do you understand? Mine, mine, mine, for ever and ever.'

'He will be, Pam. Everything will be yours. God Himself will be yours. But not that way. Nothing can be yours by nature.'

'What? Not my own son, born out of my own body?'

'And where is your own body now? Didn't you know that Nature draws to an end? Look! The sun is coming, over the mountains there: it will be up any moment now.'

'Michael is mine.'

'How yours? You didn't make him. Nature made him to grow in your body without your will. Even against your will . . . you sometimes forget that you didn't intend to have a baby then at all. Michael was originally an Accident.'

'Who told you that?' said the Ghost: and then, recovering itself, 'It's a lie. It's not true. And it's no business of yours. I hate your religion and I hate and despise your God. I believe in a God of Love.'

'And yet, Pam, you have no love at this moment for your own mother or for me.'

'Oh, I see! *That's* the trouble, is it? *Really*, Reginald! The idea of your being hurt because. . . .'

'Lord love you!' said the Spirit with a great laugh. 'You needn't bother about that! Don't you know that you *can't* hurt anyone in this country?'

The Ghost was silent and open-mouthed for a moment; more wilted, I thought, by this re-assurance than by anything else that had been said.

'Come. We will go a bit further,' said my Teacher, laying his hand on my arm.

'Why did you bring me away, Sir?' said I when we had passed out of earshot of this unhappy Ghost.

'It might take a long while, that conversation,' said my Teacher. 'And ye have heard enough to see what the choice is.'

‘Is there any hope for her, Sir?’

‘Aye, there’s some. What she calls her love for her son has turned into a poor, prickly, astringent sort of thing. But there’s still a wee spark of something that’s not just her self in it. That might be blown into a flame.’

‘Then some natural feelings are really better than others — I mean, are a better starting-point for the real thing?’

‘Better *and* worse. There’s something in natural affection which will lead it on to eternal love more easily than natural appetite could be led on. But there’s also something in it which makes it easier to stop at the natural level and mistake it for the heavenly. Brass is mistaken for gold more easily than clay is. And if it finally refuses conversion its corruption will be worse than the corruption of what ye call the lower passions. It is a stronger angel, and therefore, when it falls, a fiercer devil.’

‘I don’t know that I dare repeat this on Earth, Sir,’ said I. ‘They’d say I was inhuman: they’d say I believed in total depravity: they’d say I was attacking the best and the holiest things. They’d call me. . . .’

‘It might do you no harm if they did,’ said he with (I really thought) a twinkle in his eye.

‘But could one dare — could one have the face — to go to a bereaved mother, in her misery — when one’s not bereaved oneself? . . .’

‘No, no, Son, that’s no office of yours. You’re not a good enough man for that. When your own heart’s been broken it will be time for you to think of talking. But someone must say in general what’s been unsaid among you this many a year: that love, as mortals understand the word, isn’t enough. Every natural love will rise again and live forever in this country: but none will rise again until it has been buried.’

‘The saying is almost too hard for us.’

‘Ah, but it’s cruel not to say it. They that know have grown afraid to speak. That is why sorrows that used to purify now only fester.’

‘Keats was wrong, then, when he said he was certain of the holiness of the heart’s affections.’

‘I doubt if he knew clearly what he meant. But you and I must be clear. There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks to Him and bad when it turns from Him. And the higher and mightier it is in the natural order, the more demoniac it will be if it rebels. It’s not out of bad mice or bad fleas you make demons, but out of bad archangels. The false

religion of lust is baser than the false religion of mother-love or patriotism or art: but lust is less likely to be made into a religion. But look!'

I saw coming towards us a Ghost who carried something on his shoulder. Like all the Ghosts, he was unsubstantial, but they differed from one another as smokes differ. Some had been whitish; this one was dark and oily. What sat on his shoulder was a little red lizard, and it was twitching its tail like a whip and whispering things in his ear. As we caught sight of him he turned his head to the reptile with a snarl of impatience. 'Shut up, I tell you!' he said. It wagged its tail and continued to whisper to him. He ceased snarling, and presently began to smile. Then he turned and started to limp westward, away from the mountains.

'Off so soon?' said a voice.

The speaker was more or less human in shape but larger than a man, and so bright that I could hardly look at him. His presence smote on my eyes and on my body too (for there was heat coming from him as well as light) like the morning sun at the beginning of a tyrannous summer day.

'Yes. I'm off,' said the Ghost. 'Thanks for all your hospitality. But it's no good, you see. I told this little chap' (here he indicated the lizard) 'that he'd have to be quiet if he came — which he insisted on doing. Of course his stuff won't do here: I realise that. But he won't stop. I shall just have to go home.'

'Would you like me to make him quiet?' said the flaming Spirit — an angel, as I now understood.

'Of course I would,' said the Ghost.

'Then I will kill him,' said the Angel, taking a step forward.

'Oh — ah — look out! You're burning me. Keep away,' said the Ghost, retreating.

'Don't you *want* him killed?'

'You didn't say anything about *killing* him at first. I hardly meant to bother you with anything so drastic as that.'

'It's the only way,' said the Angel, whose burning hands were now very close to the lizard. 'Shall I kill it?'

'Well, that's a further question. I'm quite open to consider it, but it's a new point, isn't it? I mean, for the moment I was only thinking about silencing it because up here — well, it's so damned embarrassing.'

'May I kill it?'

‘Well, there’s time to discuss that later.’

‘There is no time. May I kill it?’

‘Please, I never meant to be such a nuisance. Please — really — don’t bother. Look! It’s gone to sleep of its own accord. I’m sure it’ll be all right now. Thanks ever so much.’

‘May I kill it?’

‘Honestly, I don’t think there’s the slightest necessity for that. I’m sure I shall be able to keep it in order now. I think the gradual process would be far better than killing it.’

‘The gradual process is of no use at all.’

‘Don’t you think so? Well, I’ll think over what you’ve said very carefully. I honestly will. In fact I’d let you kill it now, but as a matter of fact I’m not feeling frightfully well to-day. It would be silly to do it *now*. I’d need to be in good health for the operation. Some other day, perhaps.’

‘There is no other day. All days are present now.’

‘Get back! You’re burning me. How can I tell you to kill it? You’d kill *me* if you did.’

‘It is not so.’

‘Why, you’re hurting me now.’

‘I never said it wouldn’t hurt you. I said it wouldn’t kill you.’

‘Oh, I know. You think I’m a coward. But it isn’t that. Really it isn’t. I say! Let me run back by to-night’s bus and get an opinion from my own doctor. I’ll come again the first moment I can.’

‘This moment contains all moments.’

‘Why are you torturing me? You are jeering at me. How can I let you tear me in pieces? If you wanted to help me, why didn’t you kill the damned thing without asking me — before I knew? It would be all over by now if you had.’

‘I cannot kill it against your will. It is impossible. Have I your permission?’

The Angel’s hands were almost closed on the Lizard, but not quite. Then the Lizard began chattering to the Ghost so loud that even I could hear what it was saying.

‘Be careful,’ it said. ‘He can do what he says. He can kill me. One fatal word from you and he *will*! Then you’ll be without me for ever and ever.

It’s not natural. How could you live? You’d be only a sort of ghost, not a real man as you are now. He doesn’t understand. He’s only a cold, bloodless abstract thing. It may be natural for him, but it isn’t for us. Yes, yes. I know there are no real pleasures now, only dreams. But aren’t they better than nothing? And I’ll be so good. I admit I’ve sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won’t do it again. I’ll give you nothing but really nice dreams — all sweet and fresh and almost innocent. You might say, quite innocent. . . .’

‘Have I your permission?’ said the Angel to the Ghost.

‘I know it will kill me.’

‘It won’t. But supposing it did?’

‘You’re right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature.’

‘Then I may?’

‘Damn and blast you! Go on can’t you? Get it over. Do what you like,’ bellowed the Ghost: but ended, whimpering, ‘God help me. God help me.’

Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony such as I never heard on Earth. The Burning One closed his crimson grip on the reptile: twisted it, while it bit and writhed, and then flung it, broken backed, on the turf.

‘Ow! That’s done for me,’ gasped the Ghost, reeling backwards.

For a moment I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw, between me and the nearest bush, unmistakably solid but growing every moment solider, the upper arm and the shoulder of a man. Then, brighter still and stronger, the legs and hands. The neck and golden head materialised while I watched, and if my attention had not wavered I should have seen the actual completing of a man — an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel. What distracted me was the fact that at the same moment something seemed to be happening to the Lizard. At first I thought the operation had failed. So far from dying, the creature was still struggling and even growing bigger as it struggled. And as it grew it changed. Its hinder parts grew rounder. The tail, still flickering, became a tail of hair that flickered between huge and glossy buttocks. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinneying and stamping with its hoofs. At each stamp the land shook and the trees dindled.

The new-made man turned and clapped the new horse's neck. It nosed his bright body. Horse and master breathed each into the other's nostrils. The man turned from it, flung himself at the feet of the Burning One, and embraced them. When he rose I thought his face shone with tears, but it may have been only the liquid love and brightness (one cannot distinguish them in that country) which flowed from him. I had not long to think about it. In joyous haste the young man leaped upon the horse's back. Turning in his seat he waved a farewell, then nudged the stallion with his heels. They were off before I well knew what was happening. There was riding if you like! I came out as quickly as I could from among the bushes to follow them with my eyes; but already they were only like a shooting star far off on the green plain, and soon among the foothills of the mountains. Then, still like a star, I saw them winding up, scaling what seemed impossible steeps, and quicker every moment, till near the dim brow of the landscape, so high that I must strain my neck to see them, they vanished, bright themselves, into the rose-brightness of that everlasting morning.

While I still watched, I noticed that the whole plain and forest were shaking with a sound which in our world would be too large to hear, but there I could take it with joy. I knew it was not the Solid People who were singing. It was the voice of that earth, those woods and those waters. A strange archaic, inorganic noise, that came from all directions at once. The Nature or Arch-nature of that land rejoiced to have been once more ridden, and therefore consummated, in the person of the horse. It sang,

'The Master says to our master, Come up. Share my rest and splendour till all natures that were your enemies become slaves to dance before you and backs for you to ride, and firmness for your feet to rest on.

'From beyond all place and time, out of the very Place, authority will be given you: the strengths that once opposed your will shall be obedient fire in your blood and heavenly thunder in your voice.

'Overcome us that, so overcome, we may be ourselves: we desire the beginning of your reign as we desire dawn and dew, wetness at the birth of light.

'Master, your Master has appointed you for ever: to be our King of Justice and our high Priest.'

'Do ye understand all this, my Son?' said the Teacher.

'I don't know about *all*, Sir,' said I. 'Am I right in thinking the Lizard really turned into the Horse?'

‘Aye. But it was killed first. Ye’ll not forget that part of the story?’

‘I’ll try not to, Sir. But does it mean that everything — everything — that is in us can go on to the Mountains?’

‘Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Flesh and blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a Lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed.’

‘But am I to tell them at home that this man’s sensuality proved less of an obstacle than that poor woman’s love for her son? For that was, at any rate, an excess of *love*.’

‘Ye’ll tell them no such thing,’ he replied sternly. ‘Excess of love, did ye say? There was no excess, there was defect. She loved her son too little, not too much. If she had loved him more there’d be no difficulty. I do not know how her affair will end. But it may well be that at this moment she’s demanding to have him down with her in Hell. That kind is sometimes perfectly ready to plunge the soul they say they love in endless misery if only they can still in some fashion possess it. No, no. Ye must draw another lesson. Ye must ask, if the risen body even of appetite is as grand a horse as ye saw, what would the risen body of maternal love or friendship be?’

But once more my attention was diverted. ‘Is there *another* river, Sir?’ I asked.

12.

The reason why I asked if there were another river was this. All down one long aisle of the forest the under-sides of the leafy branches had begun to tremble with dancing light; and on earth I knew nothing so likely to produce this appearance as the reflected lights cast upward by moving water. A few moments later I realised my mistake. Some kind of procession was approaching us, and the light came from the persons who composed it.

First came bright Spirits, not the Spirits of men, who danced and scattered flowers — soundlessly falling, lightly drifting flowers, though by the standards of the ghost-world each petal would have weighed a hundred-weight and their fall would have been like the crashing of boulders. Then, on the left and right, at each side of the forest avenue, came youthful shapes, boys upon one hand, and girls upon the other. If I could remember their singing and write down the notes, no man who read that score would ever grow sick or old. Between them went musicians: and after these a lady in whose honour all this was being done.

I cannot now remember whether she was naked or clothed. If she were naked, then it must have been the almost visible penumbra of her courtesy and joy which produces in my memory the illusion of a great and shining train that followed her across the happy grass. If she were clothed, then the illusion of nakedness is doubtless due to the clarity with which her inmost spirit shone through the clothes. For clothes in that country are not a disguise: the spiritual body lives along each thread and turns them into living organs. A robe or a crown is there as much one of the wearer's features as a lip or an eye.

But I have forgotten. And only partly do I remember the unbearable beauty of her face.

'Is it? . . . is it?' I whispered to my guide.

'Not at all,' said he. 'It's someone ye'll never have heard of. Her name on earth was Sarah Smith and she lived at Golders Green.'

'She seems to be . . . well, a person of particular importance?'

'Aye. She is one of the great ones. Ye have heard that fame in this country and fame on Earth are two quite different things.'

'And who are these gigantic people . . . look! They're like emeralds . . . who are dancing and throwing flowers before her?'

‘Haven’t ye read your Milton? *A thousand liveried angels lackey her.*’

‘And who are all these young men and women on each side?’

‘They are her sons and daughters.’

‘She must have had a very large family, Sir.’

‘Every young man or boy that met her became her son — even if it was only the boy that brought the meat to her back door. Every girl that met her was her daughter.’

‘Isn’t that a bit hard on their own parents?’

‘No. There *are* those that steal other people’s children. But her motherhood was of a different kind. Those on whom it fell went back to their natural parents loving them more. Few men looked on her without becoming, in a certain fashion, her lovers. But it was the kind of love that made them not less true, but truer, to their own wives.’

‘And how . . . but hullo! What are all these animals? A cat — two cats — dozens of cats. And all those dogs . . . why, I can’t count them. And the birds. And the horses.’

‘They are her beasts.’

‘Did she keep a sort of zoo? I mean, this is a bit too much.’

‘Every beast and bird that came near her had its place in her love. In her they became themselves. And now the abundance of life she has in Christ from the Father flows over into them.’

I looked at my Teacher in amazement.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘It is like when you throw a stone into a pool, and the concentric waves spread out further and further. Who knows where it will end? Redeemed humanity is still young, it has hardly come to its full strength. But already there is joy enough in the little finger of a great saint such as yonder lady to waken all the dead things of the universe into life.’

While we spoke the Lady was steadily advancing towards us, but it was not at us she looked. Following the direction of her eyes, I turned and saw an oddly-shaped phantom approaching. Or rather two phantoms: a great tall Ghost, horribly thin and shaky, who seemed to be leading on a chain another Ghost no bigger than an organ-grinder’s monkey. The taller Ghost wore a soft black hat, and he reminded me of something that my memory could not quite recover. Then, when he had come within a few feet of the Lady he spread out his lean, shaky hand flat on his chest with the fingers wide apart, and exclaimed in a hollow voice, ‘At last!’ All at once I realised

what it was that he had put me in mind of. He was like a seedy actor of the old school.

‘Darling! At last!’ said the Lady. ‘Good Heavens!’ thought I. ‘Surely she can’t — —’, and then I noticed two things. In the first place, I noticed that the little Ghost was not being led by the big one. It was the dwarfish figure that held the chain in its hand and the theatrical figure that wore the collar round its neck. In the second place, I noticed that the Lady was looking solely at the dwarf Ghost. She seemed to think it was the Dwarf who had addressed her, or else she was deliberately ignoring the other. On the poor dwarf she turned her eyes. Love shone not from her face only, but from all her limbs, as if it were some liquid in which she had just been bathing. Then, to my dismay, she came nearer. She stooped down and kissed the Dwarf. It made one shudder to see her in such close contact with that cold, damp, shrunken thing. But she did not shudder.

‘Frank,’ she said, ‘before anything else, forgive me. For all I ever did wrong and for all I did not do right since the first day we met, I ask your pardon.’

I looked properly at the Dwarf for the first time now: or perhaps, when he received her kiss he became a little more visible. One could just make out the sort of face he must have had when he was a man: a little, oval, freckled face with a weak chin and a tiny wisp of unsuccessful moustache. He gave her a glance, not a full look. He was watching the Tragedian out of the corner of his eyes. Then he gave a jerk to the chain: and it was the Tragedian, not he, who answered the Lady.

‘There, there,’ said the Tragedian. ‘We’ll say no more about it. We all make mistakes.’ With the words there came over his features a ghastly contortion which, I think, was meant for an indulgently playful smile. ‘We’ll say no more,’ he continued. ‘It’s not myself I’m thinking about. It is you. That is what has been continually on my mind — all these years. The thought of you — you here alone, breaking your heart about me.’

‘But now,’ said the Lady to the Dwarf, ‘you can set all that aside. Never think like that again. It is all over.’

Her beauty brightened so that I could hardly see anything else, and under that sweet compulsion the Dwarf really looked at her for the first time. For a second I thought he was growing more like a man. He opened his mouth. He himself was going to speak this time. But Oh, the disappointment when the words came!

‘You missed me?’ he croaked in a small, bleating voice.

Yet even then she was not taken aback. Still the love and courtesy flowed from her.

‘Dear, you will understand about that very soon,’ she said. ‘But to-day —— .’

What happened next gave me a shock. The Dwarf and the Tragedian spoke in unison, not to her but to one another. ‘You’ll notice,’ they warned one another, ‘she hasn’t answered our question.’ I realised then that they were one person, or rather that both were the remains of what had once been a person. The Dwarf again rattled the chain.

‘You missed me?’ said the Tragedian to the Lady, throwing a dreadful theatrical tremor into his voice.

‘Dear friend,’ said the Lady, still attending exclusively to the Dwarf, ‘you may be happy about that and about everything else. Forget all about it for ever.’

And really, for a moment, I thought the Dwarf was going to obey: partly because the outlines of his face became a little clearer, and partly because the invitation to all joy, singing out of her whole being like a bird’s song on an April evening, seemed to me such that no creature could resist it. Then he hesitated. And then — once more he and his accomplice spoke in unison.

‘Of course it would be rather fine and magnanimous not to press the point,’ they said to one another. ‘But can we be sure she’d notice? We’ve done these sort of things before. There was the time we let her have the last stamp in the house to write to her mother and said nothing although she *had* known we wanted to write a letter ourself. We’d thought she’d remember and see how unselfish we’d been. But she never did. And there was the time . . . oh, lots and lots of times!’ So the Dwarf gave a shake to the chain and —— .

‘I can’t forget it,’ cried the Tragedian. ‘And I won’t forget it, either. I could forgive them all they’ve done to me. But for your miseries —— .’

‘Oh, don’t you understand?’ said the Lady. ‘There *are* no miseries here.’

‘Do you mean to say,’ answered the Dwarf, as if this new idea had made him quite forget the Tragedian for a moment, ‘do you mean to say you’ve been *happy*?’

‘Didn’t you want me to be? But no matter. Want it now. Or don’t think about it at all.’

The Dwarf blinked at her. One could see an unheard-of idea trying to enter his little mind: one could see even that there was for him some sweetness in it. For a second he had almost let the chain go: then, as if it were his life-line, he clutched it once more.

‘Look here,’ said the Tragedian. ‘We’ve got to face this.’ He was using his ‘manly’ bullying tone this time: the one for bringing women to their senses.

‘Darling,’ said the Lady to the Dwarf, ‘there’s nothing to face. You don’t want me to have been miserable for misery’s sake. You only think I must have been if I loved you. But if you’ll only wait you’ll see that isn’t so.’

‘Love!’ said the Tragedian striking his forehead with his hand: then, a few notes deeper, ‘Love! Do you know the meaning of the word?’

‘How should I not?’ said the Lady. ‘I am in love. *In* love, do you understand? Yes, now I love truly.’

‘You mean,’ said the Tragedian, ‘you mean — you did *not* love me truly in the old days.’

‘Only in a poor sort of way,’ she answered. ‘I have asked you to forgive me. There was a little real love in it. But what we called love down there was mostly the craving to be loved. In the main I loved you for my own sake: because I needed you.’

‘And now!’ said the Tragedian with a hackneyed gesture of despair. ‘Now, you need me no more?’

‘But of course not!’ said the Lady; and her smile made me wonder how both the phantoms could refrain from crying out with joy.

‘What needs could I have,’ she said, ‘now that I have all? I am full now, not empty. I am in Love Himself, not lonely. Strong, not weak. You shall be the same. Come and see. We shall have no *need* for one another now: we can begin to love truly.’

But the Tragedian was still striking attitudes. ‘She needs me no more — no more. No more,’ he said in a choking voice to no one in particular. ‘Would to God,’ he continued, but he was now pronouncing it *Gud*— ‘would to Gud I had seen her lying dead at my feet before I heard those words. Lying dead at my feet. Lying dead at my feet.’

I do not know how long the creature intended to go on repeating the phrase, for the Lady put an end to that. ‘Frank! Frank!’ she cried in a voice that made the whole wood ring. ‘Look at me. *Look* at me. What are you

doing with that great, ugly doll? Let go of the chain. Send it away. It is *you* I want. Don't you see what nonsense it's talking.' Merriment danced in her eyes. She was sharing a joke with the Dwarf, right over the head of the Tragedian. Something not all unlike a smile struggled to appear on the Dwarf's face. For he *was* looking at her now. Her laughter was past his first defences. He was struggling hard to keep it out, but already with imperfect success. Against his will, he was even growing a little bigger. 'Oh, you great goose,' said she. 'What *is* the good of talking like that here? You know as well as I do that you *did* see me lying dead years and years ago. Not "at your feet", of course, but on a bed in a nursing home. A very good nursing home it was too. Matron would never have dreamed of leaving bodies lying about the floor! It's ridiculous for that doll to try to be impressive about death *here*. It just won't work.'

13.

I do not know that I ever saw anything more terrible than the struggle of that Dwarf Ghost against joy. For he had almost been overcome. Somewhere, incalculable ages ago, there must have been gleams of humour and reason in him. For one moment, while she looked at him in her love and mirth, he saw the absurdity of the Tragedian. For one moment he did not at all misunderstand her laughter: he too must once have known that no people find each other more absurd than lovers. But the light that reached him, reached him against his will. This was not the meeting he had pictured; he would not accept it. Once more he clutched at his death-line, and at once the Tragedian spoke.

'You dare to laugh at it!' it stormed. 'To my face? And this is my reward. Very well. It is fortunate that you give yourself no concern about my fate. Otherwise you might be sorry afterwards to think that you had driven me back to Hell. What? Do you think I'd stay *now*? Thank you. I believe I'm fairly quick at recognising where I'm not wanted. "Not needed" was the exact expression, if I remember rightly.'

From this time on the Dwarf never spoke again: but still the Lady addressed it.

'Dear, no one sends you back. Here is all joy. Everything bids you stay.' But the Dwarf was growing smaller even while she spoke.

'Yes,' said the Tragedian. 'On terms you might offer to a dog. I happen to have some self-respect left, and I see that my going will make no difference to you. It is nothing to you that I go back to the cold and the gloom, the lonely, lonely streets —— .'

'Don't, don't, Frank,' said the Lady. 'Don't let it talk like that.' But the Dwarf was now so small that she had dropped on her knees to speak to it. The Tragedian caught her words greedily as a dog catches a bone.

'Ah, you can't bear to hear it!' he shouted with miserable triumph. 'That was always the way. *You* must be sheltered. Grim realities must be kept out of *your* sight. You who can be happy without me, forgetting me! You don't want even to hear of my sufferings. You say, *don't*. Don't tell you. Don't make you unhappy. Don't break in on your sheltered, self-centred little heaven. And this is the reward —— .'

She stooped still lower to speak to the Dwarf which was now a figure no bigger than a kitten, hanging on to the end of the chain with his feet off the ground.

‘That wasn’t why I said, Don’t,’ she answered. ‘I meant, stop acting. It’s no good. He is killing you. Let go of that chain. Even now.’

‘Acting,’ screamed the Tragedian. ‘What do you mean?’

The Dwarf was now so small that I could not distinguish him from the chain to which he was clinging. And now for the first time I could not be certain whether the Lady was addressing him or the Tragedian.

‘Quick,’ she said. ‘There is still time. Stop it. Stop it at once.’

‘Stop what?’

‘Using pity, other people’s pity, in the wrong way. We have all done it a bit on earth, you know. Pity was meant to be a spur that drives joy to help misery. But it can be used the wrong way round. It can be used for a kind of blackmailing. Those who choose misery can hold joy up to ransom, by pity. You see, I know now. Even as a child you did it. Instead of saying you were sorry, you went and sulked in the attic . . . because you knew that sooner or later one of your sisters would say, “I can’t bear to think of him sitting up there alone, crying.” You used their pity to blackmail them, and they gave in in the end. And afterwards, when we were married . . . oh, it doesn’t matter, if only you will *stop* it.’

‘And *that*,’ said the Tragedian, ‘that is all you have understood of me, after all these years.’ I don’t know what had become of the Dwarf Ghost by now. Perhaps it was climbing up the chain like an insect: perhaps it was somehow absorbed into the chain.

‘No, Frank, not *here*,’ said the Lady. ‘Listen to reason. Did you think joy was created to live always under that threat? Always defenceless against those who would rather be miserable than have their self-will crossed? For it was real misery. I know that now. You made yourself really wretched. That you can still do. But you can no longer communicate your wretchedness. Everything becomes more and more itself. Here is joy that cannot be shaken. Our light can swallow up your darkness: but your darkness cannot now infect our light. No, no, no. Come to us. We will not go to you. Can you really have thought that love and joy would always be at the mercy of frowns and sighs? Did you not know they were stronger than their opposites?’

‘Love? How dare *you* use that sacred word?’ said the Tragedian. At the same moment he gathered up the chain which had now for some time been swinging uselessly at his side, and somehow disposed of it. I am not quite sure, but I think he swallowed it. Then for the first time it became clear that the Lady saw and addressed him only.

‘Where is Frank?’ she said. ‘And who are you, Sir? I never knew you. Perhaps you had better leave me. Or stay, if you prefer. If it would help you and if it were possible I would go down with you into Hell: but you cannot bring Hell into me.’

‘You do not love me,’ said the Tragedian in a thin bat-like voice: and he was now very difficult to see.

‘I cannot love a lie,’ said the Lady. ‘I cannot love the thing which is not. I am in Love, and out of it I will not go.’

There was no answer. The Tragedian had vanished. The Lady was alone in that woodland place, and a brown bird went hopping past her, bending with its light feet the grasses I could not bend.

Presently the lady got up and began to walk away. The other Bright Spirits came forward to receive her, singing as they came:

‘The Happy Trinity is her home: nothing can trouble her joy.

She is the bird that evades every net: the wild deer that leaps every pitfall.

Like the mother bird to its chickens or a shield to the arm’d knight: so is the Lord to her mind, in His unchanging lucidity.

Bogies will not scare her in the dark: bullets will not frighten her in the day.

Falsehoods tricked out as truths assail her in vain: she sees through the lie as if it were glass.

The invisible germ will not harm her: nor yet the glittering sun-stroke.

A thousand fail to solve the problem, ten thousand choose the wrong turning: but she passes safely through.

He details immortal gods to attend her: upon every road where she must travel.

They take her hand at hard places: she will not stub her toes in the dark.

She may walk among Lions and rattlesnakes: among dinosaurs and nurseries of lionets.

He fills her brim full with immensity of life: he leads her to see the world's desire.'

'And yet . . . and yet . . .', said I to my Teacher, when all the shapes and the singing had passed some distance away into the forest, 'even now I am not quite sure. Is it really tolerable that she should be untouched by his misery, even his self-made misery?'

'Would ye rather he still had the power of tormenting her? He did it many a day and many a year in their earthly life.'

'Well, no. I suppose I don't want that.'

'What then?'

'I hardly know, Sir. What some people say on earth is that the final loss of one soul gives the lie to all the joy of those who are saved.'

'Ye see it does not.'

'I feel in a way that it ought to.'

'That sounds very merciful: but see what lurks behind it.'

'What?'

'The demand of the loveless and the self-imprisoned that they should be allowed to blackmail the universe: that till they consent to be happy (on their own terms) no one else shall taste joy: that theirs should be the final power; that Hell should be able to *veto* Heaven.'

'I don't know what I want, Sir.'

'Son, son, it must be one way or the other. Either the day must come when joy prevails and all the makers of misery are no longer able to infect it: or else for ever and ever the makers of misery can destroy in others the happiness they reject for themselves. I know it has a grand sound to say ye'll accept no salvation which leaves even one creature in the dark outside. But watch that sophistry or ye'll make a Dog in a Manger the tyrant of the universe.'

'But dare one say — it is horrible to say — that Pity must ever die?'

'Ye must distinguish. The action of Pity will live for ever: but the passion of Pity will not. The passion of pity, the pity we merely suffer, the ache that draws men to concede what should not be conceded and to flatter when they should speak truth, the pity that has cheated many a woman out of her virginity and many a statesman out of his honesty — that will die. It was used as a weapon by bad men against good ones: their weapon will be broken.'

‘And what is the other kind — the action?’

‘It’s a weapon on the other side. It leaps quicker than light from the highest place to the lowest to bring healing and joy, whatever the cost to itself. It changes darkness into light and evil into good. But it will not, at the cunning tears of Hell, impose on good the tyranny of evil. Every disease that submits to a cure shall be cured: but we will not call blue yellow to please those who insist on still having jaundice, nor make a midden of the world’s garden for the sake of some who cannot abide the smell of roses.’

‘You say it will go down to the lowest, Sir. But she didn’t go down with him to Hell. She didn’t even see him off by the bus.’

‘Where would ye have had her go?’

‘Why, where we all came from by that bus. The big gulf, beyond the edge of the cliff. Over there. You can’t see it from here, but you must know the place I mean.’

My Teacher gave a curious smile. ‘Look,’ he said, and with the word he went down on his hands and knees. I did the same (how it hurt my knees!) and presently saw that he had plucked a blade of grass. Using its thin end as a pointer, he made me see, after I had looked very closely, a crack in the soil so small that I could not have identified it without this aid.

‘I cannot be certain’, he said, ‘that this *is* the crack ye came up through. But through a crack no bigger than that ye certainly came.’

‘But — but,’ I gasped with a feeling of bewilderment not unlike terror. ‘I saw an infinite abyss. And cliffs towering up and up. And then *this* country on top of the cliffs.’

‘Aye. But the voyage was not mere locomotion. That bus, and all you inside it, were increasing *in size*.’

‘Do you mean then that Hell — all that infinite empty town — is down in some little crack like this?’

‘Yes. All Hell is smaller than one pebble of your earthly world: but it is smaller than one atom of *this* world, the Real World. Look at yon butterfly. If it swallowed all Hell, Hell would not be big enough to do it any harm or to have any taste.’

‘It seems big enough when you’re in it, Sir.’

‘And yet all loneliness, angers, hatreds, envies and itchings that it contains, if rolled into one single experience and put into the scale against the least moment of the joy that is felt by the least in Heaven, would have

no weight that could be registered at all. Bad cannot succeed even in being bad as truly as good is good. If all Hell's miseries together entered the consciousness of yon wee yellow bird on the bough there, they would be swallowed up without trace, as if one drop of ink had been dropped into that Great Ocean to which your terrestrial Pacific itself is only a molecule.'

'I see,' said I at last. 'She couldn't *fit* into Hell.'

He nodded. 'There's not room for her,' he said. 'Hell could not open its mouth wide enough.'

'And she couldn't make herself smaller? — like Alice, you know.'

'Nothing like small enough. For a damned soul is nearly nothing: it is shrunk, shut up in itself. Good beats upon the damned incessantly as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes fast shut. First they will not, in the end they cannot, open their hands for gifts, or their mouths for food, or their eyes to see.'

'Then no one can ever reach them?'

'Only the Greatest of all can make Himself small enough to enter Hell. For the higher a thing is, the lower it can descend — a man can sympathise with a horse but a horse cannot sympathise with a rat. Only One has descended into Hell.'

'And will He ever do so again?'

'It was not once long ago that He did it. Time does not work that way when once ye have left the Earth. All moments that have been or shall be were, or are, present in the moment of His descending. There is no spirit in prison to Whom He did not preach.'

'And some hear him?'

'Aye.'

'In your own books, Sir,' said I, 'you were a Universalist. You talked as if all men would be saved. And St. Paul too.'

'Ye can know nothing of the end of all things, or nothing expressible in those terms. It may be, as the Lord said to the Lady Julian, that all will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of thing will be well. But it's ill talking of such questions.'

'Because they are too terrible, Sir?'

'No. Because all answers deceive. If ye put the question from within Time and are asking about possibilities, the answer is certain. The choice of ways is before you. Neither is closed. Any man may choose eternal death.

Those who choose it will have it. But if ye are trying to leap on into eternity, if ye are trying to see the final state of all things as it *will* be (for so ye must speak) when there are no more possibilities left but only the Real, then ye ask what cannot be answered to mortal ears. Time is the very lens through which ye see — small and clear, as men see through the wrong end of a telescope — something that would otherwise be too big for ye to see at all. That thing is Freedom: the gift whereby ye most resemble your Maker and are yourselves parts of eternal reality. But ye can see it only through the lens of Time, in a little clear picture, through the inverted telescope. It is a picture of moments following one another and yourself in each moment making some choice that might have been otherwise. Neither the temporal succession nor the phantom of what ye might have chosen and didn't is itself Freedom. They are a lens. The picture is a symbol: but it's truer than any philosophical theorem (or, perhaps, than any mystic's vision) that claims to go behind it. For every attempt to see the shape of eternity except through the lens of Time destroys your knowledge of Freedom. Witness the doctrine of Predestination which shows (truly enough) that eternal reality is not waiting for a future in which to be real; but at the price of removing Freedom which is the deeper truth of the two. And wouldn't Universalism do the same? Ye *cannot* know eternal reality by a definition. Time itself, and all acts and events that fill Time, are the definition, and it must be lived. The Lord said we were gods. How long could ye bear to look (without Time's lens) on the greatness of your own soul and the eternal reality of her choice?'

14.

And suddenly all was changed. I saw a great assembly of gigantic forms all motionless, all in deepest silence, standing forever about a little silver table and looking upon it. And on the table there were little figures like chessmen who went to and fro doing this and that. And I knew that each chessman was the *idolum* or puppet representative of some one of the great presences that stood by. And the acts and motions of each chessman were a moving portrait, a mimicry or pantomime, which delineated the inmost nature of his giant master. And these chessmen are men and women as they appear to themselves and to one another in this world. And the silver table is Time. And those who stand and watch are the immortal souls of those same men and women. Then vertigo and terror seized me and, clutching at my Teacher, I said, 'Is *that* the truth? Then is all that I have been seeing in this country false? These conversations between the Spirits and the Ghosts — were they only the mimicry of choices that had really been made long ago?'

'Or might ye not as well say, anticipations of a choice to be made at the end of all things? But ye'd do better to say neither. Ye saw the choices a bit more clearly than ye could see them on earth: the lens was clearer. But it was still seen through the lens. Do not ask of a vision in a dream more than a vision in a dream can give.'

'A dream? Then — then — am I not really here, Sir?'

'No, Son,' said he kindly, taking my hand in his. 'It is not so good as that. The bitter drink of death is still before you. Ye are only dreaming. And if ye come to tell of what ye have seen, make it plain that it was but a dream. See ye make it very plain. Give no poor fool the pretext to think ye are claiming knowledge of what no mortal knows. I'll have no Swedenborgs and no Vale Owens among my children.'

'God forbid, Sir,' said I, trying to look very wise.

'He *has* forbidden it. That's what I'm telling ye.' As he said this he looked more Scotch than ever. I was gazing steadfastly on his face. The vision of the chessmen had faded, and once more the quiet woods in the cool light before sunrise were about us. Then, still looking at his face, I saw there something that sent a quiver through my whole body. I stood at that moment with my back to the East and the mountains, and he, facing me, looked towards them. His face flushed with a new light. A fern, thirty yards

behind him, turned golden. The eastern side of every tree-trunk grew bright. Shadows deepened. All the time there had been bird noises, trillings, chatterings, and the like; but now suddenly the full chorus was poured from every branch; cocks were crowing, there was music of hounds, and horns; above all this ten thousand tongues of men and woodland angels and the wood itself sang. ‘It comes! It comes!’ they sang. ‘Sleepers awake! It comes, it comes, it comes.’ One dreadful glance over my shoulder I essayed — not long enough to see (or did I see?) the rim of the sunrise that shoots Time dead with golden arrows and puts to flight all phantasmal shapes. Screaming, I buried my face in the folds of my Teacher’s robe. ‘The morning! The morning!’ I cried, ‘I am caught by the morning and I am a ghost.’ But it was too late. The light, like solid blocks, intolerable of edge and weight, came thundering upon my head. Next moment the folds of my Teacher’s garment were only the folds of the old ink-stained cloth on my study table which I had pulled down with me as I fell from my chair. The blocks of light were only the books which I had pulled off with it, falling about my head. I awoke in a cold room, hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead.

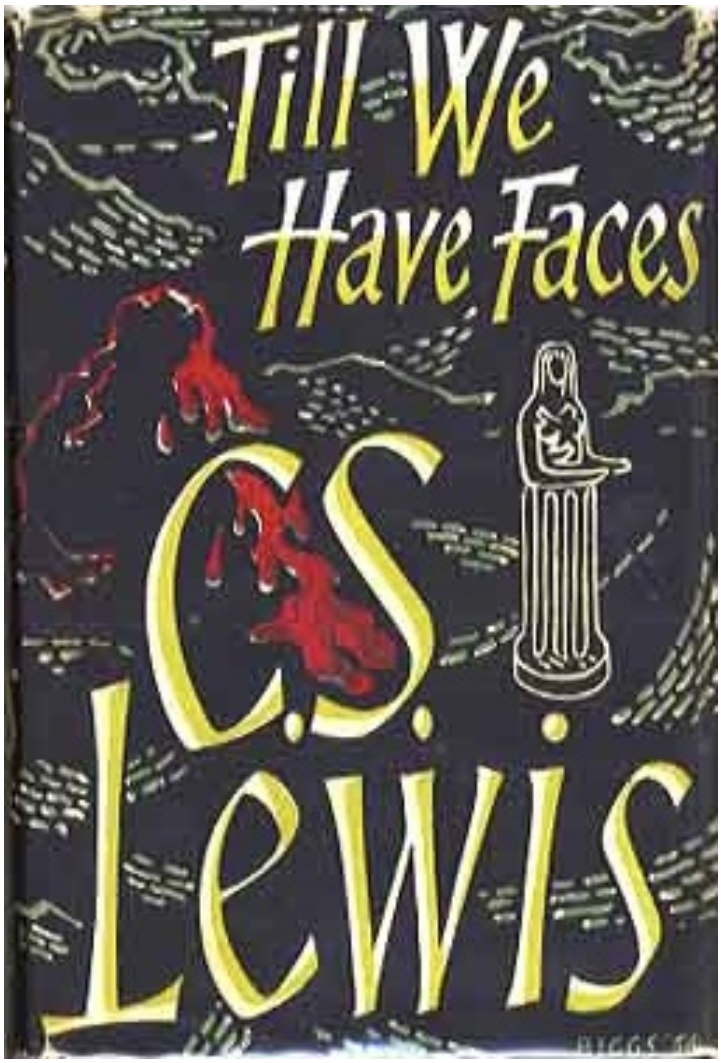
TILL WE HAVE FACES (1956)



A MYTH RETOLD

This 1956 novel is a retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth, as recounted in a chapter of *The Golden Ass* by the Roman author Apuleius. The tale had haunted Lewis all his life, as he realised that some of the main characters' actions were illogical. As a consequence, his retelling of the story is characterised by a highly developed character, the narrator, with the reader being drawn into her reasoning and her emotions. *Till We Have Faces* would be Lewis' last novel and he considered it his most mature piece of fiction, written in conjunction with his wife, Joy Davidman.

The first part of the novel is written from the perspective of Psyche's older sister Orual, as an accusation against the gods. The story is set in the fictional kingdom of Glome, a primitive city-state whose people have occasional contact with civilised Hellenistic Greece. In the second part, the narrator undergoes a change of mindset ('conversion') and understands that her initial accusation was tainted by her own failings and shortcomings, and that the gods are lovingly present in humans' lives.



The first edition

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TILL WE HAVE FACES



Joy Davidman was an American poet and writer. Often referred to as a child prodigy, she earned a master's degree from Columbia University in English literature in 1935. For her book of poems, 'Letter to a Comrade', she won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Competition in 1938 and the Russell Loines Award for Poetry in 1939.



Psyche and Amor by François Gérard, 1798

PART ONE

I

I am old now and have not much to fear from the anger of gods. I have neither husband nor child, nor hardly a friend, through whom they can hurt me. My body, this lean carrion that still has to be washed and fed and have clothes hung about it daily with so many changes, they may kill as soon as they please. The succession is provided for. My crown passes to my nephew.

Being, for all these reasons, free from fear, I will write in this book what no one who has happiness would dare to write. I will accuse the gods; especially the god who lives on the Grey Mountain. That is, I will tell all he has done to me from the very beginning, as if I were making my complaint of him before a judge. But there is no judge between gods and men, and the god of the mountain will not answer me. Terrors and plagues are not an answer. I write in Greek as my old master taught it to me. It may some day happen that a traveller from the Greeklands will again lodge in this palace and read the book. Then he will talk of it among the Greeks, where there is great freedom of speech even about the gods themselves. Perhaps their wise men will know whether my complaint is right or whether the god could have defended himself if he had made an answer.

I was Orual the eldest daughter of Trom, King of Glome. The city of Glome stands on the left hand of the river Shennit to a traveller who is coming up from the south-east, not more than a day's journey above Ringal, which is the last town southward that belongs to the land of Glome. The city is built about as far back from the river as a woman can walk in the third of an hour; for the Shennit overflows her banks in the spring. In summer there was then dry mud on each side of it, and reeds, and plenty of waterfowl. About as far beyond the ford of the Shennit as our city is on this side of it you come to the holy house of Ungit. And beyond the house of Ungit (going all the time east and north) you come quickly to the foothills of the Grey Mountain. The god of the Grey Mountain, who hates me, is the son of Ungit. He does not, however, live in the house of Ungit, but Ungit sits there alone. In the furthest recess of her house where she sits it is so dark that you cannot see her well, but in summer enough light may come down from the smoke-holes in the roof to show her a little. She is a black stone without head or hands or face, and a very great goddess. My old master, whom we called the Fox, said she was the same whom the Greeks

call Aphrodite; but I write all the names of people and places in our own language.

I will begin my writing with the day my mother died, and they cut off my hair, as the custom is. The Fox — but he was not with us then — said it is a custom we learned from the Greeks. Batta, the nurse, shore me and my sister Redival outside the palace, at the foot of the garden which runs steeply up the hill behind. Redival was my sister, three years younger than I, and we two were still the only children. While Batta was using the shears many other of the slave women were standing round, from time to time wailing for the Queen's death and beating their breasts; but in between they were eating nuts and joking. As the shears snipped and Redival's curls fell off, the slaves said, "Oh, what a pity! All the gold gone!" They had not said anything like that while I was being shorn. But what I remember best is the coolness of my head and the hot sun on the back of my neck when we were building mud houses, Redival and I, all that summer afternoon.

Our nurse Batta was a big-boned, fair-haired, hard-handed woman whom my father had bought from traders who got her further north. When we plagued her she would say, "Only wait till your father brings home a new queen to be your stepmother. It'll be changed times for you then. You'll have hard cheese instead of honey-cakes then and skim milk instead of red wine. Wait and see."

As things fell out, we got something else before we got a stepmother. There was a bitter frost that day. Redival and I were booted (we mostly went barefoot or sandalled) and trying to slide in the yard which is at the back of the oldest part of the palace, where the walls are wooden. There was ice enough all the way from the byre-door to the big dunghill, what with frozen spills of milk and puddles and the stale of the beasts; but too rough for sliding. And out comes Batta, with the cold reddening her nose, calling out, "Quick, quick! Ah, you filthies! Come and be cleaned and then to the King. You'll see who's waiting for you there. My word! This'll be a change for you."

"Is it the Stepmother?" said Redival.

"Oh, worse than that, worse than that; you'll see," said Batta, polishing Redival's face with the end of her apron. "Lots of whippings for the pair of you; lots of ear-pullings; lots of hard work." Then we were led off and over to the new parts of the palace, where it is built of painted brick, and there were guards in their armour, and skins and heads of animals hung up on the

walls. In the Pillar Room our father was standing by the hearth, and opposite him there were three men in travelling dress whom we knew well enough — traders who came to Glome three times a year. They were just packing up their scales, so we knew they had been paid for something, and one was putting up a fetter, so we knew they must have sold our father a slave. There was a short, thick-set man standing before them, and we knew this must be the man they had sold, for you could still see the sore places on his legs where the irons had been. But he did not look like any other slave we had ever known. He was very bright-eyed, and whatever of his hair and beard was not grey was reddish.

"Now, Greekling," said my father to this man, "I trust to beget a prince one of these days and I have a mind to see him brought up in all the wisdom of your people. Meanwhile practice on *them*." (He pointed at us children.) "If a man can teach a girl, he can teach anything." Then, just before he sent us away, he said, "Especially the elder. See if you can make her wise; it's about all she'll ever be good for." I didn't understand that, but I knew it was like things I had heard people say of me ever since I could remember.

I loved the Fox, as my father called him, better than anyone I had yet known. You would have thought that a man who had been free in the Greeklands, and then been taken in war and sold far away among the barbarians, would be downcast. And so he was sometimes; possibly more often than I, in my childishness, guessed. But I never heard him complain; and I never heard him boast (as all the other foreign slaves did) about the great man he had been in his own country. He had all sorts of sayings to cheer himself up with: "No man can be an exile if he remembers that all the world is one city," and, "Everything is as good or bad as our opinion makes it." But I think what really kept him cheerful was his inquisitiveness. I never knew such a man for questions. He wanted to know everything about our country and language and ancestors and gods, and even our plants and flowers.

That was how I came to tell him all about Ungit, about the girls who are kept in her house, and the presents that brides have to make to her, and how we sometimes, in a bad year, have to cut someone's throat and pour the blood over her. He shuddered when I said that and muttered something under his breath; but a moment later he said, "Yes, she is undoubtedly Aphrodite, though more like the Babylonian than the Greek. But come, I'll tell you a tale of our Aphrodite."

Then he deepened and lilted his voice and told how their Aphrodite once fell in love with the prince Anchises while he kept his father's sheep on the slopes of a mountain called Ida. And as she came down the grassy slopes towards his shepherd's hut, lions and lynxes and bears and all sorts of beasts came about her fawning like dogs, and all went from her again in pairs to the delights of love. But she dimmed her glory and made herself like a mortal woman and came to Anchises and beguiled him and they went up together into his bed. I think the Fox had meant to end here, but the song now had him in its grip, and he went on to tell what followed; how Anchises woke from sleep and saw Aphrodite standing in the door of the hut, not now like a mortal but with the glory. So he knew he had lain with a goddess, and he covered his eyes and shrieked, "Kill me at once."

"Not that this ever really happened," the Fox said in haste. "It's only lies of poets, lies of poets, child. Not in accordance with nature." But he had said enough to let me see that if the goddess was more beautiful in Greece than in Glome she was equally terrible in each.

It was always like that with the Fox; he was ashamed of loving poetry ("All folly, child") and I had to work much at my reading and writing and what he called philosophy in order to get a poem out of him. But thus, little by little, he taught me many. *Virtue, sought by man with travail and toil* was the one he praised most, but I was never deceived by that. The real lilt came into his voice and the real brightness into his eyes when we were off into Take me to the apple-laden land or

The Moon's gone down, but Alone I lie.

He always sang that one very tenderly and as if he pitied me for something. He liked me better than Redival, who hated study and mocked and plagued him and set the other slaves on to play tricks on him.

We worked most often (in summer) on the little grass plot behind the pear trees, and it was there one day that the King found us. We all stood up of course, two children and a slave with our eyes on the ground and our hands crossed on our breasts. The King smacked the Fox heartily on the back and said, "Courage, Fox. There'll be a prince for you to work on yet, please the gods. And thank them too, Fox, for it can't often have fallen to the lot of a mere Greekling to rule the grandson of so great a king as my father-in-law that is to be. Not that you'll know or care more about it than an ass. You're all pedlars and hucksters down in the Greeklands, eh?"

"Are not all men of one blood, Master?" said the Fox.

“Of one blood?” said the King with a stare and a great bull-laugh. “I’d be sorry to think so.”

Thus in the end it was the King himself and not Batta who first told us that the Stepmother was really at hand. My father had made a great match. He was to have the third daughter of the King of Caphad, who is the biggest king in all our part of the world. (I know now why Caphad wanted an alliance with so poor a kingdom as we are, and I have wondered how my father did not see that his father-in-law must already be a sinking man. The marriage itself was a proof of it.)

It cannot have been many weeks before the marriage took place, but in my memory the preparations seem to have lasted for almost a year. All the brick work round the great gate was painted scarlet, and there were new hangings for the Pillar Room, and a great new royal bed which cost the King far more than he was wise to give. It was made of an eastern wood which was said to have such virtue that four of every five children begotten in such a bed would be male. (“All folly, child,” said the Fox, “these things come about by natural causes.”) And as the day drew nearer there was nothing but driving in of beasts and slaughtering of beasts — the whole courtyard reeked with the skins of them — and baking and brewing. But we children had not much time to wander from room to room and stare and hinder, for the King suddenly took it into his head that Redival and I and twelve other girls, daughters of nobles, were to sing the bridal hymn. And nothing would do him but a Greek hymn, which was a thing no other neighbouring king could have provided. “But, Master — —” said the Fox, almost with tears in his eyes. “Teach ’em, Fox, teach ’em,” roared my father. “What’s the use of my spending good food and drink on your Greek belly if I’m not to get a Greek song out of you on my wedding night? What’s that? No one’s asking you to teach them Greek. Of course they won’t understand what they’re singing, but they can make the noises. See to it, or your back’ll be redder than ever your beard was.”

It was a crazy scheme, and the Fox said afterwards that the teaching of that hymn to us barbarians was what greyed the last red hair. “I was a fox,” he said, “now I am a badger.”

When we had made some progress in our task the King brought the Priest of Ungit in to hear us. I had a fear of that Priest which was quite different from my fear of my father. I think that what frightened me (in those early days) was the holiness of the smell that hung about him — a

temple-smell of blood (mostly pigeons' blood, but he had sacrificed men too) and burnt fat and singed hair and wine and stale incense. It is the Ungit smell. Perhaps I was afraid of his clothes too; all the skins they were made of, and the dried bladders, and the great mask shaped like a bird's head which hung on his chest. It looked as if there were a bird growing out of his body.

He did not understand a word of the hymn, nor the music either, but he asked, "Are the young women to be veiled or unveiled?"

"Need you ask?" said the King with one of his great laughs, jerking his thumb in my direction. "Do you think I want my queen frightened out of her senses? Veils of course. And good thick veils too." One of the other girls tittered, and I think that was the first time I clearly understood that I am ugly.

This made me more afraid of the Stepmother than ever. I thought she would be crueller to me than to Redival because of my ugliness. It wasn't only what Batta had said that frightened me; I had heard of stepmothers in plenty of stories. And when the night came and we were all in the pillared porch, nearly dazzled with the torches and trying hard to sing our hymn as the Fox had taught us to — and he kept on frowning and smiling and nodding at us while we sang, and once he held up his hands in horror — pictures of things that had been done to girls in the stories were dancing in my mind. Then came the shouts from outside, and more torches, and next moment they were lifting the bride out of the chariot. She was as thickly veiled as we, and all I could see was that she was very small; it was as if they were lifting a child. That didn't ease my fears; "the little are the spiteful," our proverb says. Then (still singing) we got her into the bridal chamber and took off her veil.

I know now that the face I saw was beautiful, but I did not think of that then. All I saw was that she was frightened, more frightened than I; indeed terrified. It made me see my father as he must have looked to her, a moment since, when she had her first sight of him standing to greet her in the porch. His was not a brow, a mouth, a girth, a stance, or a voice to quiet a girl's fear.

We took off layer after layer of her finery, making her yet smaller, and left the shivering, white body with its staring eyes in the King's bed, and filed out. We had sung very badly.

II

I can say very little about my father's second wife, for she did not live till the end of her first year in Glome. She was with child as soon as anyone could reasonably look for it, and the King was in high spirits and hardly ever ran across the Fox without saying something about the prince who was to be born. He made great sacrifices to Ungit every month after that. How it was between him and the Queen I do not know; except that once, after messengers had come from Caphad, I heard the King say to her, "It begins to look, girl, as if I had driven my sheep to a bad market. I learn now that your father has lost two towns — no, three, though he tries to mince the matter. I would thank him to have told me he was sinking before he persuaded me to embark in the same bottom." (I was leaning my head on my window-sill to dry my hair after the bath, and they were walking in the garden.) However that might be, it is certain that she was very homesick, and I think our winter was too hard for her southern body. She was soon pale and thin. I learned that I had nothing to fear from her. She was at first more afraid of me; after that, very loving in her timid way, and more like a sister than a stepmother.

Of course no one in the house went to bed on the night of the birth, for that, they say, will make the child refuse to wake into the world. We all sat in the great hall between the Pillar Room and the Bedchamber, in a red glare of birth-torches. The flames swayed and guttered terribly, for all doors must be open; the shutting of a door might shut up the mother's womb. In the middle of the hall burned a great fire. Every hour the Priest of Ungit walked round it nine times and threw in the proper things. The King sat in his chair and never moved all night, not even his head. I was sitting next to the Fox.

"Grandfather," I whispered to him, "I am terribly afraid."

"We must learn, child, not to fear anything that nature brings," he whispered back.

I must have slept after that, for the next thing I knew was the sound of women wailing and beating the breast as I had heard them do it the day my mother died. Everything had changed while I slept. I was shivering with cold. The fire had sunk low, the King's chair was empty, the door of the Bedchamber was at last shut, and the terrible sounds from within it had

stopped. There must have been some sacrifice too, for there was a smell of slaughtering, and blood on the floor, and the Priest was cleaning his holy knife. I was all in a daze from my sleep, for I started up with the wildest idea; I would go and see the Queen. The Fox was after me long before I reached the door of the Bedchamber. “Daughter, daughter,” he was saying. “Not now. Are you mad? The King — —”

At that moment the door was flung open and out came my father. His face shocked me full awake, for he was in his pale rage. I knew that in his red rage he would storm and threaten, and little might come of it, but when he was pale he was deadly. “Wine,” he said, not very loud; and that too was a bad sign. The other slaves pushed forward a boy who was rather a favourite, as slaves do when they are afraid. The child, white as his master and in all his finery (my father dressed the younger slaves very fine) came running with the flagon and the royal cup, slipped in the blood, reeled, and dropped both. Quick as thought, my father whipped out his dagger and stabbed him in the side. The boy dropped dead in the blood and wine, and the fall of his body sent the flagon rolling over and over. It made a great noise in that silence; I hadn’t thought till then that the floor of the hall was so uneven. (I have re-paved it since.)

My father stared for a moment at his own dagger; stupidly, it seemed. Then he goes very gently up to the Priest.

“What have you to say for Ungit now?” he asked, still in that low voice. “You had better recover what she owes me. When are you going to pay me for my good cattle?” Then, after a pause, “Tell me, prophet, what would happen if I hammered Ungit into powder and tied you between the hammers and the stone?”

But the Priest was not in the least afraid of the King.

“Ungit hears, King, even at this moment,” he said. “And Ungit will remember. You have already said enough to call down doom upon all your descendants.”

“Descendants,” says the King. “You talk of descendants,” still very quiet, but now he was shaking. The ice of his rage would break any moment. The body of the dead boy caught his eye. “Who did that?” he asked. Then he saw the Fox and me. All the blood rushed into his face, and now at last the voice came roaring out of his chest loud enough to lift the roof.

“Girls, girls, girls,” he bellowed. “And now one girl more. Is there no end to it? Is there a plague of girls in heaven that the gods send me this

flood of them? You — you — —” He caught me by the hair, shook me to and fro, and flung me from him so that I fell in a heap. There are times when even a child knows better than to cry. When the blackness passed and I could see again, he was shaking the Fox by his throat.

“Here’s an old babbler who has eaten my bread long enough,” he said. “It would have paid me better to buy a dog as things turn out. But I’ll feed you in idleness no longer. Some of you take him to the mines tomorrow. There might be a week’s work in his old bones even now.”

Again there was dead silence in the hall. Suddenly the King flung up his hands, stamped, and cried, “Faces, faces, faces! What are you all gaping at? It’d make a man mad. Be off! Away! Out of my sight, the whole pack of you!”

We were out of the hall as quick as the doorways would let us.

The Fox and I went out of the little door by the herb-garden on the east. It was nearly daylight now and there was a small rain beginning.

“Grandfather,” said I, sobbing, “you must fly at once. This moment, before they come to take you to the mines.”

He shook his head. “I’m too old to run far,” he said. “And you know what the King does to runaway slaves.”

“But the mines, the mines! Look, I’ll come with you. If we’re caught I’ll say I made you come. We shall be almost out of Glome once we’re over *that*.” I pointed to the ridge of the Grey Mountain, now dark with a white daybreak behind it, seen through the slanting rain.

“That is foolishness, daughter,” said he, petting me like a small child. “They would think I was stealing you to sell. No; I must fly further. And help me you shall. Down by the river; you know the little plant with the purple spots on its stalks. It’s the roots of it I need.”

“The poison?”

“Why, yes. (Child, child, don’t cry so.) Have I not told you often that to depart from life of a man’s own will when there’s good reason is one of the things that are according to nature? We are to look on life as — —”

“They say that those who go that way lie wallowing in filth — down there in the land of the dead.”

“Hush, hush. Are you also still a barbarian? At death we are resolved into our elements. Shall I accept birth and cavil at — —”

“Oh, I know, I know. But, Grandfather, do you really in your heart believe nothing of what is said about the gods and Those Below? But you

do, you do. You are trembling."

"That's my disgrace. The body is shaking. I needn't let it shake the god within me. Have I not already carried this body too long if it makes such a fool of me at the end? But we are wasting time."

"Listen!" said I. "What's that?" For I was in a state to be scared by every sound.

"Horses," said the Fox, peering through the quick-hedge with his eyes screwed up to see against the rain. "They are coming to the great door. Messengers from Phars, by the look of them. And that will not sweeten the King's mood either. Will you — ah, Zeus, it is already too late." For there was a call from within doors, "The Fox, the Fox, the Fox to the King."

"As well go as be dragged," said the Fox. "Farewell, daughter," and he kissed me, Greek fashion, on the eyes and the head. But I went in with him. I had an idea I would face the King; though whether I meant to beseech him or curse him or kill him I hardly knew. But as we came to the Pillar Room we saw many strangers within, and the King shouted through the open door, "Here, Fox, I've work for you." Then he saw me and said, "And you, curd-face, be off to the women's quarters and don't come here to sour the morning drink for the men."

I do not know that I have ever (to speak of things merely mortal) been in such dread as I was for the rest of that day; dread that feels as if there were an empty place between your belly and your chest. I didn't know whether I dared be comforted by the King's last words or not; for they sounded as if his anger had passed, but it might blaze out again. Moreover, I had known him do a cruel thing not in anger but in a kind of murderous joke, or because he remembered he had sworn to do it when he was angry. He had sent old house-slaves to the mines before. And I could not be alone with my terror, for now comes Batta to shear my head and Redival's again as they had been shorn when my mother died, and to make a great tale (clicking her tongue) of how the Queen was dead in childbed, which I had known ever since I heard the mourning, and how she had borne a daughter alive. I sat for the shearing and thought that, if the Fox must die in the mines, it was very fit I should offer my hair. Lank and dull and little it lay on the floor beside Redival's rings of gold.

In the evening the Fox came and told me that there was no more talk of the mines; for the present. A thing that had often irked me had now been our salvation. More and more, of late, the King had taken the Fox away

from us girls to work for him in the Pillar Room; he had begun to find that the Fox could calculate and read and write letters (at first only in Greek but now in the speech of our parts too) and give advice better than any man in Glome. This very day the Fox had taught him to drive a better bargain with the King of Phars than he would ever have thought of for himself. The Fox was a true Greek; where my father could give only a Yes or a No to some neighbouring king or dangerous noble, he could pare the Yes to the very quick and sweeten the No till it went down like wine. He could make your weak enemy believe that you were his best friend and make your strong enemy believe you were twice as strong as you really were. He was far too useful to be sent to the mines.

They burnt the dead Queen on the third day, and my father named the child Istra. “It is a good name,” said the Fox, “a very good name. And you know enough now to tell me what it would be in Greek.”

“It would be Psyche, Grandfather,” said I.

New-born children were no rarity in the palace; the place sprawled with the slaves’ babies and my father’s bastards. Sometimes my father would say, “Lecherous rascals! Anyone’d think this was Ungit’s house, not mine,” and threaten to drown a dozen of them like blind puppies. But in his heart he thought the better of a man-slave if he could get half the maids in the place with child, especially if they bore boys. (The girls, unless they took his own fancy, were mostly sold when they were ripe; some were given to the house of Ungit.) Nevertheless, because I had (a little) loved the Queen, I went to see Psyche that very evening as soon as the Fox had set my mind at rest. And so, in one hour, I passed out of the worst anguish I had yet suffered into the beginning of all my joys.

The child was very big, not a wearish little thing as you might have expected from her mother’s stature, and very fair of skin. You would have thought she made bright all the corner of the room in which she lay. She slept (tiny was the sound of her breathing). But there never was a child like Psyche for quietness in her cradle days. As I gazed at her the Fox came in on tiptoes and looked over my shoulder. “Now by all the gods,” he whispered, “old fool that I am, I could almost believe that there really is divine blood in your family. Helen herself, new-hatched, must have looked so.”

Batta had put her to nurse with a red-haired woman who was sullen and (like Batta herself) too fond of the wine-jar. I soon had the child out of their

hands. I got for her nurse a free woman, a peasant's wife, as honest and wholesome as I could find, and after that both were in my own chamber day and night. Batta was only too pleased to have her work done for her, and the King knew and cared nothing about it. The Fox said to me, "Don't wear yourself out, daughter, with too much toil, even if the child is as beautiful as a goddess." But I laughed in his face. I think I laughed more in those days than in all my life before. Toil? I lost more sleep looking on Psyche for the joy of it than in any other way. And I laughed because she was always laughing. She laughed before the third month. She knew me for certain (though the Fox said not) before the second.

This was the beginning of my best times. The Fox's love for the child was wonderful; I guessed that long before, when he was free, he must have had a daughter of his own. He was like a true grandfather now. And it was now always we three — the Fox, and Psyche, and I — alone together. Redival had always hated our lessons and, but for the fear of the King, would never have come near the Fox. Now, it seemed, the King had put all his three daughters out of his mind, and Redival had her own way. She was growing tall, her breasts rounding, her long legs getting their shape. She promised to have beauty enough, but not like Psyche's.

Of Psyche's beauty — at every age the beauty proper to that age — there is only this to be said, that there were no two opinions about it, from man or woman, once she had been seen. It was beauty that did not astonish you till afterwards when you had gone out of sight of her and reflected on it. While she was with you, you were not astonished. It seemed the most natural thing in the world. As the Fox delighted to say, she was "according to nature"; what every woman, or even every thing, ought to have been and meant to be, but had missed by some trip of chance. Indeed, when you looked at her you believed, for a moment, that they had not missed it. She made beauty all round her. When she trod on mud, the mud was beautiful; when she ran in the rain, the rain was silver. When she picked up a toad — she had the strangest and, I thought, unchanciest love for all manner of brutes — the toad became beautiful.

The years, doubtless, went round then as now, but in my memory it seems to have been all springs and summers. I think the almonds and the cherries blossomed earlier in those years and the blossoms lasted longer; how they hung on in such winds I don't know, for I see the boughs always rocking and dancing against blue-and-white skies, and their shadows

flowing water-like over all the hills and valleys of Psyche's body. I wanted to be a wife so that I could have been her real mother. I wanted to be a boy so that she could be in love with me. I wanted her to be my full sister instead of my half sister. I wanted her to be a slave so that I could set her free and make her rich.

The Fox was so trusted by now that when my father did not need him he was allowed to take us anywhere, even miles from the palace. We were often out all day in summer on the hill-top to the south-west, looking down on all Glome and across to the Grey Mountain. We stared our eyes out on that jagged ridge till we knew every tooth and notch of it, for none of us had ever gone there or seen what was on the other side. Psyche, almost from the beginning (for she was a very quick, thinking child), was half in love with the Mountain. She made herself stories about it. "When I'm big," she said, "I will be a great, great queen, married to the greatest king of all, and he will build me a castle of gold and amber up there on the very top."

The Fox clapped his hands and sang, "Prettier than Andromeda, prettier than Helen, prettier than Aphrodite herself."

"Speak words of better omen, Grandfather," I said, though I knew he would scold and mock me for saying it. For at his words, though on that summer day the rocks were too hot to touch, it was as if a soft, cold hand had been laid on my left side; and I shivered.

"Babai!" said the Fox. "It is your words that are ill-omened. The divine nature is not like that. It has no envy."

But whatever he said, I knew it is not good to talk that way about Ungit.

III

It was Redival who ended the good time. She had always been feather-headed and now grew wanton, and what must she do but stand kissing and whispering love-talk with a young officer of the guard (one Tarin) right under Batta's window an hour after midnight. Batta had slept off her wine in the earlier part of the night and was now wakeful. Being a busy-body and tattler in grain, she went off straight and woke the King, who cursed her roundly but believed her. He was up, and had a few armed men with him, and was out into the garden and surprised the lovers before they knew that anything was amiss. The whole house was raised by the noise of it. The King had the barber to make a eunuch of Tarin there and then (as soon as he was healed, they sold him down at Ringal). The boy's screams had hardly sunk to a whimper before the King turned on the Fox and me, and made us to blame for the whole thing. Why had the Fox not looked to his pupil? Why had I not looked to my sister? The end of it was a strict command that we were never to let her out of our sight. "Go where you will and do what you will," said my father. "But the salt bitch must be with you. I tell you, Fox, if she loses her maidenhead before I find her a husband, you'll yell louder for it than she. Look to your hide. And you, goblin daughter, do what you're good for, you'd best. Name of Ungit! if you with that face can't frighten the men away, it's a wonder."

Redival was utterly cowed by the King's anger and obeyed him. She was always with us. And that soon cooled any love she had for Psyche or me. She yawned and she quarrelled and she mocked. Psyche, who was a child so merry, so truthful, so obedient that in her (the Fox said) Virtue herself had put on a human form, could do no right in Redival's eyes. One day Redival hit her. Then I hardly knew myself again till I found that I was astride of Redival, she on the ground with her face a lather of blood, and my hands about her throat. It was the Fox who pulled me off and, in the end, some kind of peace was made between us.

Thus all the comfort we three had had was destroyed when Redival joined us. And after that, little by little, one by one, came the first knocks of the hammer that finally destroyed us all.

The year after I fought Redival was the first of the bad harvests. That same year my father tried to marry himself (as the Fox told me) into two

royal houses among the neighbouring kings, and they would have none of him. The world was changing, the great alliance with Caphad had proved a snare. The tide was against Glome.

That same year, too, a small thing happened which cost me many a shuddering. The Fox and I, up behind the pear trees, were deep in his philosophy. Psyche had wandered off, singing to herself, among the trees, to the edge of the royal gardens where they overlook the lane. Redival went after her. I had one eye on the pair of them, and one ear for the Fox. Then it seemed they were talking to someone in the lane, and shortly after that they came back.

Redival, sneering, bowed double before Psyche and went through the actions of pouring dust on her head. “Why don’t you honour the goddess?” she said to us.

“What do you mean, Redival?” asked I, wearily, for I knew she meant some new spite.

“Did you not know our stepsister had become a goddess?”

“What does she mean, Istra?” said I. (I never called her Psyche now that Redival had joined us.)

“Come on, stepsister goddess, speak up,” said Redival. “I’m sure I’ve been told often enough how truthful you are, so you’ll not deny that you have been worshipped.”

“It’s not true,” said Psyche. “All that happened was that a woman with child asked me to kiss her.”

“Ah, but why?” said Redival.

“Because — because she said her baby would be beautiful if I did.”

“Because you are so beautiful yourself. Don’t forget that. She said that.”

“And what did you do, Istra?” asked I.

“I kissed her. She was a nice woman. I liked her.”

“And don’t forget that she then laid down a branch of myrtle at your feet and bowed and put dust on her head,” said Redival.

“Has this happened before, Istra?” said I.

“Yes. Sometimes.”

“How often?”

“Don’t know.”

“Twice before?”

“More than that.”

“Well, ten times?”

“No, more. I don’t know. I can’t remember. What are you looking at me like that for? Is it wrong?”

“Oh, it’s dangerous, dangerous,” said I. “The gods are jealous. They can’t bear — —”

“Daughter, it doesn’t matter a straw,” said the Fox. “The divine nature is without jealousy. Those gods — the sort of gods you are always thinking about — are all folly and lies of poets. We have discussed this a hundred times.”

“Heigh-ho,” yawns Redival, lying flat on her back in the grass and kicking her legs in the air till you could see all there was of her (which she did purely to put the Fox out of countenance, for the old man was very modest). “Heigh-ho, a stepsister for goddess and a slave for counsellor. Who’d be a princess in Glome? I wonder what Ungit thinks of our new goddess.”

“It is not very easy to find out what Ungit thinks,” said the Fox.

Redival rolled round and laid her cheek on the grass. Then, looking up at him, she said softly, “But it would be easy to find out what the Priest of Ungit thinks. Shall I try?”

All my old fear of the Priest, and more fears for the future than I could put a name to, stabbed into me.

“Sister,” said Redival to me, “give me your necklace with the blue stones, the one our mother gave you.”

“Take it,” said I. “I’ll give it you when we go in.”

“And you, slave,” she said to the Fox. “Mend your manners. And get my father to give me to some king in marriage; and it must be a young king, brave, yellow-bearded, and lusty. You can do what you like with my father when you’re shut up with him in the Pillar Room. Everyone knows that you are the real King of Glome.”

The year after that we had rebellion. It came of my father’s gelding Tarin. Tarin himself was of no great lineage (to be about a king’s house at all) and the King had thought his father would have no power to avenge him. But the father made common cause with bigger men than himself, and about nine strong lords in our north-west rose against us. My father took the field himself (and when I saw him ride out in his armour, I came nearer to loving him than I had been yet) and beat the rebels; but with great slaughter on both parts and, I think, more slaughter of the beaten men than was

needed. The thing left a stench and a disaffection behind it; when all was done, the King was weaker than he had been.

That year was the second bad harvest and the beginning of the fever. In the autumn the Fox took it and nearly died. I could not be with him, for as soon as the Fox fell sick the King said, “Now, girl, you can read and write and chatter Greek. I’ll have work for you. You must take the Fox’s place.” So I was nearly always in the Pillar Room, for there was much business at the time. Though I was sick with fear for the Fox, the work with my father was far less dreadful to me than I expected. He came, for the time, to hate me less. In the end he would speak to me, not, certainly, with love, but friendly as one man might to another. I learned how desperate his affairs were. No neighbouring houses of divine blood (and ours cannot lawfully marry into any other) would take his daughters or give him theirs. The nobles were muttering about the succession. There were threats of war from every side, and no strength to meet any of them.

It was Psyche who nursed the Fox, however often forbidden. She would fight, yes, and bite, any who stood between her and his door; for she, too, had our father’s hot blood, though her angers were all the sort that come from love. The Fox won through his illness, thinner and greyer than before. Now mark the subtlety of the god who is against us. The story of his recovery and Psyche’s nursing got abroad; Batta alone was conduit-pipe enough, and there were a score of other talkers. It became a story of how the beautiful princess could cure the fever by her touch; soon, that her touch was the only thing that could cure it. Within two days half the city was at the palace gate — such scarecrows, risen from their beds, old dotards as eager to save their lives as if their lives in any event were worth a year’s purchase, babies, sick men half dead and carried on beds. I stood looking at them from behind barred windows; all the pity and dread of it, the smell of sweat and fever and garlic and foul clothes.

“The Princess Istra,” they cried. “Send out the Princess with her healing hands. We die! Healing, healing, healing!”

“And bread,” came other voices. “The royal granaries! We are starving.”

This was at first, while they stood a little way off from the gate. But they got nearer. Soon they were hammering at it. Someone was saying, “Bring fire.” But, behind them, the weaker voices wailed on, “Heal us, heal us. The Princess with the healing hands!”

“She’ll have to go out,” said my father. “We can’t hold them.” (Two-thirds of our guards were down with the fever.)

“Can she heal them?” said I to the Fox. “Did she heal you?”

“It is possible,” said the Fox. “It might be in accordance with nature that some hands can heal. Who knows?”

“Let me go out,” said Psyche. “They are our people.”

“Our rump!” said my father. “They shall smart for this day’s work if ever I get the whip hand of them again. But quick. Dress the girl. She has beauty enough, that’s one thing. And spirit.”

They put a queen’s dress on her and a chaplet on her head and opened the door. You know how it is when you shed few tears or none, but there is a weight and pressure of weeping through your whole head. It is like that with me even now when I remember her going out, slim and straight as a sceptre, out of the darkness and cool of the hall into the hot, pestilential glare of that day. The people drew back, thrusting one another, the moment the doors opened. I think they expected a rush of spearmen. But a minute later the wailing and shouting died utterly away. Every man (and many a woman too) in that crowd was kneeling. Her beauty, which most of them had never seen, worked on them as a terror might work. Then a low murmur, almost a sob, began; swelled, broke into the gasping cry, “A goddess, a goddess.” One woman’s voice rang out clear. “It is Ungit herself in mortal shape.”

Psyche went on, walking slowly and gravely, like a child going to say a lesson, right in among all the foulness. She touched and she touched. They fell at her feet and kissed her feet and the edge of her robe and her shadow and the ground where she had trodden. And still she touched and touched. There seemed to be no end of it; the crowd increased instead of diminishing. For hours she touched. The air was stifling even for us who stood in the shadow of the porch. The whole earth and air ached for the thunderstorm which (we knew now) would not come. I saw her growing paler and paler. Her walk had become a stagger.

“King,” said I, “it will kill her.”

“Then more’s the pity,” said the King. “They’ll kill us all if she stops.”

It was over in the end, somewhere about sunset. We carried her to her bed, and next day the fever was on her. But she won through it. In her wanderings she talked most of her gold and amber castle on the ridge of the Grey Mountain. At her worst, there was no look of death upon her face. It

was as if he dared not came near her. And when her strength came back she was more beautiful than before. The childishness had gone. There was a new and severer radiance. “Ah, no wonder,” sang the Fox, “if the Trojans and the Achaeans suffer long woes for such a woman. Terribly does she resemble an undying spirit.”

Some of the sick in the town died and some recovered. Only the gods know if those who recovered were those whom Psyche had touched, and gods do not tell. But the people had, at first, no doubts. Every morning there were offerings left for her outside the palace; myrtle branches and garlands and soon honey-cakes and then pigeons, which are specially sacred to Ungit. “Can this be well?” I said to the Fox.

“I should be greatly afraid,” said he, “but for one thing. The Priest of Ungit lies sick with the fever himself. I do not think he can do us much mischief at present.”

About this time Redival became very pious and went often to the house of Ungit to make offerings. The Fox and I saw to it that she always had with her a trusty old slave who would let her get into no mischief. I thought she was praying for a husband (she wanted one badly since the King had, in a manner, chained her to the Fox and me) and also that she was as glad to be out of our sight for an hour as we were to be out of hers. Yet I warned her to speak to no one on the way.

“Oh, make your mind easy, Sister,” says Redival. “It’s not me they worship, you know. I’m not the goddess. The men are as likely to look at you as at me, now they’ve seen Istra.”

IV

Up till now I had not known what the common people are like. That was why their adorings of Psyche, which in one way made me afraid, comforted me in another. For I was confused in my mind, sometimes thinking of what Ungit by her own divine power might do to any mortal who thus stole her honour, and sometimes of what the Priest and our enemies in the city (my father had many now) might do with their tongues, or stones, or spears. Against the latter the people's love for Psyche seemed to me a protection.

It did not last long. For one thing, the mob had now learned that a palace door can be opened by banging on it. Before Psyche was out of her fever they were back at our gates crying, "Corn, corn! We are starving. Open the royal granaries." That time the King gave them a dole. "But don't come again," he said. "I've no more to give you. Name of Ungit! d'you think I can make corn if the fields don't bear it?"

"And why don't they?" said a voice from the back of the crowd.

"Where are your sons, King?" said another. "Where's the prince?"

"The King of Phars has thirteen sons," said another.

"Barren king makes barren land," said a fourth. This time the King saw who had spoken and nodded to one of the bowmen who stood beside him. Before you'd wink the arrow went through the speaker's throat and the mob took to its heels. But it was foolishly done; my father ought to have killed either none of them or nearly all. He was right enough, though, in saying we could give them no more doles. This was the second of the bad harvests and there was little in the granary but our own seedcorn. Even in the palace we were already living for the most part on leeks and bean-bread and small beer. It took me endless contrivance to get anything good for Psyche when she was mending from the fever.

The next thing was this. Shortly after Psyche was well, I left the Pillar Room where I had been working for the King (and he still kept the Fox with him after he let me go) and set out to look for Redival, that care being always on my mind. The King would have thought nothing of keeping me away from her at his own business all the day and then blaming me for not having my eyes on her. But as it happened I met her at once, just coming in from one of her visits to the house of Ungit, and Batta with her. Batta and she were as thick as thieves these days.

“You needn’t come looking for me, sister-jailer,” said Redival. “I’m safe enough. It isn’t here the danger lies. When did you last see the little goddess? Where’s your darling stepsister?”

“In the gardens most likely,” said I. “And as for *little*, she’s half a head taller than yourself.”

“Oh mercy! Have I blasphemed? Will she smite me with thunder? Yes, she’s tall enough. Tall enough to see her a long way off — half an hour ago — in a little lane near the market place. A king’s daughter doesn’t usually walk the back streets alone; but I suppose a goddess can.”

“Istra out in the town and alone?” said I.

“Indeed she was then,” chattered Batta. “Scuttling along with her robe caught up. Like this . . . like this.” (Batta was a bad mimic but always mimicking; I remembered that from my earliest years.) “I’d have followed her, the young boldface, but she went in at a doorway, so she did.”

“Well, well,” said I. “The child ought to have known better. But she’ll do no harm and come to none.”

“Come to no harm!” said Batta. “That’s more than any of us know.”

“You are mad, Nurse,” said I. “The people were worshipping her not six days ago.”

“I don’t know anything about that,” said Batta (who knew perfectly well). “But she’ll get little worship today. I knew what would come of all that touching and blessing. Fine goings on indeed! The plague’s worse than ever it was. There were a hundred died yesterday, the smith’s wife’s brother-in-law tells me. They say the touchings didn’t heal the fever but gave it. I’ve spoken to a woman whose old father was touched by the Princess, and he was dead before they had carried him home. And he wasn’t the only one. If anyone had listened to old Batta — —”

But I at least listened no more. I went out to the porch and looked towards the city; a long half-hour. I watched the shadows of the pillars slowly changing their position and it was then I first saw how the things we have known ever since we were weaned can look new and strange, like enemies. And at last I saw Psyche coming, very tired but in great haste. She caught me by the wrist and swallowed, like one that has a sob in the throat, and began leading me away and never stopped till we were in my own chamber. Then she put me in my chair and fell down and laid her head on my knees. I thought she was crying, but when at last she raised her face there were no tears on it.

“Sister,” she said. “What is wrong? I mean, about me.”

“About you, Psyche?” said I. “Nothing. What do you mean?”

“Why do they call me the Accursed?”

“Who has dared? We’ll have his tongue torn out. Where have you been?”

Then it all came out. She had gone (very foolishly, I thought) into the city without a word to any of us. She had heard that her old nurse, the freewoman whom I had hired to suckle her and who now lived in town, was sick with the fever. And Psyche had gone to touch her— “For they all said my hands cured it, and who knows? It might be. I felt as if they did.”

I told her she had done very wrong, and it was then that I fully perceived how much older she had grown since her sickness. For she neither accepted the rebuke like a child nor defended herself like a child, but looked at me with a grave quietness, almost as if she were older than I. It gave me a pang at the heart.

“But who cursed you?” I asked.

“Nothing happened till I had left Nurse’s house; except that no one in the streets had saluted me, and I thought that one or two women gathered their skirts together and drew away from me as I passed. Well, on the way back, first there was a boy — a lovely boy he was, not eight years old — who stared at me and spat on the ground. ‘Oh rude!’ said I, and laughed and held out my hand to him. He scowled at me as black as a little fiend and then lost his courage and ran howling into a doorway. After that the street was empty for a space, but presently I had to pass a knot of men. They gave me black looks as I was passing, and as soon as my back was towards them they were all saying, ‘The Accursed, the Accursed! She made herself a goddess.’ And one said, ‘She is the curse itself.’ Then they threw stones. No, I’m not hurt. But I had to run. What does it mean? What did I do to them?”

“Do?” said I. “You healed them, and blessed them, and took their filthy diseases upon yourself. And these are their thanks. Oh, I could tear them in pieces! Get up, child. Let me go. Even now — we are king’s daughters still. I’ll go to the King. He may beat me and drag me by the hair as he pleases, but this he shall hear. Bread for them indeed. I’ll — I’ll — —”

“Hush, sister, hush,” said Psyche. “I can’t bear it when he hurts you. And I’m so tired. And I want my supper. There, don’t be angry. You look just like our father when you say those things. Let us have supper here, you and I. There is some bad thing coming towards us — I have felt it a long time

— but I don’t think it will come tonight. I’ll clap my hands to call your maids.”

Though the words *You look just like our father*, and from her, had hurt me with a wound that sometimes aches still, I let go my anger and yielded. We supped together and turned our poor meal into a joke and a game and were in a fashion happy. One thing the gods have not taken from me; I can remember all that she said or did that night and how she looked from moment to moment.

But whatever my heart boded, our ruin (and even now I had no clear foresight what it would be) did not fall upon us the next day. A whole train of days went past in which nothing happened, except for the slow, steady worsening of everything in Glome. The Shennit was now no more than a trickle between one puddle and another amid dry mud-flats; it was the corpse of a river and stank. Her fish were dead, her birds dead or gone away. The cattle had all died or been killed or were not worth the killing. The bees were dead. Lions, which had not been heard of in the land for forty years, came over the ridge of the Grey Mountain and took most of the few sheep we had left. The plague never ceased. All through these days I was waiting and listening, watching (when I could) everyone who went out of the palace or came in. It was well for me that the King found plenty of work both for the Fox and me in the Pillar Room. Messengers and letters from the neighbouring kings were coming in every day, demanding impossible things and contrary things, dragging up old quarrels or claiming old promises. They knew how things were in Glome and clustered round us like flies and crows round a dying sheep. My father would pass in and out of his rages a dozen times in one morning. When he was in them he would slap the Fox about the face and pull me by the ears or the hair; and then, between the fits, the tears would stand in his eyes, and he would speak to us more like a child imploring help than a king asking counsel.

“Trapped!” he would say. “No way out. They will kill me by inches. What have I done that all these miseries should fall upon me? I’ve been a god-fearing man all my life.”

The only betterment in these days was that the fever seemed to have left the palace. We had lost a good many slaves, but we had better luck with the soldiers. Only one died and all the rest were now back at duty.

Then we heard that the Priest of Ungit had recovered from his fever. His sickness had been very long, for he had taken the fever and won over it and

then taken it again, so that it was a wonder he should be alive. But it was noticed for a strange and unlucky thing about this sickness that it killed the young more easily than the old. On the seventh day after this news the Priest came to the palace. The King, who saw his coming (as I did too) from the windows of the Pillar Room, said, “What does the old carrion mean by coming here with half an army?” There were indeed a good many spears behind his litter, for the house of Ungit has its own guards and he had brought a big handful with him. They grounded their spears some distance from our gates, and only the litter was carried to the porch. “They’d better come no nearer,” said the King. “Is this treason or only pride?” Then he gave some order to the captain of his own guard. I don’t think he expected it would come to a fight, but that was what I, being still young, looked for. I had never seen men fight and, being as big a fool in that way as most girls, I felt no dread; rather, a little tingling that I liked well enough.

The bearers set down the litter and the Priest was lifted out of it. He was very old now and blind, and he had two temple girls with him to lead him. I had seen their kind before, but only by torchlight in the house of Ungit. They looked strange under the sun, with their gilt paps and their huge flaxen wigs and their faces painted till they looked like wooden masks. Only these two and the Priest, with one hand on a shoulder of each, came into the palace. As soon as they were in, my father called out to our men to shut and bar the door. “The old wolf would hardly walk into such a trap if he meant mischief,” he said. “But we’ll make sure.”

The temple girls led the Priest into the Pillar Room, and a chair was set for him and he was helped into it. He was out of breath and sat for a long time before he spoke, making a chewing motion with his gums as old men do. The girls stood stiffly at each side of his chair, their meaningless eyes looking always straight ahead out of the mask of their painting. The smell of old age, and the smell of the oils and essences they put on those girls, and the Ungit smell, filled the room. It became very holy.

V

My father greeted the Priest and wished him joy of his recovery and called for wine to be given him. But the Priest held up his hand and said, “No, King. I am under a strong vow, and neither food nor drink must pass my lips till I have given my message.” He spoke well enough now, though weakly, and I noticed how much thinner he was since his sickness.

“As you please, servant of Ungit,” said the King. “What’s this of a message?”

“I am speaking to you, King, with the voice of Ungit and the voice of all the people and elders and nobles of Glome.”

“Did all these, then, send you with a message?”

“Yes. We were all gathered — or those who could speak for all were gathered — last night, and even till this day’s daybreak, in the house of Ungit.”

“Were you, death and scabs?” said my father, frowning. “It’s a new fashion to hold an assembly without the King’s bidding; and newer still to hold it without bidding the King to it.”

“There would have been no reason in bidding you to it, King, seeing that we came together not to hear what you would say to us but to determine what we would say to you.”

My father’s look grew very black.

“And being gathered together,” said the Priest, “we reckoned up all the woes that have come upon us. First, the famine, which still increases. Second, the pestilence. Third, the drought. Fourth, the certain expectation of war by next spring at the latest. Fifth, the lions. And lastly, King, your own barrenness of sons which is hateful to Ungit — —”

“That’s enough,” shouted the King. “You old fool, do you think I need you or any of the other wiseacres to tell me where my own belly aches? Hateful to Ungit, is it? Why does Ungit not mend it then? She’s had bulls and rams and goats from me in plenty; blood enough to sail a ship on if all was reckoned.”

The Priest jerked up his head as if, though blind, he was looking at the King. And now I saw better how his thinness had changed him. He looked like a vulture. I was more afraid of him than I had been. The King dropped his eyes.

“Bulls and rams and goats will not win Ungit’s favour while the land is impure,” said the Priest. “I have served Ungit these fifty — no, sixty-three years, and I have learned one thing for certain. Her anger never comes upon us without cause, and it never ceases without expiation. I have made offerings to her for your father and your father’s father, and it has always been the same. We were overthrown long before your day by the King of Essur; and that was because there was a man in your grandfather’s army who had lain with his sister and killed the child. He was the Accursed. We found him out and expiated his sin, and then the men of Glome chased the men of Essur like sheep. Your father himself could have told you how one woman, little more than a child, cursed Ungit’s son, the god of the Mountain, in secret. For her sake the floods came. She was the Accursed. We found her out and expiated her sin, and Shennit returned into her banks. And now, by all the signs I have reckoned over to you, we know that Ungit’s anger is far greater than ever within my memory. Thus we all said in her house last night. We all said, We must find the Accursed. Though every man knew that he himself might be the Accursed, no man spoke against it. I too — I had not a word to say against it, though I knew that the Accursed might be I; or you, King. For we all knew (and you may hold it for certain) that there will be no mending of all our ills till the land is purged. Ungit will be avenged. It’s not a bull or a ram that will quiet her now.”

“You mean she wants Man?” said the King.

“Yes,” said the Priest. “Or Woman.”

“If they think I can get them a captive in war at present, they must be mad. The next time I take a thief you can cut his throat over Ungit if you like.”

“That is not enough, King. And you know it. We must find the Accursed. And she (or he) must die by the rite of the Great Offering. What is a thief more than a bull or a ram? This is not to be a common sacrifice. We must make the Great Offering. The Brute has been seen again. And when it comes the Great Offering must be made. That is how the Accursed must be offered.”

“The Brute? It’s the first I’ve heard of it.”

“It may be so. Kings seem to hear very little. They do not know even what goes on in their own palaces. But I hear. I lie awake in the nights, very

long awake, and Ungit tells me things. I hear of terrible doings in this land; mortals aping the gods and stealing the worship due to the gods — —”

I looked at the Fox and said, soundlessly, by the shaping of my lips, “Redival.”

The King was walking up and down the room with his hands clasped behind his back and his fingers working.

“You’re doting,” he said. “The Brute’s a tale of my grandmother’s.”

“It may well be,” said the Priest, “for it was in her time that the Brute was last seen. And we made the Great Offering and it went away.”

“Who has ever seen this Brute?” asked my father. “What is it like, eh?”

“Those who have seen it closest can least say what it is like, King. And many have seen it of late. Your own chief shepherd on the Grey Mountain saw it the night the first lion came. He fell upon the lion with a burning torch. And in the light of the torch he saw the Brute — behind the lion — very black and big, a terrible shape.”

As the Priest said this the King’s walk had brought him close to the table where I and the Fox sat with our tablets and other tools for writing. The Fox slid along the bench and whispered something in my father’s ear.

“Well said, Fox,” muttered my father. “Speak up. Say it to the Priest.”

“By the King’s permission,” said the Fox, “the shepherd’s tale is very questionable. If the man had a torch, of necessity the lion would have a big black shadow behind it. The man was scared and new waked from sleep. He took a shadow for a monster.”

“That is the wisdom of the Greeks,” said the Priest. “But Glome does not take counsel with slaves, not even if they are king’s favourites. And if the Brute was a shadow, King, what then? Many say it *is* a shadow. But if that shadow begins coming down into the city, look to yourself. You are of divine blood and doubtless fear nothing. But the people will fear. Their fear will be so great that not even I will be able to hold them. They will burn your palace about your ears. They will bar you in before they burn it. You would be wiser to make the Great Offering.”

“How is it made?” said the King. “It has never happened in my time.”

“It is not done in the house of Ungit,” said the Priest. “The victim must be given to the Brute. For the Brute is, in a mystery, Ungit herself or Ungit’s son, the god of the Mountain; or both. The victim is led up the mountain to the Holy Tree, and bound to the Tree and left. Then the Brute comes. That is why you angered Ungit just now, King, when you spoke of offering a

thief. In the Great Offering the victim must be perfect. For in holy language a man so offered is said to be Ungit's husband, and a woman is said to be the bride of Ungit's son. And both are called the Brute's Supper. And when the Brute is Ungit it lies with the man, and when it is her son it lies with the woman. And either way there is a devouring . . . many different things are said . . . many sacred stories . . . many great mysteries. Some say the loving and the devouring are all the same thing. For in sacred language we say that a woman who lies with a man devours the man. That is why you are so wide of the mark, King, when you think a thief, or an old worn-out slave, or a coward taken in battle, would do for the Great Offering. The best in the land is not too good for this office."

The King's forehead, I saw, was clammy now. The holiness and horror of divine things were continually thickening in that room. All at once, the Fox burst out, "Master, Master, let me speak."

"Speak on," said the King.

"Do you not see, Master," said the Fox, "that the Priest is talking nonsense? A shadow is to be an animal which is also a goddess which is also a god, and loving is to be eating — a child of six would talk more sense. And a moment ago the victim of this abominable sacrifice was to be the Accursed, the wickedest person in the whole land, offered as a punishment. And now it is to be the best person in the whole land — the perfect victim — married to the god as a reward. Ask him which he means. It can't be both."

If any hope had put up its head within me when the Fox began, it was killed. This sort of talk could do no good. I knew what had happened to the Fox; he had forgotten all his wiles, even, in a way, his love and fears for Psyche, simply because things such as the Priest had been saying put him beyond all patience. (I have noticed that all men, not only Greek men, if they have clear wits and ready tongues, will do the same.)

"We are hearing much Greek wisdom this morning, King," said the Priest. "And I have heard most of it before. I did not need a slave to teach it to me. It is very subtle. But it brings no rain and grows no corn; sacrifice does both. It does not even give them boldness to die. That Greek there is your slave because in some battle he threw down his arms and let them bind his hands and lead him away and sell him, rather than take a spear-thrust in his heart. Much less does it give them understanding of holy things. They demand to see such things clearly, as if the gods were no more than letters

written in a book. I, King, have dealt with the gods for three generations of men, and I know that they dazzle our eyes and flow in and out of one another like eddies on a river, and nothing that is said clearly can be said truly about them. Holy places are dark places. It is life and strength, not knowledge and words, that we get in them. Holy wisdom is not clear and thin like water, but thick and dark like blood. Why should the Accursed not be both the best and the worst?”

The Priest looked more and more like a gaunt bird as he was speaking; not unlike the bird-mask that lay on his knees. And his voice, though not loud, was no longer shaking like an old man’s. The Fox sat hunched together with his eyes fixed on the table. The taunt about being taken in war, I guessed, had been hot iron to some old ulcer in his soul. Certainly, I would that moment have hanged the Priest and made the Fox a king if power had been given me; but it was easy to see on which side the strength lay.

“Well, well,” says the King, quickening his stride, “this may be all very true. I’m neither priest nor Greekling, I. They used to tell me I was the King. What’s next?”

“Being determined, therefore,” said the Priest, “to seek out the Accursed, we cast the holy lots. First we asked whether the Accursed were to be found among the commons. And the lots said No.”

“Go on, go on,” said the King.

“I cannot speak quickly,” said the Priest. “I have not breath for it now. Then we asked if it was among the Elders. And the lots said No.”

There was a queer mottled colour on the King’s face now; his fear and his anger were just on the balance, and neither he nor anyone else knew at all which would have the victory.

“Then we asked if it were among the nobles. And the lots said No.”

“And then you asked?” says the King, stepping up close to him and speaking low. And the Priest says:

“Then we asked, Is it in the King’s house? And the lots said Yes.”

“Aye,” says the King, rather breathless. “Aye. I thought as much. I smelled it from the beginning. Treason in a new cloak. Treason.” Then louder, “Treason.” Next moment he was at the door, roaring, “Treason! Treason! Guards! Bardia! Where are my guards? Where’s Bardia? Send Bardia.”

There was a rush and a jingle of iron and guards came running. Bardia their captain, a very honest man, came in.

“Bardia,” said the King, “there are too many people about my door today. Take what men you think you need and fall on those rebels who are standing with spears out yonder over against the gate. Don’t scatter them but kill. Kill, do you see? Don’t leave one of them alive.”

“Kill the temple guards, King?” said Bardia, looking from the King to the Priest and back at the King again.

“Temple rats! Temple pimps!” shouted the King. “Are you deaf? Are you afraid? I — I—” And his rage choked him.

“This is foolishness, King,” said the Priest. “All Glome is in arms. There is a party of armed men at every door of the palace by now. Your guards are outnumbered ten to one. And they won’t fight. Would you fight against Ungit, Bardia?”

“Will you slink away from my side, Bardia?” said the King. “After eating my bread? You were glad of my shield to cover you one day at Varin’s wood.”

“You saved my head that day, King,” said Bardia. “I’ll never say otherwise. May Ungit send me to do as much for you (there may be chance enough next spring). I’m for the King of Glome and the gods of Glome while I live. But if the King and the gods fall out, you great ones must settle it between you. I’ll not fight against powers and spirits.”

“You — you girl!” squealed the King, his voice shrill as a pipe. Then, “Be off! I’ll talk with you presently.” Bardia saluted and went out; you could see from his face that he cared no more for the insult than a great dog cares for a puppy making believe to fight him.

The moment the door was shut, the King, all quiet and white again, whipped out his dagger (the same he killed the page with the night Psyche was born), stepped up to the Priest’s chair in three long cat’s strides, shouldered the two girls away, and had the point of the dagger through the Priest’s robes and his skin.

“You old fool,” he said. “Where is your plot now? Eh? Can you feel my bodkin? Does it tickle you? As that? Or that? I can drive it into your heart as quickly or slowly as I please. The wasps may be outside but I’ve the queen wasp here. And now, what’ll you do?”

I have never (to speak of things merely mortal) seen anything more wonderful than the Priest’s stillness. Hardly any man can be quite still when

a finger, much less a dagger, is thrust into the place between two ribs. The Priest was. Even his hands did not tighten on the arms of the chair. Never moving his head or changing his voice, he said:

“Drive it in, King, swift or slow, if it pleases you. It will make no difference. Be sure the Great Offering will be made whether I am dead or living. I am here in the strength of Ungit. While I have breath I am Ungit’s voice. Perhaps longer. A priest does not wholly die. I may visit your palace more often, both by day and night, if you kill me. The others will not see me. I think you will.”

This was the worst yet. The Fox had taught me to think — at any rate to speak — of the Priest as of a mere schemer and a politic man who put into the mouth of Ungit whatever might most increase his own power and lands or most harm his enemies. I saw it was not so. He was sure of Ungit. Looking at him as he sat with the dagger pricking him and his blind eyes unwinking, fixed on the King, and his face like an eagle’s face, I was sure too. Our real enemy was not a mortal. The room was full of spirits, and the horror of holiness.

With a beastly noise, all groan and snarl in one, my father turned away from the Priest and flung himself into his own chair and leaned back and passed his hands over his face and ruffled his hair like a man who is tired.

“Go on. Finish it,” he said.

“And then,” said the Priest, “we asked whether it was the King who was the Accursed, and the lots said No.”

“What?” said the King. And this is the greatest shame I have to tell of in my whole life. His face cleared. He was only a hair’s breadth from smiling. I had thought that he had seen the arrow pointed at Psyche all along, had been afraid for her, fighting for her. He had not thought of her at all, nor of any of us. Yet I am credibly told that he was a brave enough man in a fight.

“Go on,” he said. But his voice was changed; freshened, as if ten years of his age had slipped off him.

“The lot fell on your youngest daughter, King. She is the Accursed. The Princess Istra must be the Great Offering.”

“It’s very hard,” said the King; gravely and glum enough, but I saw he was acting. He was hiding the greatness of his own relief. I went mad. In a moment I was at his feet, clinging to his knees as suppliants cling, babbling out I didn’t know what, weeping, begging, calling him Father — a name I never used before. I believe he was glad of the diversion. He tried to kick

me away, and when I still clung to his feet, rolling over and over, bruised in face and breast, he rose, gathered me up by my shoulders, and flung me from him with all his power.

“You!” he shouted. “You! You to raise your voice among the counsels of men? You trull, you quean, you mandrake root! Have I not woes and miseries and horrors enough heaped upon me by the gods but you also must come scrabbling and clawing me? and it would have come to biting in a trice if I’d let you. There’s vixen in your face this minute. For two straws I’d have you to the guardhouse to be flogged. Name of Ungit! are gods and priests and lions and shadowbrutes and traitors and cowards not enough unless I’m plagued with girls as well?”

I think he felt better the longer he railed. The breath had been knocked out of me so that I could neither sob nor rise nor speak. Somewhere above my head I heard them talking on, making all the plans for Psyche’s death. She was to be kept prisoner in her chamber — or no, better in the room with five sides, which was more secure. The temple guards would reinforce our own; the whole house must be guarded, for the people were weathercocks — there might be a change of mood, even a rescue. They were talking soberly and prudently like men providing for a journey or a feast. Then I lost myself in darkness and a roaring noise.

VI

“She’s coming to her mind again,” said my father’s voice. “Take that side of her, Fox, and we’ll get her to the chair.” The two of them were lifting me; my father’s hands were gentler than I expected. I have found since that a soldier’s hands often are. The three of us were alone.

“Here, lass, this’ll do you good,” he said when they had put me in the chair, holding a cup of wine to my lips. “Faugh, you’re spilling it like a baby. Take it easy. So; that’s better. If there’s a bit of raw meat still to be had in this dog-hole of a palace, you must lay it on your bruises. And look, daughter, you shouldn’t have crossed me like that. A man can’t have women (and his own daughters, what’s worse) meddling in business.”

There was a sort of shame about him; whether for beating me or for giving up Psyche without a struggle, who knows? He seemed to me now a very vile, pitiable king.

He set down the cup. “The thing has to be done,” he said. “Screaming and scrabbling won’t help. Why, the Fox here was just telling me it’s done even in your darling Greeklands — which I begin to think I was a fool ever to let you hear of.”

“Master,” said the Fox, “I had not finished telling you. It is very true that a Greek king sacrificed his own daughter. But afterwards his wife murdered him, and his son murdered the wife, and Those Below drove the son mad.”

At this the King scratched his head and looked very blank. “That’s just like the gods,” he muttered. “Drive you to do a thing and then punish you for doing it. The comfort is I’ve no wife or son, Fox.”

I had got my voice again now. “King,” I said, “you can’t mean to do it. Istra is your daughter. You can’t do it. You have not even tried to save her. There must be some way. Surely between now and the day — —”

“Listen to her!” says the King. “You fool, it’s tomorrow they offer her.”

I was within an inch of fainting again. To hear this was as bad as to hear that she must be offered at all. As bad? It was worse. I felt that I had had no sorrow till now. I felt that if she could be spared only for a month — a month, why, a month was like eternity — we should all be happy.

“It’s better so, dear,” whispered the Fox to me in Greek. “Better for her and for us.”

“What are you mumbling about, Fox?” said the King. “You both look at me as if I were some sort of two-headed giant they frighten children with, but what’d you have me do? What would you do yourself, Fox, with all your cleverness, if you were in my place?”

“I’d fight about the day first. I’d get a little time somehow. I’d say the Princess was at the wrong time of the month to be a bride. I’d say I’d been warned in a dream not to make the Great Offering till the new moon. I’d bribe men to swear that the Priest had cheated over the lots. There’s half a dozen men across the river who hold land from him and don’t love their landlord. I’d make a party. Anything to gain time. Give me ten days and I’d have a secret messenger to the King of Phars. I’d offer him all he wants without war — offer him anything if he’d come in and save the Princess — offer him Glome itself and my own crown.”

“What?” snarled the King. “Be a little less free with other men’s wealth, you’d best.”

“But, Master, I’d lose not only my throne but my life to save the Princess, if I were a king and a father. Let us fight. Arm the slaves and promise them their freedom if they play the man. We can make a stand, we of your household, even now. At the worst, we should all die innocent. Better than going Down Yonder with a daughter’s blood on your hands.”

The King flung himself once more into his chair and began speaking with a desperate patience, like a teacher to a very stupid child (I had seen the Fox do it with Redival).

“I am a King. I have asked you for counsel. Those who counsel kings commonly tell them how to strengthen or save their kingship and their land. That is what counselling a king means. And your counsel is that I should throw my crown over the roof, sell my country to Phars, and get my throat cut. You’ll tell me next that the best way to cure a man’s headache is to cut off his head.”

“I see, Master,” said the Fox. “I ask your pardon. I had forgotten that your own safety was the thing we must work for at all costs.” I, who knew the Fox so well, could see such a look in his face that he could not have done the King much more dishonour if he had spat on him. Indeed I had often seen him look at the King like that, and the King never knew. I was determined he should know something now.

“King,” said I, “the blood of the gods is in us. Can such a house as ours bear the shame? How will it sound if men say when you are dead that you

took shelter behind a girl to save your own life?”

“You hear her, Fox, you hear her,” said the King. “And then she wonders that I black her eyes! I’ll not say mar her face, for that’s impossible. Look, mistress, I’d be sorry to beat you twice in a day, but don’t try me too far.” He leaped up and began pacing the floor again.

“Death and scabs!” he said. “You’d make a man mad. Anyone’d think it was *your* daughter they were giving to the Brute. Sheltering behind a girl, you say. No one seems to remember whose girl she is. She’s mine; fruit of my own body. My loss. It’s I who have a right to rage and blubber if anyone has. What did I beget her for if I can’t do what I think best with my own? What is it to you? There’s some cursed cunning that I haven’t yet smelled out behind all your sobbing and scolding. You’re not asking me to believe that any woman, let alone such a fright as you, has much love for a pretty half-sister. It’s not in nature. But I’ll sift you yet.”

I don’t know whether he really believed this or not, but it is possible he did. He could believe anything in his moods, and everyone in the palace knew more than he about the life of us girls.

“Yes,” he said, more quietly now. “It’s I who should be pitied. It’s I who am asked to give up part of myself. But I’ll do my duty. I’ll not ruin the land to save my own girl. The pair of you have talked me into making too much work about it. It has happened before. I’m sorry for the girl. But the Priest’s right. Ungit must have her due. What’s one girl — why, what would one man be — against the safety of us all? It’s only sense that one should die for many. It happens in every battle.”

Wine and passion had brought my strength back. I rose from my chair and found that I could stand.

“Father,” said I. “You are right. It is fit that one should die for the people. Give me to the Brute instead of Istra.”

The King, without a word, came up to me, took me (softly enough) by the wrist and led me the whole length of the room, to where his great mirror hung. You might wonder that he did not keep it in his bedchamber, but the truth is he was too proud of it for that and wanted every stranger to see it. It had been made in some distant land and no king in our parts had one to match it. Our common mirrors were false and dull; in this you could see your perfect image. As I had never been in the Pillar Room alone, I had never looked in it. He stood me before it and we saw our two selves, side by side.

“Ungit asked for the best in the land as her son’s bride,” he said. “And you’d give her *that*.” He held me there a full minute in silence; perhaps he thought I would weep or turn my eyes away. At last he said, “Now be off. A man can’t keep pace with your moods today. Get the beefsteak for your face. The Fox and I must be busy.”

As I came out of the Pillar Room I first noticed the pain in my side; I had twisted myself somehow in my fall. But I forgot it again when I saw how, in that little time, our house had changed. It seemed crowded. All the slaves, whether they had anything to do or not, were walking about and gathering in knots, wearing looks of importance; chattering under their breath, too, with a sort of mournful cheerfulness. (They always will when there’s great news in a house, and now it troubles me not at all.) There were many of the temple guard lounging in the porch; some temple girls sitting in the hall. From the courtyard came the smell of incense, and sacrifice was going on. Ungit had taken the house; the reek of holiness was everywhere.

At the foot of the staircase who should meet me but Redival, running to me all in tears, and a great babble pouring out of her mouth— “Oh Sister, Sister, how dreadful! Oh, poor Psyche! It’s only Psyche, isn’t it? They’re not going to do it to all of us, are they? I never thought — I didn’t mean any harm — it wasn’t I — and oh, oh, oh. . . .”

I put my face close up to hers and said very low but distinctly, “Redival: if there is one single hour when I am queen of Glome, or even mistress of this house, I’ll hang you by the thumbs at a slow fire till you die.”

“Oh, cruel, cruel,” sobbed Redival. “How can you say such things, and when I’m so miserable already? Sister, don’t be angry, comfort me — —”

I pushed her away from me and passed on. I had known Redival’s tears ever since I could remember. They were not wholly feigned; nor much dearer than ditchwater. I know now, as I felt sure then, that she had carried tattle about Psyche to the house of Ungit, and that with malice. It’s likely enough she meant less mischief than she had done (she never knew how much she meant) and was now, in her fashion, sorry; but a new brooch, much more a new lover, would have had her drying her eyes and laughing in no time.

As I came to the top of the stairs (for we have upper rooms and even galleries in the palace; it is not like a Greek house) I was a little out of breath and the pain in my side came on me worse. I seemed to be somewhat lame in one foot too. I went on with all the haste I could to that five-sided

room where they had shut Psyche up. The door was bolted on the outside (I have used that room for a courteous prison myself) and an armed man stood before it. It was Bardia.

“Bardia,” I panted, “let me in. I must see the Princess Istra.”

He looked at me kindly but shook his head. “It can’t be done, Lady,” he said.

“But, Bardia, you can lock us both in. There’s no way out but the door.”

“That’s how all escapes begin, Lady. I am sorry for you and for the other Princess, but it can’t be done. I’m under the sternest orders.”

“Bardia,” I said, with tears, my left hand to my side (for the pain was bad now) “it’s her last night alive.”

He looked away from me and said again, “I’m sorry.”

I turned from him without another word. Though his was the kindest face (always excepting the Fox) I had seen that day, for the moment I hated him more than my father or the Priest or even Redival. What I did next shows how near I was to madness. I went as fast as I could to the Bedchamber. I knew the King had arms there. I took a plain, good sword, drew it, looked at it, and weighed it in my hand. It was not at all too heavy for me. I felt the edges and the point; they were what I then thought sharp, though a smart soldier would not have called them so. Quickly I was back at Psyche’s door. Even in my woman’s rage I had man enough about me to cry out, “Ward yourself, Bardia,” before I fell on him.

It was of course the craziest attempt for a girl who had never had a weapon in her hand before. Even if I had known my work, the lame foot and the pain in my side (to breathe deep was agony) disabled me. Yet I made him use some of his skill; chiefly, of course, because he was not fighting to hurt me. In a moment he had twisted my sword out of my grip. I stood before him, with my hand pressed harder than ever to my side, all in a muck sweat and a tremble. His brow was dry and his breathing unchanged; it had been as easy as that for him. The knowledge that I was so helpless came over me like a new woe, or gathered the other woe up into itself. I burst into utterly childish weeping; like Redival.

“It’s a thousand pities, Lady, that you weren’t a man,” said Bardia. “You’ve a man’s reach and a quick eye. There are none of the recruits would do as well at a first attempt; I’d like to have the training of you. It’s a thousand — —”

“Ah, Bardia, Bardia,” I sobbed, “if only you’d killed me. I’d be out of my misery now.”

“No, you wouldn’t,” said he. “You’d be dying, not dead. It’s only in tales that a man dies the moment the steel’s gone in and come out. Unless of course you swap off his head.”

I could talk no more at all now. The whole world seemed to me to be in my weeping.

“Curse it,” said Bardia, “I can’t bear this.” There were tears in his own eyes now; he was a very tender man. “I wouldn’t mind so much if the one weren’t so brave and the other so beautiful. Here! Lady! Stop it. I’ll risk my life, and Ungit’s wrath too.”

I gazed at him, but was still not able to speak.

“I’d give my own life for the girl in there, if it would do any good. You may have wondered why I, the captain of the guard, am standing here like a common sentry. I wouldn’t let anyone else do it. I thought if the poor girl called, or if I had to go in to her for any reason, I’d be homelier for her than a stranger. She sat on my knees when she was little. . . . I wonder do the gods know what it feels like to be a man.”

“You’ll let me in?” I said.

“On one condition, Lady. You must swear to come out when I knock. It’s quiet up here now, but there’ll be comings and goings later. There’ll be two temple girls coming to her presently; I was warned of that. I’ll give you as long as I can. But I must be sure of your coming out when I give the sign. Three knocks — like this.”

“I’ll come out at once when you do that.”

“Swear it, Lady; here on my sword.”

I swore it. He looked to left and right, did back the bolt, and said, “Quick. In you go. Heaven comfort you both.”

VII

The window in that room is so small and high up that men need lights there at noon. That is why it can serve as a prison; it was built as the second story of a tower which my great-grandfather began and never finished.

Psyche sat upon the bed with a lamp burning beside her. Of course I was at once in her arms and saw this only in a flash; but the picture — Psyche, a bed, and a lamp — is everlasting.

Long before I could speak she said, “Sister, what have they done to you? Your face, your eye! He has been beating you again.” Then I realised somewhat slowly that all this time she had been petting and comforting me as if it were I who was the child and the victim. And this, even in the midst of the great anguish, made its own little eddy of pain. It was so unlike the sort of love that used to be between us in our happy times.

She was so quick and tender that she knew at once what I was thinking, and at once she called me *Maia*, the old baby’s name that the Fox had taught her. It was one of the first words she ever learned to say.

“Maia, Maia, tell me. What has he done to you?”

“Oh, Psyche,” said I, “what does it matter? If only he had killed me! If only they would take me instead of you!”

But she would not be put off. She forced the whole tale out of me (how could one deny her?) wasting on it the little time we had.

“Sister, no more,” I said at last. “What is it to me? What is he to either of us? I’ll not shame your mother or mine to say he’s not our father. If so, the name *father* is a curse. I’ll believe now that he would hide behind a woman in a battle.”

And then (it was a kind of terror to me) she smiled. She had wept very little, and mostly, I think, for love and pity of me. Now she sat tall and queenly and still. There was no sign about her of coming death, except that her hands were very cold.

“Orual,” she said, “you make me think I have learned the Fox’s lessons better than you. Have you forgotten what we are to say to ourselves every morning? ‘Today I shall meet cruel men, cowards and liars, the envious and the drunken. They will be like that because they do not know what is good from what is bad. This is an evil which has fallen upon them not upon me.

They are to be pitied, not — —’” She was speaking with a loving mimicry of the Fox’s voice; she could do this as well as Batta did it badly.

“Oh child, how can — —” But I was choked again. All she was saying seemed to me so light, so far away from our sorrow. I felt we ought not to be talking that way, not now. What I thought it would be better to talk of, I did not know.

“Maia,” said Psyche. “You must make me a promise. You’ll not do anything outrageous? You’ll not kill yourself? You mustn’t, for the Fox’s sake. We have been three loving friends.” (Why must she say bare *friends*?) “Now it’s only he and you; you must hold together and stand the closer. No, Maia, you must. Like soldiers in a hard battle.”

“Oh, your heart is of iron,” I said.

“As for the King, give him my duty — or whatever is proper. Bardia is a prudent and courteous man. He’ll tell you what dying girls ought to say to fathers. One would not seem rude or ignorant at the last. But I can send the King no other message. The man is a stranger to me; I know the henwife’s baby better than him. And for Redival — —”

“Send her your curse. And if the dead can — —”

“No, no. She also does what she doesn’t know.”

“Not even for you, Psyche, will I pity Redival, whatever the Fox says.”

“Would you like to be Redival? What? No? Then she’s pitiable. If I am allowed to give my jewels as I please, you must keep all the things that you and I have really loved. Let her have all that’s big and costly and doesn’t matter. You and the Fox take what you please.”

I could bear no more for a while, so I laid my head down in her lap and wept. If only she would so have laid her head in mine!

“Look up, Maia,” she said presently. “You’ll break my heart, and I to be a bride.” She could bear to say that. I could not bear to hear it.

“Orual,” she said, very softly, “we are the blood of the gods. We must not shame our lineage. Maia, it was you who taught me not to cry when I fell.”

“I believe you are not afraid at all,” said I; almost, though I had not meant it to sound so, as if I were rebuking her for it.

“Only of one thing,” she said. “There is a cold doubt, a horrid shadow, in some corner of my soul. Supposing — supposing — how if there were no god of the Mountain and even no holy Shadowbrute, and those who are tied to the tree only die, day by day, from thirst and hunger and wind and sun, or

are eaten piecemeal by the crows and catamountains? And it is this — oh, Maia, Maia. . . .”

And now she did weep and now she was a child again. What could I do but fondle and weep with her? But this is a great shame to write; there was now (for me) a kind of sweetness in our misery for the first time. This was what I had come to her in her prison to do.

She recovered before I did. She raised her head, queenlike again, and said, “But I’ll not believe it. The Priest has been with me. I never knew him before. He is not what the Fox thinks. Do you know, Sister, I have come to feel more and more that the Fox hasn’t the whole truth. Oh, he has much of it. It’d be dark as a dungeon within me but for his teaching. And yet . . . I can’t say it properly. He calls the whole world a city. But what’s a city built on? There’s earth beneath. And outside the wall? Doesn’t all the food come from there as well as all the dangers? . . . things growing and rotting, strengthening and poisoning, things shining wet . . . in one way (I don’t know which way) more like, yes, even more like the House of — —”

“Yes, of Ungit,” said I. “Doesn’t the whole land smell of her? Do you and I need to flatter gods any more? They’re tearing us apart . . . oh, how shall I bear it? . . . and what worse can they do? Of course the Fox is wrong. He knows nothing about her. He thought too well of the world. He thought there were no gods, or else (the fool!) that they were better than men. It never entered his mind — he was too good — to believe that the gods are real, and viler than the vilest man.”

“Or else,” said Psyche, “they are real gods but don’t really do these things. Or even — mightn’t it be — they do these things and the things are not what they seem to be? How if I am indeed to wed a god?”

She made me, in a way, angry. I would have died for her (this, at least, I know is true) and yet, the night before her death, I could feel anger. She spoke so steadily and thoughtfully; as if we had been disputing with the Fox, up behind the pear trees, with hours and days still before us. The parting between her and me seemed to cost her so little.

“Oh, Psyche,” I said, almost in a shriek, “what can these things be except the cowardly murder they seem? To take you — you whom they have worshipped and who never hurt so much as a toad — to make you food for a monster. . . .”

You will say — I have said it many thousand times to myself — that, if I saw in her any readiness to dwell on the better part of the Priest’s talk and to

think she would be a god's bride more than a Brute's prey, I ought to have fallen in with her and encouraged it. Had I not come to her to give comfort, if I could? Surely not to take it away. But I could not rule myself. Perhaps it was a sort of pride in me, a little like her own; not to blind our eyes, not to hide terrible things; or a bitter impulse in anguish itself to say, and to keep on saying, the worst.

"I see," said Psyche in a low voice. "You think it devours the offering. I mostly think so myself. Anyway, it means death. Orual, you didn't think I was such a child as not to know that? How can I be the ransom for all Glome unless I die? And if I am to go to the god, of course it must be through death. That way, even what is strangest in the holy sayings might be true. To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different. We don't understand. There must be so much that neither the Priest nor the Fox knows."

This time I bit my lip and said nothing. Unspeakable foulness seethed in my mind; did she think the Brute's lust better than its hunger? To be mated with a worm, or a giant eft, or a spectre?

"And as for death," she said, "why, Bardia there (I love Bardia) will look on it six times a day and whistle a tune as he goes to find it. We have made little use of the Fox's teaching if we're to be scared by death. And you know, Sister, he has sometimes let out that there were other Greek masters than those he follows himself; masters who have taught that death opens a door out of a little, dark room (that's all the life we have known before it) into a great, real place where the true sun shines and we shall meet — —"

"Oh, cruel, cruel!" I wailed. "Is it nothing to you that you leave me here alone? Psyche; did you ever love me at all?"

"Love you? Why, Maia, what have I ever had to love save you and our grandfather the Fox?" (But I did not want her to bring even the Fox in now.) "But, Sister, you will follow me soon. You don't think any mortal life seems a long thing to me tonight? And how would it be better if I had lived? I suppose I should have been given to some king in the end; perhaps such another as our father. And there you can see again how little difference there is between dying and being married. To leave your home — to lose you, Maia, and the Fox — to lose one's maidenhead — to bear a child — they are all deaths. Indeed, indeed, Orual, I am not sure that this which I go to is not the best."

"This!"

“Yes. What had I to look for if I lived? Is the world — this palace, this father — so much to lose? We have already had what would have been the best of our time. I must tell you something, Orual, which I never told to anyone, not even you.”

I know now that this must be so even between the lovingest hearts. But her saying it that night was like stabbing me.

“What is it?” said I, looking down at her lap where our four hands were joined.

“This,” she said, “I have always — at least, ever since I can remember — had a kind of longing for death.”

“Ah, Psyche,” I said, “have I made you so little happy as that?”

“No, no, no,” she said. “You don’t understand. Not that kind of longing. It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was on happy days when we were up there on the hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine . . . where you couldn’t see Glome or the palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking across at the Grey Mountain in the distance? And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come! But I couldn’t (not yet) come and I didn’t know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me. I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home.”

She kissed both my hands, flung them free, and stood up. She had her father’s trick of walking to and fro when she talked of something that moved her. And from now till the end I felt (and this horribly) that I was losing her already, that the sacrifice tomorrow would only finish something that had already begun. She was (how long had she been, and I not to know?) out of my reach; in some place of her own.

Since I write this book against the gods, it is just that I should put into it whatever can be said against myself. So let me set this down; as she spoke I felt, amid all my love, a bitterness. Though the things she was saying gave her (that was plain enough) courage and comfort, I grudged her that courage and comfort. It was as if someone or something else had come in between us. If this grudging is the sin for which the gods hate me, it is one I have committed.

“Orual,” she said, her eyes shining. “I am going, you see, to the Mountain. You remember how we used to look and long? And all the stories of my gold and amber house, up there against the sky, where we

thought we should never really go? The greatest King of all was going to build it for me. If only you could believe it, Sister! No, listen. Do not let grief shut up your ears and harden your heart — —”

“Is it *my* heart that is hardened?”

“Never to me; nor mine to you at all. But listen. Are these things so evil as they seemed? The gods will have mortal blood. But they say whose. If they had chosen any other in the land, that would have been only terror and cruel misery. But they chose me. And I am the one who has been made ready for it ever since I was a little child in your arms, Maia. The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing — to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from — —”

“And that was the sweetest? Oh, cruel, cruel. Your heart is not of iron; stone, rather,” I sobbed. I don’t think she even heard me.

“ — my country, the place where I ought to have been born. Do you think it all meant nothing, all the longing? The longing for home? For indeed it now feels not like going, but like going back. All my life the god of the Mountain has been wooing me. Oh, look up once at least before the end and wish me joy. I am going to my lover. Do you not see now —— ?”

“I only see that you have never loved me,” said I. “It may well be you are going to the gods. You are becoming cruel like them.”

“Oh, Maia!” cried Psyche, tears at last coming into her eyes again. “Maia, I — —”

Bardia knocked on the door. No time for better words, no time to unsay anything. Bardia knocked again, and louder. My oath on his sword, itself like a sword, was upon us.

So, the last, spoiled embrace. Those are happy who have no such in their memory. For those who have — would they endure that I should write of it?

VIII

As soon as I was out in the gallery my pains, which I had not perceived while I was with Psyche, came strongly back upon me. My grief, even, was deadened for a while, though my wits became very sharp and clear. I was determined to go with Psyche to the Mountain and the holy Tree, unless they bound me with chains. I even thought I might hide up there and set her free when the Priest and the King and all the rest had turned to come home. "Or if there is a real Shadowbrute," I thought, "and I cannot save her from it, I'll kill her with my own hand before I'll leave her to its clutches." To do all this I knew I must eat and drink and rest. (It was now nearly twilight and I was still fasting.) But first of all I must find out when their murder, their Offering, was to be. So I limped, holding my side, along the gallery and found an old slave, the King's butler, who was able to tell me all. The procession, he said, was to leave the palace an hour before sunrise. Then I went to my own chamber and told my women to bring me food. I sat down to wait till it came. A great dullness and heaviness crept over me; I thought and felt nothing, except that I was very cold. When the food came I could not eat, though I tried to force myself to it; it was like putting cloth in my mouth. But I drank; a little of the small beer which was all they had to give me, and then (for my stomach rose against the beer) a great deal of water. I must have been almost sleeping before I finished, for I remember that I knew I was in some great sorrow but I could not recall what it was.

They lifted me into the bed (I shrank and cried out a little at their touch) and I fell at once into a dead stupidity of sleep; so that it seemed only a heartbeat later that they were waking me — two hours before sunrise, as I had bidden them. I woke screaming, for all my sore places had stiffened while I slept and it was like hot pincers when I tried to move. One eye had closed up so that I might as well have been blind on that side. When they found how much they hurt me in raising me from the bed, they begged me to lie still. Some said it was useless for me to rise, for the King had said that neither of the Princesses should go to the Offering. One asked if she should bring Batta to me. I told that one, with bitter words, to hold her tongue, and if I had had the strength I would have hit her; which would have been ill done, for she was a good girl. (I have always been fortunate with my

women since first I had them to myself and out of the reach of Batta's meddling.)

They dressed me somehow and tried to make me eat. One even had a little wine for me; stolen, I guess, from a flagon intended for the King. They were all weeping; I was not.

Dressing me (so sore I was) had taken a great time, so that I had hardly swallowed the wine before we heard the music beginning: temple music, Ungit's music, the drums and the horns and rattles and castanets, all holy, deadly; dark, detestable, maddening noises.

"Quick!" said I. "It's time. They're going. Oh, I can't get up. Help me, girls. No, quicker! Drag me, if need be. Take no heed of my groaning and screaming."

They got me with great torture as far as the head of the staircase. I could now see down into the great hall between the Pillar Room and the Bedchamber. It was ablaze with torches, and very crowded. There were many guards. There were some girls of noble blood veiled and chapleted like a bride's party. My father was there in very splendid robes. And there was a great bird-headed man. By the smell and the smoke there seemed to have been much killing already, at the altar in the courtyard. (Food for the gods must always be found somehow, even when the land starves.) The great gateway was opened. I could see cold, early twilight through it. Outside, priests and girls were singing. There must have been a great mob of the rabble too; in the pauses you could hear (who can mistake it?) their noise. No herd of other beasts, gathered together, has so ugly a voice as Man.

For a long time I could not see Psyche at all. The gods are cleverer than we and can always think of some vileness it never entered our heads to fear. When at last I saw her, that was the worst of all. She sat upright on an open litter between the King and the Priest. The reason I had not known her was that they had painted and gilded and be-wigged her like a temple girl. I could not even tell whether she saw me or not. Her eyes, peering out of the heavy, lifeless mask which they had made of her face, were utterly strange; you couldn't even see in what direction she was looking.

It is, in its way, admirable, this divine skill. It was not enough for the gods to kill her, they must make her father the murderer. It was not enough to take her from me, they must take her from me three times over, tear out my heart three times. First her sentence; then her strange, cold talk last

night; and now this painted and gilded horror to poison my last sight of her. Ungit had taken the most beautiful thing that was ever born and made it into an ugly doll.

They told me afterwards that I tried to start going down the stairway, and fell. They carried me to my bed.

For many days after that I was sick, and most of them I do not remember. I was not in my right mind, and slept (they tell me) not at all. My ravings — what I can recall of them — were a ceaseless torture of tangled diversity, yet also of sameness. Everything changed into something else before you could understand it, yet the new thing always stabbed you in the very same place. One thread ran through all the delusions. Now mark yet again the cruelty of the gods. There is no escape from them into sleep or madness, for they can pursue you into them with dreams. Indeed you are then most at their mercy. The nearest thing we have to a defence against them (but there is no real defence) is to be very wide awake and sober and hard at work, to hear no music, never to look at earth or sky, and (above all) to love no one. And now, finding me heart-shattered for Psyche's sake, they made it the common burden of all my fantasies that Psyche was my greatest enemy. All my sense of intolerable wrong was directed against her. It was she who hated me; it was on her that I wanted to be revenged. Sometimes she and Redival and I were all children together, and then Psyche and Redival would drive me away and put me out of the game and stand with their arms linked laughing at me. Sometimes I was beautiful and had a lover who looked (absurdly) a little like poor, eunuch'd Tarin or a little like Bardia (I suppose because his was the last man's face, almost, that I had seen before I fell ill). But on the very threshold of the bridal chamber, or from the very bedside, Psyche, wigged and masked and no bigger than my forearm, would lead him away with one finger. And when they got to the door they would turn round and mock and point at me. But these were the clearest visions. More often it was all confused and dim — Psyche throwing me down high precipices, Psyche (now very like the King, but still Psyche) kicking me and dragging me by the hair, Psyche with a torch or a sword or a whip pursuing me over vast swamps and dark mountains; I running to save my life. But always wrong, hatred, mockery, and my determination to be avenged.

The beginning of my recovery was when the visions ceased and left behind them only a settled sense of some great injury that Psyche had done me, though I could not gather my wits to think what it was. They say I lay

for hours saying, “Cruel girl. Cruel Psyche. Her heart is of stone.” And soon I was in my right mind again and knew how I loved her and that she had never willingly done me any wrong; though it hurt me somewhat that she should have found time, at our last meeting of all, talking so little of me, to talk so much about the god of the Mountain, and the King, and the Fox, and Redival, and even Bardia.

Soon after that I was aware of a pleasant noise that had already been going on a long time.

“What is it?” I asked (and was astonished at the weak croak of my voice).

“What is what, child?” said the voice of the Fox; and I knew somehow that he had been sitting by my bed for many hours.

“The noise, Grandfather. Above our heads.”

“That is the rain, dear,” he said. “Give thanks to Zeus for that and for your own recovery. And I — but you must sleep again. And drink this first.” I saw the tears on his face as he gave me the cup.

I had no broken bones, the bruises were gone, and my other pains with them. But I was very weak. Weakness, and work, are two comforts the gods have not taken from us. I’d not write it (it might move them to take these also away) except that they must know it already. I was too weak now to feel much grief or anger. These days, before my strength came back, were almost happy. The Fox was very loving and tender (and much weakened himself) and so were my women. I was loved; more than I had thought. And my sleeps were sweet now and there was much rain and, between-whiles, the kind south wind blowing in at the window; and sunshine. For a long time we never spoke of Psyche. We talked, when we talked at all, of common things.

They had much to tell me. The weather had changed the very day after my sickness began. The Shennit was full again. The breaking of the drought had come too late to save the crops (for the most part; one or two fields put up a little) but garden stuff was growing. Above all, the grass was reviving wonderfully; we should save far more of the cattle than we had hoped. And the fever was clean gone. My own sickness had been of another kind. And birds were coming back to Glome, so that every woman whose husband could shoot with a bow or set a snare might soon have something in the pot.

These things I heard of from the women as well as from the Fox. When we were alone he told me other news. My father was now, while it lasted,

the darling of his people. It seemed (this was how we first came round to the matter nearest our hearts) he had been much pitied and praised at the Great Offering. Up there at the holy Tree he had wailed and wept and torn his robes and embraced Psyche countless times (he had never done it before) but said again and again that he would not withhold his heart's dearest when the good of the people called for her death. The whole crowd was in tears, as the Fox had been told; he himself, as a slave and an alien, had not been there.

"Did you know, Grandfather," said I, "that the King was such a mountebank?" (We were talking in Greek of course.)

"Not wholly that, child," said the Fox. "He believed it while he did it. His tears are no falser — or truer — than Redival's."

Then he went on to tell me of the great news from Phars. A fool in the crowd had said the King of Phars had thirteen sons. The truth is he had begotten eight, whereof one died in childhood. The eldest was simple and could never rule, and the King (as some said their laws allowed him) had named Argan, the third, as his successor. And now, it seemed, his second son, Trunia, taking it ill to be put out of the succession — and, doubtless, fomenting some other discontents such as are never far to seek in any land — had risen in rebellion, with a strong following, to recover what he called his right. The upshot was that all Phars was likely to be busy with civil war for a twelvemonth at least, and both parties were already as soft as butter towards Glome, so that we were safe from any threat in that quarter.

A few days later when the Fox was with me (often he could not be, for the King needed him) I said:

"Grandfather, do you still think that Ungit is only lies of poets and priests?"

"Why not, child?"

"If she were indeed a goddess what more could have followed my poor sister's death than has followed it? All the dangers and plagues that hung over us have been scattered. Why, the wind must have changed the very day after they had — —" I found, now, I could not give it a name. The grief was coming back with my strength. So was the Fox's.

"Cursed chance, cursed chance," he muttered, his face all screwed up, partly in anger and partly to keep back his tears (Greek men cry easily as women). "It is these chances that nourish the beliefs of barbarians."

“How often, Grandfather, you have told me there’s no such thing as chance?”

“You’re right. It was an old trick of the tongue. I meant that all these things had no more to do with that murder than with anything else. They and it are all part of the same web, which is called Nature, or the Whole. That south-west wind came over a thousand miles of sea and land. The weather of the whole world would have to have been different from the beginning if that wind was not to blow. It’s all one web; you can’t pick threads out nor put them in.”

“And so,” said I, raising myself on my elbow, “she died to no purpose. If the King had waited a few days later we could have saved her, for all would have begun to go well of itself. And this you call comfort?”

“Not this. Their evil-doing was vain and ignorant, as all evil deeds are. This is our comfort, that the evil was theirs, not hers. They say there was not a tear in her eye, nor did so much as her hand shake, when they put her to the Tree. Not even when they turned away and left her did she cry out. She died full of all things that are really good; courage, and patience, and — and — Aiai! Aiai — oh Psyche, oh my little one — —” Then his love got the better of his philosophy and he pulled his mantle over his head and at last, still weeping, left me.

Next day he said, “You saw yesterday, Daughter, how little progress I have made. I began to philosophise too late. You are younger and can go further. To love, and to lose what we love, are equally things appointed for our nature. If we cannot bear the second well, that evil is ours. It did not befall Psyche. If we look at it with reason’s eye and not with our passions, what good that life offers did she not win? Chastity, temperance, prudence, meekness, clemency, valour — and, though fame is froth, yet, if we should reckon it at all, a name that stands with Iphigenia’s and Antigone’s.”

Of course he had long since told me those stories, so often that I had them by heart, mostly in the very words of the poets. Nevertheless, I asked him to tell me them again; chiefly for his sake, for I was now old enough to know that a man (above all, a Greek man) can find comfort in words coming out of his own mouth. But I was glad to hear them too. These were peaceful, familiar things and would keep at bay the great desolation which now, with my returning health, was beginning to mix itself in every thought.

Next day, being then for the first time risen, I said to him, “Grandfather, I have missed being Iphigenia. I can be Antigone.”

“Antigone? How, child?”

“She gave her brother burial. I too — there may be something left. Even the Brute would not eat bones and all. I must go up to the Tree. I will bring it . . . them . . . back if I can and burn them rightly. Or, if there’s too much, I’ll bury it up there.”

“It would be pious,” said the Fox. “It would accord with custom, if not with Nature. If you can. It’s late in the year now for going up the Mountain.”

“That’s why it must be done speedily. I think it will be about five-and-twenty days before the earliest snow.”

“If you can, child. You have been very sick.”

“It’s all I can do,” said I.

IX

I was soon able to go about the house and in the gardens again. I did it in some stealth, for the Fox told the King I was still sick. Otherwise he would have had me off to the Pillar Room to work for him. He often asked, “Where’s that girl got to? Does she mean to slug abed for the rest of her life? I’ll not feed drones in my hive for ever.” The loss of Psyche had not at all softened him to Redival and me. Rather, the opposite. “To hear him talk,” said the Fox, “you’d think no father ever loved a child better than he Psyche.” The gods had taken his darling and left him the dross: the young whore (that was Redival) and the hobgoblin (which was I). But I could guess it all without the Fox’s reports to help me.

For my own part, I was busily thinking out how I could make my journey to the Tree on the Mountain and gather whatever might remain of Psyche. I had talked lightly enough of doing this and was determined that I would do it, but the difficulties were very great. I had never been taught to ride any beast, so I must go on foot. I knew it would take a man who knew the way about six hours to go from the palace to the Tree. I, a woman, and one who had to find her way, must allow myself eight at the least. And two more for the work I went to do; and, say, six for the journey home. There were sixteen hours in all. It could not be done in one stitch. I must reckon to lie out a night on the Mountain, and must take food (water I should find) and warm clothing. It could not be done till I recovered my full strength.

And in truth (as I now see) I had the wish to put off my journey as long as I could. Not for any peril or labour it might cost; but because I could see nothing in the whole world for me to do once it was accomplished. As long as this act lay before me, there was, as it were, some barrier between me and the dead desert which the rest of my life must be. Once I had gathered Psyche’s bones, then, it seemed, all that concerned her would be over and done with. Already, even with the great art still ahead, there was flowing in upon me, from the barren years beyond it, a dejection such as I had never conceived. It was not at all like the agonies I had endured before and have endured since. I did not weep nor wring my hands. I was like water put into a bottle and left in a cellar; utterly motionless, never to be drunk, poured out, spilled or shaken. The days were endless. The very shadows seemed nailed to the ground, as if the sun no longer moved.

One day when this deadness was at its worst I came into the house by the little door that leads into a narrow passage between the guards' quarters and the dairy. I sat down on the threshold, less weary of body (for the gods, not out of mercy, have made me strong) than unable to find a reason for going a step further in any direction or for doing anything at all. A fat fly was crawling up the doorpost. I remember thinking that its sluggish crawling, seemingly without aim, was like my life, or even the life of the whole world.

"Lady," said a voice behind me. I looked up; it was Bardia.

"Lady," he said, "I'll make free with you. I've known sorrow too. I have been as you are now; I have sat and felt the hours drawn out to the length of years. What cured me was the wars. I don't think there's any other cure."

"But I can't go to the wars, Bardia," said I.

"You can, almost," he said. "When you fought me outside the other Princess's door (peace be on her, the Blessed!) I told you you had a good eye and a good reach. You thought I was saying it to cheer you. Well, so perhaps I was. But it was true too. There's no one in the quarters, and there are blunt swords. Come in and let me give you a lesson."

"No," said I dully. "I don't want to. What would be the use?"

"Use? Try it and see. No one can be sad while they're using wrist and hand and eye and every muscle of their body. That's truth, Lady, whether you believe it or not. As well, it would be a hundred shames not to train anyone who has such a gift for the sport as you look like having."

"No," said I. "Leave me alone. Unless we can use sharps and you would kill me."

"That's women's talk, by your favour. You'd never say that again once you'd seen it done. Come. I'll not leave off till you do."

A big, kindly man, some years older than herself, can usually persuade even a sad and sullen girl. In the end I rose and went in with him.

"That shield is too heavy," he said. "Here's the one for you. Slip it on, thus. And understand from the outset; your shield is a weapon, not a wall. You're fighting with it every bit as much as your sword. Watch me, now. You see the way I twist my shield — make it flicker like a butterfly. There'd be arrows and spears and sword points flying off it in every direction if we were in a hot engagement. Now: here's your sword. No, not like that. You want to grip it firm, but light. It's not a wild animal that's trying to run away from you. That's better. Now, your left foot forward. And don't look at my

face, look at my sword. It isn’t my face is going to fight you. And now, I’ll show you a few guards.”

He kept me at it for a full half-hour. It was the hardest work I’d ever done, and, while it lasted, one could think of nothing else. I said not long before that work and weakness are comforters. But sweat is the kindest creature of the three; far better than philosophy, as a cure for ill thoughts.

“That’s enough,” said Bardia. “You shape very well. I’m sure now I can make a swordsman of you. You’ll come again tomorrow? But your dress hampers you. It would be better if you could wear something that came only to your knee.”

I was in such a heat that I went across the passage into the dairy and drank a bowl of milk. It was the first food or drink that I had really relished ever since the bad times began. While I was in there, one of the other soldiers (I suppose he had had a sight of what we were doing) came into the passage and said something to Bardia. Bardia replied, I couldn’t hear what. Then he spoke louder: “Why, yes, it’s a pity about her face. But she’s a brave girl and honest. If a man was blind and she weren’t the King’s daughter, she’d make him a good wife.” And that is the nearest thing to a love-speech that was ever made me.

I had my lesson with Bardia every day after that. And I knew soon that he had been a good doctor to me. My grief remained, but the numbness was gone and time moved at its right pace again.

Soon I told Bardia how I wished to go to the Grey Mountain, and why.

“That’s very well thought of, Lady,” he said. “I’m ashamed I have not done it myself. We all owe the Blessed Princess that much at the least. But there’s no need for you to go. I’ll go for you.”

I said I would go.

“Then you must go with me,” he said. “You’d never find the place by yourself. And you might meet a bear or wolves or a mountainy man, an outlaw, that’d be worse. Can you ride a horse, Lady?”

“No, I’ve never been taught.”

He wrinkled up his brow, thinking. “One horse will do,” he said, “I in the saddle and you behind me. And it won’t take six hours getting up; there’s a shorter way. But the work we have to do might take long enough. We’ll need to sleep a night on the mountain.”

“Will the King let you be absent so long, Bardia?”

He chuckled. “Oh, I’ll spin the King a story easily enough. He isn’t with us as he is with you, Lady. For all his hard words he’s no bad master to soldiers, shepherds, huntsmen, and the like. He understands them and they him. You see him at his worst with women and priests and politic men. The truth is, he’s half afraid of them.” This was very strange to me.

Six days after that, I and Bardia set out at the milking-time of the morning, the day being so cloudy that it was almost as dark as full night. No one in the palace knew of our going except the Fox and my own women. I had on a plain black cloak with a hood, and a veil over my face. Under the mantle I wore the short smock that I used for my fencing bouts, with a man’s belt and a sword, this time a sharp one, at my side. “Most likely we’ll meet nothing worse than a wild cat or a fox,” Bardia had said. “But no one, man or maid, ought to go weaponless up the hills.” I sat with both my legs on one side of the horse, and a hand on Bardia’s girdle. With the other, I held on my knees an urn.

It was all silent in the city, but for the clatter of our own beast’s hooves, though here and there you would see a light in a window. A sharp rain came on us from behind our backs as we went down from the city to the ford of the Shennit, but it ceased as we were crossing the water, and the clouds began to break. There was still no sign of dawn ahead, for it was in that direction the foul weather was packing off.

We passed the house of Ungit on our right. Its fashion is thus: great, ancient stones, twice the height of a man and four times the thickness of a man, set upright in an egg-shaped ring. These are very ancient, and no one knows who set them up or brought them into that place, or how. In between the stones it is filled up with brick to make the wall complete. The roof is thatched with rushes and not level but somewhat domed, so that the whole thing is a roundish hump, most like a huge slug lying on the field. This is a holy shape, and the priests say it resembles, or (in a mystery) that it really is, the egg from which the whole world was hatched or the womb in which the whole world once lay. Every spring the Priest is shut into it and fights, or makes believe to fight, his way out through the western door; and this means that the new year is born. There was smoke going up from it as we passed, for the fire before Ungit is always alight.

I found my mood changed as soon as we had left Ungit behind; partly because we were now going into country I had never known, and partly because I felt as if the air were sweeter as we got away from all that

holiness. The Mountain, now bigger ahead of us, still shut out the brightening of the day; but when I looked back and saw, beyond the city, those hills where Psyche and I and the Fox used to wander, I perceived that it was already morning there. And further off still, the clouds in the western sky were beginning to turn pale rose.

We were going up and down little hills, but always more up than down, on a good enough road, with grass-lands on each side of us. There were dark woods on our left, and presently the road bent towards them. But here Bardia left the road and took to the grass.

"That's the Holy Road," he said, pointing to the woods. "That's the way they took the Blessed (peace be on her). Our way will be steeper and shorter."

We now went for a long time over grass, gently but steadily upward, making for a ridge so high and so near that the true Mountain was quite out of sight. When we topped it, and stood for a while to let the horse breathe, everything was changed. And my struggle began.

We had come into the sunlight now, too bright to look into, and warm (I threw back my cloak). Heavy dew made the grass jewel-bright. The Mountain, far greater yet also far further off than I expected, seen with the sun hanging a hand-breath above its topmost crags, did not look like a solid thing. Between us and it was a vast tumble of valley and hill, woods and cliffs, more little lakes than I could count. To left and right, and behind us, the whole coloured world with all its hills was heaped up and up to the sky, with, far away, a gleam of what we call the sea (though it is not to be compared with the Great Sea of the Greeks). There was a lark singing; but for that, huge and ancient stillness.

And my struggle was this. You may well believe that I had set out sad enough; I came on a sad errand. Now, flung at me like frolic or insolence, there came as if it were a voice — no words, but if you made it into words it would be, "Why should your heart not dance?" It's the measure of my folly that my heart almost answered, Why not? I had to tell myself over like a lesson the infinite reasons it had not to dance. My heart to dance? Mine whose love was taken from me, I, the ugly princess who must never look for other love, the drudge of the King, the jailer of hateful Redival, perhaps to be murdered or turned out as a beggar when my father died (for who knew what Glome would do then?). And yet, it was a lesson I could hardly keep in my mind. The sight of the huge world put mad ideas into me; as if I

could wander away, wander for ever, see strange and beautiful things, one after the other to the world's end.

The freshness and wetness all about me (I had seen nothing but drought and withered things for many months before my sickness) made me feel that I had misjudged the world; it seemed kind, and laughing, as if its heart also danced. Even my ugliness I could not quite believe in. Who can *feel* ugly when the heart meets delight? It is as if, somewhere inside, within the hideous face and bony limbs, one is soft, fresh, lissom and desirable.

We had stood on the ridge only for a short time. But for hours later, while we went up and down, winding among great hills, often dismounting and leading the horse, sometimes on dangerous edges, the struggle went on.

Was I not right to struggle against this fool-happy mood? Mere seemliness, if nothing else, called for it. I would not go laughing to Psyche's burial. If I did, how should I ever again believe that I had loved her? Reason called for it. I knew the world too well to believe this sudden smiling. What woman can have patience with the man who can be yet again deceived by his doxy's fawning after he has thrice proved her false? I should be just like such a man if a mere burst of fair weather, and fresh grass after a long drought, and health after sickness, could make me friends again with this god-haunted, plague-breeding, decaying, tyrannous world. I had seen. I was not a fool. I did not know then, however, as I do now, the strongest reason for distrust. The gods never send us this invitation to delight so readily or so strongly as when they are preparing some new agony. We are their bubbles; they blow us big before they prick us.

But I held my own without that knowledge. I ruled myself. Did they think I was nothing but a pipe to be played on as their moment's fancy chose?

The struggle ended when we topped the last rise before the real Mountain. We were so high now that, though the sun was very strong, the wind blew bitterly cold. At our feet, between us and the Mountain, lay a cursed black valley: dark moss, dark peat-bogs, shingle, great boulders, and screes of stone sprawling down into it from the Mountain — as if the Mountain had sores and these were the stony issue from them. The great mass of it rose up (we tilted our heads back to look at it) into huge knobbles of stone against the sky, like an old giant's back teeth. The face it showed us was really no steeper than a roof, except for certain frightful cliffs on our left, but it looked as if it went up like a wall. It too was now black. Here the

gods ceased trying to make me glad. There was nothing here that even the merriest heart could dance for.

Bardia pointed, ahead to our right. There the Mountain fell away in a smooth sweep to a saddle somewhat lower than the ground we stood on, but still with nothing behind it but the sky. Against the sky, on the saddle, stood a single leafless tree.

We went down into the black valley on our own feet, leading the horse, for the going was bad and stones slipped away from under us until, at the lowest place, we joined the sacred road (it came into the valley through the northern end, away to our left). We were so near now that we did not mount again. A few loops of the road led us up to the saddle and, once more, into the biting wind.

I was afraid, now that we were almost at the Tree. I can hardly say of what, but I know that to find the bones, or even the body, would have set my fear at rest. I believe I had a senseless child's fear that she might be neither living nor dead.

And now we were there. The iron girdle, and the chain that went from it about the gaunt trunk (there was no bark on the Tree) hung there and made a dull noise from time to time as they moved with the wind. There were no bones, nor rags of clothing, nor marks of blood, nor anything else.

"How do you read these signs, Bardia?" said I.

"The god's taken her," said he, rather pale and speaking low (he was a god-fearing man). "No natural beast would have licked his plate so clean. There'd be bones. A beast — any but the holy Shadowbrute itself — couldn't have got the whole body out of the irons. And it would have left the jewels. A man, now — but a man couldn't have freed her, unless he had tools with him."

I had not thought of our journey's being so vain; nothing to do, nothing to gather. The emptiness of my life was to begin at once.

"We can search about a bit," I said; foolishly, for I had no hope of finding anything.

"Yes, yes, Lady. We can search about," said Bardia. I knew it was only his kindness that spoke.

And so we did; working round in circles, he one way and I the other, with our eyes on the ground; very cold, one's cloak flapping till leg and cheek smarted with the blows of it.

Bardia was ahead of me now, eastward and further across the saddle, when he called out. I had to thrust back the hair that was whipping about my face before I could see him. I rushed to him; half-flying, for the westwind made a sail of my cloak. He showed me what he had found — a ruby.

"I never saw her wear such a stone," said I.

"She did though, Lady. On her last journey. They had put their own holy gear on her. The straps of the sandals were red with rubies."

"Oh, Bardia! Then somebody — something — carried her thus far."

"Or maybe carried only the sandals. A jackdaw'd do it."

"We must go on; further on this line."

"Carefully, Lady. If we must, I'll do it. You'd best stay behind."

"Why, what's to fear? And anyway, I'll not stay behind."

"I don't know that anyone's been over the saddle. At the Offering, even the priests come no further than the Tree. We are very near the bad part of the Mountain; I mean, the holy part. Beyond the Tree it's all gods' country, they say."

"Then it is you must stay behind, Bardia. They can't do worse to me than they've done already."

"I'll go where you go, Lady. But let's talk less of them, or not at all. And first, I must go back and get the horse."

He went back (and for a moment out of sight — I stood alone on the edge of the perilous land) to where he had tied the horse to a little stunted bush. Then he rejoined me, leading it, very grave, and we went forward.

"Carefully," he said again. "We may find we're on the top of a cliff any moment." And indeed it looked, for the next few paces, as if we were walking straight into the empty sky. Then suddenly we found we were on the brow of a steep slope; and at the same moment the sun — which had been overcast ever since we went down into the black valley — leaped out.

It was like looking down into a new world. At our feet, cradled amid a vast confusion of mountains, lay a small valley bright as a gem, but opening southward on our right. Through that opening there was a glimpse of warm, blue lands, hills and forests, far below us. The valley itself was like a cleft in the Mountain's southern chin. High though it was, the year seemed to have been kinder in it than down in Glome. I never saw greener turf. There was gorse in bloom, and wild vines, and many groves of flourishing trees; and plenty of bright water — pools, streams, and little cataracts. And when,

after casting about a little to find where the slope would be easiest for the horse, we began descending, the air came up to us warmer and sweeter every minute. We were out of the wind now and could hear ourselves speak; soon we could hear the very chattering of the streams and the sound of bees.

“This may well be the secret valley of the god,” said Bardia, his voice hushed.

“It’s secret enough,” said I.

Now we were at the bottom, and so warm that I had half a mind to dip my hands and face in the swift, amber water of the stream which still divided us from the main of the valley. I had already lifted my hand to put aside my veil when I heard two voices cry out; one, Bardia’s. I looked. A quivering shock of feeling that has no name (but nearest terror) stabbed through me from head to foot. There, not six feet away, on the far side of the river, stood Psyche.

X

What I babbled, between tears and laughter, in the first wildness of my joy (the water still between us) I don't know. I was recalled by Bardia's voice.

"Careful, Lady. It may be her wraith. It may — ai! ai! — it is the bride of the god. It is a goddess." He was deadly white, and bending down to throw earth on his forehead.

You could not blame him. She was so brightface, as we say in Greek. But I felt no holy fear. What? — I to fear the very Psyche whom I had carried in my arms and taught to speak and to walk? She was tanned by sun and wind, and clothed in rags; but laughing, her eyes like two stars, her limbs smooth and rounded, and (but for the rags) no sign of beggary or hardship about her.

"Welcome, welcome, welcome," she was saying. "Oh, Maia, I have longed for this. It was my only longing. I knew you would come. Oh, how happy I am! And good Bardia, too. It was he that brought you? Of course; I might have guessed it. Come, Orual, you must cross the stream. I'll show you where it's easiest. But, Bardia — I can't bid you across. Dear Bardia, it's not — —"

"No, no, Blessed Istra," said Bardia (and I thought he was very relieved). "I'm only a soldier." Then, in a lower voice, to me, "Will you go, Lady? This is a very dreadful place. Perhaps — —"

"Go?" said I. "I'd go if the river flowed with fire instead of water."

"Of course," said he. "It's not with you as with us. You have gods' blood in you. I'll stay here with the horse. We're out of the wind and there's good grass for him here."

I was already on the edge of the river.

"A little further up, Orual," Psyche was saying. "Here's the best ford. Go straight ahead off that big stone. Gently! make your footing sure. No, not to your left. It's very deep in places. This way. Now, one step more. Reach out for my hand."

I suppose the long bedridden and indoors time of my sickness had softened me. Anyhow, the coldness of that water shocked all the breath out of me; and the current was so strong that, but for Psyche's hand, I think it would have knocked me down and rolled me under. I even thought, momentarily amid a thousand other things, "How strong she grows. She'll

be a stronger woman than ever I was. She'll have that as well as her beauty."

The next was all a confusion — trying to talk, to cry, to kiss, to get my breath back, all together. But she led me a few paces beyond the river and made me sit in the warm heather and sat beside me; our four hands joined in my lap, just as it had been that night in her prison.

"Why, Sister," she said merrily, "you have found my threshold cold and steep! You are breathless. But I'll refresh you."

She jumped up, went a little way off, and came back, carrying something; the little cool, dark berries of the Mountain, in a green leaf. "Eat," she said. "Is it not food fit for the gods?"

"Nothing sweeter," said I. And indeed I was both hungry and thirsty enough by now, for it was noon or later. "But oh, Psyche, tell me how — —"

"Wait!" said she. "After the banquet, the wine." Close beside us a little silvery trickle came out from among stones mossed cushion-soft. She held her two hands under it till they were filled and raised them to my lips.

"Have you ever tasted a nobler wine?" she said. "Or in a fairer cup?"

"It is indeed a good drink," said I. "But the cup is better. It is the cup I love best in the world."

"Then it's yours, Sister." She said it with such a pretty air of courtesy, like a queen and hostess giving gifts, that the tears came into my eyes again. It brought back so many of her plays in childhood.

"Thank you, child," said I. "I hope it is mine indeed. But, Psyche, we must be serious; yes, and busy too. How have you lived? How did you escape? And oh — we mustn't let the joy of the moment put it out of our minds — what are we to do now?"

"Do? Why, be merry, what else? Why should our hearts not dance?"

"They do dance. Do you not think — why, I could forgive the gods themselves. I'll shortly be able to forgive Redival; perhaps. But how can — it will be winter in a month or less. You can't — Psyche, how have you kept alive till now? I thought, I thought — —" But to think of what I had thought overcame me.

"Hush, Maia, hush," said Psyche (once more it was she who was comforting me). "All those fears are over. All's well. I'll make it well for you too; I'll not rest till you're as happy as I. But you haven't yet even

asked me my story. Weren't you surprised to find this fair dwelling-place, and me living here; like this? Have you no wonder?"

"Yes, Psyche, I am overwhelmed in it. Of course I want to hear your story. Unless we should make our plans first."

"Solemn Orual," said Psyche mockingly. "You were always one for plans. And rightly too, Maia, with such a foolish child as me to bring up. And well you did it." With one light kiss she put all those days, all of my life that I cared for, behind us, and began her story.

"I wasn't in my right mind when we left the palace. Before the two temple girls began painting and dressing me they gave me a sweet, sticky stuff to drink — a drug, as I guess, for soon after I had swallowed it everything went dreamlike, and more and more so for a long time. And I think, Sister, they must always give that to those whose blood is to be poured over Ungit, and that's why we see them die so patiently. And the painting on my face helped the dreaminess too. It made my face stiff till it didn't seem to be my own face. I couldn't feel it was I who was being sacrificed. And then the music and incense and the torches made it more so. I saw you, Orual, at the top of the stairway, but I couldn't lift even a hand to wave to you; my arms were as heavy as lead. And I thought it didn't matter much, because you too would wake up presently and find it was all a dream. And in a sense it was, wasn't it? And you are nearly awake now. What? still so grave? I must wake you more.

"You'd think the cold air would have given me my mind back when we came out of the great gates, but the drug must have been still coming to its full power. I had no fear; nor joy either. Sitting there on that litter, up above the heads of all that crowd, was a strange enough thing anyway . . . and the horns and the rattles were going on all the time. I don't know whether the journey up the mountain was long or short. Each bit of it was long; I noticed every pebble on the road, I looked long, long at every tree as we passed it. Yet the whole journey seemed to take hardly any time. Yet long enough for me to get some of my wits back. I began to know that something dreadful was being done to me. Then for the first time I wanted to speak. I tried to cry out to them that there was some mistake, that I was only poor Istra and it couldn't be me they meant to kill. But nothing more than a kind of grunting or babbling came out of my mouth. Then a great bird-headed man, or a bird with a man's body — —"

"That would be the Priest," said I.

“Yes. If he is still the Priest when he puts on his mask; perhaps he becomes a god while he wears it. Anyway, it said, ‘Give her some more,’ and one of the younger priests got on someone else’s shoulders and put the sweet sticky cup to my lips again. I didn’t want to take it, but, you know, Maia, it all felt so like the time you had the barber to take that thorn out of my hand long ago — you remember, you holding me tight, and telling me to be good, and that it’d all be over in a moment. Well, it was like that, so I felt sure I’d better do whatever I was told.

“The next thing I knew — really knew — was that I was off the litter and on the hot earth, and they were fastening me to the Tree with iron round my waist. It was the sound of the iron that cleared the last of the drug out of my mind. And there was the King, shrieking and wailing and tearing his hair. And do you know, Maia, he actually looked at me, really looked, and it seemed to me he was then seeing me for the first time. But all I wished was that he would stop it and then he and all the rest would go away and leave me alone to cry. I wanted to cry now. My mind was getting clearer and clearer and I was terribly afraid. I was trying to be like those girls in the Greek stories that the Fox is always telling us about, and I knew I could keep it up till they were gone, if only they would go quickly.”

“Oh, Psyche, you say all’s well now. Forget that terrible time. Go on quickly and tell me how you were saved. We have so much to talk about and arrange. There’s no time — —”

“Orual! There’s all the time there is. Don’t you *want* to hear my story?”

“Of course I do. I want to hear every bit. When we’re safe and — —”

“Where shall we ever be safe if we’re not safe here? This is my home, Maia. And you won’t understand the wonder and glory of my adventure unless you listen to the bad part. It wasn’t very bad, you know.”

“It’s so bad I can hardly bear to listen to it.”

“Ah, but wait. Well, at last they were gone, and there I was alone under the glare of the sky with the great baked, parched mountain all round me, and not one noise to be heard. There wasn’t a breath of wind even by the Tree; you remember what the last day of the drought was like. I was already thirsty — the sticky drink had done that. Then I noticed for the first time that they had so bound me that I couldn’t sit down. That was when my heart really failed me. I did cry then; oh, Maia, how badly I wanted you and the Fox! And all I could do was to pray, pray, pray to the gods that whatever was going to happen to me might happen soon. But nothing happened,

except that my tears made me thirstier. Then, a very long time after that, things began gathering round me."

"Things?"

"Oh, nothing dreadful. Only the mountain cattle at first. Poor lean things they were. I was sorry for them, for I thought they were as thirsty as I. And they came nearer and nearer in a great circle, but never very near, and mooed at me. And after that there came a beast that I had never seen before, but I think it was a lynx. It came right up close. My hands were free and I wondered if I would be able to beat it off. But I had no need to. After advancing and drawing back I don't know how many times (I think it began by fearing me as much as I feared it) it came and sniffed at my feet, and then it stood up with its forepaws on me and sniffed again. Then it went away. I was sorry it had gone; it was a kind of company. And do you know what I was thinking all this time?"

"What?"

"At first I was trying to cheer myself with all that old dream of my gold and amber palace on the Mountain . . . and the god . . . trying to believe it. But I couldn't believe in it at all. I couldn't understand how I ever had. All that, all my old longings, were clean gone."

I pressed her hands and said nothing. But inwardly I rejoiced. It might have been good (I don't know) to encourage that fancy the night before the Offering, if it supported her. Now, I was glad she had got over it. It was a thing I could not like; unnatural and estranging. Perhaps this gladness of mine is one of the things the gods have against me. They never tell.

"The only thing that did me good," she continued "was quite different. It was hardly a thought, and very hard to put into words. There was a lot of the Fox's philosophy in it; things he says about gods or 'the divine nature'; but mixed up with things the Priest said too, about the blood and the earth and how sacrifice makes the crops grow. I'm not explaining it well. It seemed to come from somewhere deep inside me; deeper than the part that sees pictures of gold and amber palaces, deeper than fears and tears. It was shapeless, but you could just hold on to it; or just let it hold on to you. Then the change came."

"What change?" I didn't know well what she was talking about, but I saw she must have her way and tell the story in her own fashion.

"Oh, the weather of course. I couldn't see it, tied the way I was, but I could feel it. I was suddenly cool. Then I knew the sky must be filling with

clouds, behind my back, over Glome, for all the colours on the Mountain went out and my own shadow vanished. And then — that was the first sweet moment — a sigh of wind — westwind — came at my back. Then more and more wind; you could hear and smell and feel the rain drawing near. So then I knew quite well that the gods really are, and that I was bringing the rain. And then the wind was roaring (but it's too soft a sound to call it a roar) all round me; and rain. The Tree kept some of it off me; I was holding out my hands all the time and licking the rain off them, I was so thirsty. The wind got wilder and wilder. It seemed to be lifting me off the ground so that, if it hadn't been for the iron round my waist, I'd have been blown right away, up in the air. And then — at last — for a moment — I saw him."

"Saw whom?"

"The westwind."

"*Saw* it?"

"Not it; him. The god of the wind: Westwind himself."

"Were you awake, Psyche?"

"Oh, it was no dream. One can't dream things like that, because one's never seen things like that. He was in human shape. But you couldn't mistake him for a man. Oh, Sister, you'd understand if you'd seen. How can I make you understand? You've seen lepers?"

"Well, of course."

"And you know how healthy people look beside a leper?"

"You mean — healthier, ruddier than ever?"

"Yes. Now we, beside the gods, are like lepers beside us."

"Do you mean this god was so red?"

She laughed and clapped her hands. "Oh, it's no use," she said. "I see I've not given you the idea at all. Never mind. You shall see gods for yourself, Orual. It must be so; I'll make it so. Somehow. There must be a way. Look, this may help you. When I saw Westwind I was neither glad nor afraid (at first). I felt ashamed."

"But what of? Psyche, they hadn't stripped you naked or anything?"

"No, no, Maia. Ashamed of looking like a mortal; ashamed of being a mortal."

"But how could you help that?"

"Don't you think the things people are most ashamed of are the things they can't help?"

I thought of my ugliness and said nothing.

“And he took me,” said Psyche, “in his beautiful arms which seemed to burn me (though the burning didn’t hurt) and pulled me right out of the iron girdle — and that didn’t hurt either and I don’t know how he did it — and carried me up into the air, far up above the ground, and whirled me away. Of course he was invisible again almost at once. I had seen him only as one sees a lightning flash. But that didn’t matter. Now I knew it was he, not it, I wasn’t in the least afraid of sailing along in the sky; even of turning head over heels in it.”

“Psyche, are you sure this happened? You must have been dreaming!”

“And if it was a dream, Sister, how do you think I came here? It’s more likely everything that had happened to me before this was a dream. Why, Glome and the King and old Batta seem to me very like dreams now. But you hinder my tale, Maia. So he carried me through the air and set me down softly. At first I was all out of breath and too bewildered to see where I was; for Westwind is a merry, rough god. (Sister, do you think young gods have to be taught how to handle us? A hasty touch from hands like theirs and we’d fall to pieces.) But when I came to myself — ah, can you think what a moment that was! — and saw the House before me; I lying at the threshold. And it wasn’t, you see, just the gold and amber House I used to imagine. If it had been just that, I might indeed have thought I was dreaming. But I saw it wasn’t. And not quite like any house in this land, nor quite like those Greek houses the Fox describes to us. Something new, never conceived of — but, there, you can see for yourself; and I’ll show you over every bit of it in a moment. Why need I try to show it in words?

“You could see it was a god’s house at once. I don’t mean a temple where a god is worshipped. A god’s house, where he lives. I would not for any wealth have gone into it. But I had to, Orual. For there came a voice — sweet? oh, sweeter than any music, yet my hair rose at it too — and do you know, Orual, what it said? It said, ‘Enter your house’ — yes, it called it *my* house— ‘Psyche, the bride of the god.’

“I was ashamed again, ashamed of my mortality, and terribly afraid. But it would have been worse shame and worse fear to disobey. I went, cold, small, and shaking, up the steps and through the porch and into the courtyard. There was no one to be seen. But then the voices came. All round me, bidding me welcome.”

“What kind of voices?”

“Like women’s voices — at least, as like women’s voices as the wind-god was like a man. And they said, ‘Enter, Lady, enter, Mistress. Do not be afraid.’ And they were moving as the speakers moved, though I could see no one; and leading me by their movements. And so they brought me into a cool parlour with an arched roof, where there was a table set out with fruit and wine. Such fruits as never — but you shall see. They said, ‘Refresh yourself, Lady, before the bath; after it comes the feast.’ Oh, Orual, how can I tell you what it felt like? I knew they were all spirits and I wanted to fall at their feet. But I daren’t; if they made me mistress of that house, mistress I should have to be. Yet all the time I was afraid there might be some bitter mockery in it and that at any moment terrible laughter might break out and — —”

“Ah!” said I, with a long breath. How well I understood.

“Oh, but I was wrong, Sister. Utterly wrong. That’s part of the mortal shame. They gave me fruit, they gave me wine — —”

“The voices gave you?”

“The spirits gave them to me. I couldn’t see their hands. Yet, you know, it never looked as if the plates or the cup were moving of themselves. You could see that hands were doing it. And, Orual” (her voice grew very low) “When I took the cup, I — I — *felt* the other hands, touching my own. Again, that burning, though without pain. That was terrible.” She blushed suddenly and (I wondered why) laughed. “It wouldn’t be terrible now,” she said. “Then they had me to the bath. You shall see it. It is in the delicatest pillared court, open to the sky, and the water is like crystal and smells as sweet as . . . as sweet as this whole valley. I was terribly shy when it came to taking off my clothes, but — —”

“You said they were all she-spirits.”

“Oh, Maia, you still don’t understand. This shame has nothing to do with He or She. It’s the being mortal; being, how shall I say it? . . . insufficient. Don’t you think a dream would feel shy if it were seen walking about in the waking world? And then” (she was speaking more and more quickly now) “they dressed me again — in the most beautiful things — and then came the banquet — and the music — and then they had me to bed — and the night came — and then — he.”

“He?”

“The Bridegroom . . . the god himself. Don’t look at me like that, Sister. I’m your own true Psyche still. Nothing will change that.”

“Psyche,” said I, leaping up, “I can’t bear this any longer. You have told me so many wonders. If this is all true, I’ve been wrong all my life. Everything has to be begun over again. Psyche, it is true? You’re not playing a game with me? Show me. Show me your palace.”

“Of course I will,” she said, rising. “Let us go in. And don’t be afraid whatever you see or hear.”

“Is it far?” said I.

She gave me a quick, astonished look. “Far to where?” she said.

“To the palace, to this god’s house.”

You have seen a lost child in a crowd run up to a woman whom it takes for its mother, and how the woman turns round and shows the face of a stranger, and then the look in the child’s eyes, silent a moment before it begins to cry. Psyche’s face was like that; checked, blank; happiest assurance suddenly dashed all to pieces.

“Orual,” she said, beginning to tremble, “what do you mean?”

I too became frightened, though I had yet no notion of the truth. “Mean?” said I. “Where is the palace? How far have we to go to reach it?”

She gave one loud cry. Then, with white face, staring hard into my eyes, she said, “But *this* is it, Orual! It is here! You are standing on the stairs of the great gate.”

XI

If anyone could have seen us at that moment I believe he would have thought we were two enemies met for a battle to the death. I know we stood like that, a few feet apart, every nerve taut, each with eyes fixed on the other in a terrible watchfulness.

And now we are coming to that part of my history on which my charge against the gods chiefly rests; and therefore I must try at any cost to write what is wholly true. Yet it is hard to know perfectly what I was thinking while those huge, silent moments went past. By remembering it too often I have blurred the memory itself.

I suppose my first thought must have been, “She’s mad.” Anyway, my whole heart leaped to shut the door against something monstrously amiss; not to be endured. And to keep it shut. Perhaps I was fighting not to be mad myself.

But what I said when I got my breath (and I know my voice came out in a whisper) was simply, “We must go away at once. This is a terrible place.”

Was I believing in her invisible palace? A Greek will laugh at the thought. But it’s different in Glome. There the gods are too close to us. Up in the Mountain, in the very heart of the Mountain, where Bardia had been afraid and even the priests don’t go, anything was possible. No door could be kept shut. Yes, that was it; not plain belief, but infinite misgiving — the whole world (Psyche with it) slipping out of my hands.

Whatever I meant, she misunderstood me horribly.

“So,” she said, “you do see it after all.”

“See what?” I asked. A fool’s question. I knew what.

“Why, this, this,” said Psyche. “The gates, the shining walls — —”

For some strange reason, fury — my father’s own fury — fell upon me when she said that. I found myself screaming (I am sure I had not meant to scream), “Stop it! Stop it at once! There’s nothing there.”

Her face flushed. For once, and for the moment only, she too was angry. “Well, feel it, feel it, if you can’t see,” she cried. “Touch it. Slap it. Beat your head against it. Here — —” She made to grab my hands. I wrenched them free.

“Stop it, stop it, I tell you! There’s no such thing. You’re pretending. You’re trying to make yourself believe it.” But I was lying. How did I know

whether she really saw invisible things or spoke in madness? Either way, something hateful and strange had begun. As if I could thrust it back by brute force, I fell upon Psyche. Before I knew what I was doing I had her by the shoulders and was shaking her as one shakes a child.

She was too big for that now and far too strong (stronger than I ever dreamt she could be) and she flung my grip off in a moment. We fell apart, both breathing hard, now more like enemies than ever. All at once a look came into her face that I had never seen there; sharp, suspicious.

"But you tasted the wine. Where do you think I got it from?"

"Wine? What wine? What are you talking about?"

"Orual! The wine I gave you. And the cup. I gave you the cup. And where is it? Where have you hidden it?"

"Oh, have done with it, child. I'm in no mood for nonsense. There was no wine."

"But I gave it to you. You drank it. And the fine honey-cakes. You said — —"

"You gave me water, cupped in your hands."

"But you praised the wine; and the cup. You said — —"

"I praised your hands. You were playing a game (you know you were) and I fell in with it."

She gaped open-mouthed, yet beautiful even then.

"So that was all," she said slowly. "You mean you saw no cup? tasted no wine?"

I wouldn't answer. She had heard well enough what I said.

Presently her throat moved as if she were swallowing something (oh, the beauty of her throat!). She pressed down a great storm of passion and her mood changed; it was now sober sadness, mixed with pity. She struck her breast with her clenched fist as mourners do.

"Aiai!" she mourned, "so this is what he meant. You can't see it. You can't feel it. For you, it is not there at all. Oh, Maia . . . I am very sorry."

I came almost to a full belief. She was shaking and stirring me a dozen different ways. But I had not shaken her at all. She was as certain of her palace as of the plainest thing; as certain as the Priest had been of Ungit when my father's dagger was between his ribs. I was as weak beside her as the Fox beside the Priest. This valley was indeed a dreadful place; full of the divine, sacred, no place for mortals. There might be a hundred things in it that I could not see.

Can a Greek understand the horror of that thought? Years after, I dreamed, again and again, that I was in some well-known place — most often the Pillar Room — and everything I saw was different from what I touched. I would lay my hand on the table and feel warm hair instead of smooth wood, and the corner of the table would shoot out a hot, wet tongue and lick me. And I knew, by the mere taste of them that all those dreams came from that moment when I believed I was looking at Psyche's palace and did not see it. For the horror was the same; a sickening discord, a rasping together of two worlds, like the two bits of a broken bone.

But in the reality (not in the dreams), with the horror, came the inconsolable grief. For the world had broken in pieces and Psyche and I were not in the same piece. Seas, mountains, madness, death itself, could not have removed her from me to such a hopeless distance as this. Gods, and again gods, always gods . . . they had stolen her. They would leave us nothing. A thought pierced up through the crust of my mind like a crocus coming up in the early year. Was she not worthy of the gods? Ought they not to have her? But instantly great, choking, blinding waves of sorrow swept it away and, "Oh!" I cried. "It's not right. It's not right. Oh, Psyche, come back! Where are you? Come back, come back."

She had me in her arms at once. "Maia — Sister," she said. "I'm here. Maia, don't. I can't bear it. I'll — —"

"Yes . . . oh, my own child . . . I do feel you . . . I hold you. But oh . . . it's only like holding you in a dream. You are leagues away. And I . . ."

She led me a few paces further and made me sit down on a mossy bank and sat beside me. With words and touch she comforted me all she could. And as, in the centre of a storm or even of a battle, I have known sudden stillness for a moment, so now for a little I let her comfort me. Not that I took any heed of what she was saying. It was her voice, and her love in her voice, that counted. Her voice was very deep for a woman's. Sometimes even now the way she used to say this or that word comes back to me as warm and real as if she were beside me in the room; the softness of it, the richness as of corn grown from a deep soil.

What was she saying: ". . . and perhaps, Maia, you too will learn how to see. I will beg and implore him to make you able. He will understand. He warned me when I asked for this meeting that it might not turn out all as I hoped. I never thought . . . I'm only simple Psyche, as he calls me . . . never

thought he meant you wouldn't even see it. So he must have known. He'll tell us. . . ."

He? I'd forgotten this *him*; or, if not forgotten, left him out of account ever since she first told me we were standing at his palace gates. And now she was saying *he* every moment, no other name but *he*, the way young wives talk. Something began to grow colder and harder inside me. And this also is like what I've known in wars; when that which was only *they* or *the enemy* all at once becomes the man, two feet away, who means to kill you.

"Who are you talking of?" I asked; but I meant, "Why do you talk of him to me? What have I to do with him?"

"But, Maia," she said, "I've told you all my story. My god, of course. My lover. My husband. The master of my house."

"Oh, I can't bear it," said I, leaping up. Those last words of hers, spoken softly and with trembling, set me on fire. I could feel my rage coming back. Then (like a great light, a hope of deliverance, it came to me) I asked myself why I'd forgotten, and how long I'd forgotten, that first notion of her being mad. Madness; of course. The whole thing must be madness. I had been nearly as mad as she to think otherwise. At the very name *madness* the air of that valley seemed more breathable, seemed emptied of a little of its holiness and horror.

"Have done with it, Psyche," I said sharply. "Where is this god? Where the palace is? Nowhere — in your fancy. Where is he? Show him to me? What is he like?"

She looked a little aside and spoke, lower than ever but very clear, and as if all that had yet passed between us were of no account beside the gravity of what she was now saying. "Oh, Orual," she said, "not even I have seen him . . . yet. He comes to me only in the holy darkness. He says I mustn't . . . not yet . . . see his face or know his name. I'm forbidden to bring any light into his . . . our . . . chamber."

Then she looked up, and as our eyes met for a moment I saw in hers unspeakable joy.

"There's no such thing," I said, loud and stern. "Never say these things again. Get up. It's time — —"

"Orual," said she, now at her queenliest, "I have never told you a lie in my life."

I tried to soften my manner. Yet the words came out cold and stern. "No, you don't mean to lie. You're not in your right mind, Psyche. You have

imagined things. It's the terror and the loneliness . . . and that drug they gave you. We'll cure you."

"Orual," said she.

"What?"

"If it's all my fancy, how do you think I have lived these many days? Do I look as if I'd fed on berries and slept under the sky? Are my arms wasted? Or my cheeks fallen in?"

I would, I believe, have lied to her myself and said they were, but it was impossible. From the top of her head to her naked feet she was bathed in life and beauty and well-being. It was as if they flowed over her or from her. It was no wonder Bardia had worshipped her as a goddess. The very rags served only to show more of her beauty; all the honey-sweetness, all the rose-red and the ivory, the warm, breathing perfection of her. She even seemed ("But that's impossible," I thought) taller than before. And as my lie died unspoken she looked at me with something like mockery in her face. Her mocking looks had always been some of her loveliest.

"You see?" she said. "It's all true. And that — no, listen, Maia — that's why all will come right. We'll make — he will make you able to see, and then — —"

"I don't want it!" I cried, putting my face close to hers, threatening her almost, till she drew back before my fierceness. "I don't want it. I hate it. Hate it, hate it, hate it. Do you understand?"

"But . . . Orual . . . why? What do you hate?"

"Oh, the whole — what can I call it? You know very well. Or you used to. This, this — —" And then something she had said about *him* (hardly noticed till now) began to work horribly in my mind. "This thing that comes to you in the darkness . . . and you're forbidden to see it. Holy darkness, you call it. What sort of thing? Faugh! it's like living in the house of Ungit. Everything's dark about the gods . . . I think I can smell the very . . ." The steadiness of her gaze, the beauty of her, so full of pity yet in a way so pitiless, made me dumb for a moment. Then my tears broke out again. "Oh, Psyche," I sobbed, "you're so far away. Do you even hear me? I can't reach you. Oh, Psyche, Psyche . . . you loved me once . . . come back. What have we to do with gods and wonders and all these cruel, dark things? We're women, aren't we? Mortals. Oh, come back to the world. Leave all that alone. Come back where we were happy."

"But Orual — think. How can I go back? This is my home. I am a wife."

“Wife? Of what?” said I, shuddering.

“If you only knew him,” she said.

“You like it! Oh, Psyche!”

She would not answer me. Her face flushed. Her face, and her whole body, were the answer.

“Oh, you ought to have been one of Ungit’s girls,” said I savagely. “You ought to have lived in there — in the dark — all blood and incense and muttering and the reek of burnt fat. To like it . . . living among things you can’t see . . . dark and holy and horrible. Is it nothing to you at all that you are leaving me . . . going into all that . . . turning your back on all our love?”

“No, no, Maia. I can’t go back to you. How could I? But you must come to me.”

“Oh, it’s madness,” said I.

Was it madness or not? Which was true? Which would be worse? I was at that very moment when, if they meant us well, the gods would speak. Mark what they did instead.

It began to rain. It was only a light rain, but it changed everything for me.

“Here, child,” said I, “come under my cloak. Your poor rags! Quick. You’ll be wet through.”

She gazed at me wonderingly. “How should I get wet, Maia,” she said, “when we are sitting indoors with a roof above us? And ‘rags’? — but I forgot. You can’t see my robes either.” The rain shone on her cheeks as she spoke.

If that wise Greek who is to read this book doubts that this turned my mind right round, let him ask his mother or wife. The moment I saw her, my child whom I had cared for all her life, sitting there in the rain as if it meant no more to her than it does to cattle, the notion that her palace and her god could be anything but madness was at once unbelievable. All those wilder misgivings, all the fluttering to and fro between two opinions, was (for that time) quite over. I saw in a flash that I must choose one opinion or the other; and in the same flash knew which I had chosen.

“Psyche,” I said (and my voice had changed). “This is sheer raving. You can’t stay here. Winter’ll be on us soon. It’ll kill you.”

“I cannot leave my home, Maia.”

“Home! There’s no home here. Get up. Here — under my cloak.”

She shook her head, a little wearily.

“It’s no use, Maia,” she said. “I see it and you don’t. Who’s to judge between us?”

“I’ll call Bardia.”

“I’m not allowed to let him in. And he wouldn’t come.”

That, I knew, was true.

“Get up, girl,” I said. “Do you hear me? Do as you’re told. Psyche, you never disobeyed me before.”

She looked up (wetter every moment) and said, very tender in voice but hard as a stone in her determination, “Dear Maia, I am a wife now. It’s no longer you that I must obey.”

I learned then how one can hate those one loves. My fingers were round her wrist in an instant, my other hand on her upper arm. We were struggling.

“You *shall* come,” I panted. “We’ll force you away — hide you somewhere — Bardia has a wife, I believe — lock you up — his house — bring you to your senses.”

It was useless. She was far stronger than I. (“Of course,” I thought, “they say mad people have double strength.”) We left marks on one another’s skin. There was a thick, tangled sort of wrestling. Then we were apart again; she staring with reproach and wonder, I weeping (as I had wept at her prison door), utterly broken with shame and despair. The rain had stopped. It had, I suppose, done all the gods wanted.

And now there was nothing at all left that I could do.

Psyche, as always, recovered herself first. She laid her hand — there was a smear of blood on it; was it possible I could have scratched her? — across my shoulder.

“Dear Maia,” she said, “you have very seldom been angry with me in all the years I can remember. Don’t begin now. Look, the shadows have already crept nearly all the way across the courtyard. I had hoped that before this we should have feasted together and been merry. But, there — you would have tasted only berries and cold water. Bread and onions with Bardia will be more comfort to you. But I must send you away before the sun sets. I promised that I would.”

“Are you sending me away for ever, Psyche? And with nothing?”

“Nothing, Orual, but a bidding to come again as soon as you can. I’ll work for you here. There must be some way. And then — oh, Maia — then we shall meet here again with no cloud between us. But now you must go.”

What could I do but obey her? In body she was stronger than I; her mind I could not reach. She was already leading me back to the river, back through the desolate valley she called her palace. The valley looked hideous to me now. There was a chill in the air. Sunset flamed up behind the black mass of the saddle.

She clung to me at the very edge of the water. “You will come back soon, soon?” she said.

“If I can, Psyche. You know how it is in our house.”

“I think,” said she, “the King will not be much hindrance to you in the next few days. Now, there’s no more time. Kiss me again. Dear Maia. And now, lean on my hand. Feel for the flat stone with your foot.”

Again I endured the sword-cut of the icy water. From this side I looked back.

“Psyche, Psyche,” I broke out. “There’s still time. Come with me. Anywhere — I’ll smuggle you out of Glome — we’ll go for beggarwomen all over the world — or you can go to Bardia’s house — anywhere, anything you like.”

She shook her head. “How could I?” she said. “I’m not my own. You forget, Sister, that I’m a wife. Yet always yours. Oh, if you knew, you’d be happy. Orual, don’t look so sad. All will be well; all will be better than you can dream of. Come again soon. Farewell for a little.”

She went away from me into her terrible valley, and out of sight finally among the trees. It was already deep twilight on my side of the river, close in under the shadow of the saddle.

“Bardia,” I called. “Bardia, where are you?”

XII

Bardia, a grey shape in the twilight, came towards me.

"You have left the Blessed?" he said.

"Yes," said I. I could not talk to him about it, I thought.

"Then we must speak of how to spend our night. We'd never find a way for the horse up to the saddle now, and if we did, we'd have to go down again beyond the Tree into the other valley. We couldn't sleep on the saddle itself; too much wind. It'll be cold enough here, where we're sheltered, in an hour or so. I fear we must lie here. Not where a man'd choose; too near the gods."

"What does it matter?" said I. "It will do as well as anywhere else."

"Then come with me, Lady. I've gathered a few sticks."

I followed him; and in that silence (there was nothing now but the chattering of the stream, and it seemed louder than ever) we could hear, long before we came to the horse, the sound of the grass torn up by his teeth.

A man and a soldier is a wonderful creature. Bardia had chosen a place where the bank was steepest, and two rocks close together made the next best thing to a cave. The sticks were all laid and the fire alight, though still sputtering from the late rain. And he brought out of the saddle-bags things better than bread and onions; even a flask of wine. I was still a girl (which in many matters is the same thing as a fool) and it seemed to me shameful that, in all my sorrow and care, I was so eager for the food when it came. I never tasted better. And that meal in the firelight (which had made all the rest of the world a mere darkness as soon as it blazed up) seemed to me very sweet and homelike; mortal food and warmth for mortal limbs and bellies, no need (for a space) to think of gods and riddles and wonders.

When we had ended Bardia said, somewhat shamefacedly, "Lady, you're not used to lying in the open and you might be cruelly chilled before day. So I'll make so free — for I'm no more to you, Lady, than one of your father's big dogs — as to say we'd best lie close, back to back, the way men do in the wars. And both cloaks over us."

I said yes to that, and indeed no woman in the world has so little reason as I to be chary in such matters. Yet it surprised me that he should have said

it; for I did not yet know that, if you are ugly enough, all men (unless they hate you deeply) soon give up thinking of you as a woman at all.

Bardia rested as soldiers do; dead asleep in two breaths but ready (I have seen him tested since) to be wide awake in one if need were. I think I never slept at all. First there was the hardness and slope of the ground, and after that the cold. And besides these, fast and whirling thoughts, wakeful as a madman's; about Psyche and my hard riddle, and also of another thing.

At last the cold grew so bitter that I slipped from under the cloak — its outer side was wet with dew by now — and began walking to and fro. And now, let that wise Greek whom I look to as my reader and the judge of my cause, mark well what followed.

It was already twilight and there was much mist in the valley. The pools of the river as I went down to it to drink (for I was thirsty as well as cold) seemed to be dark holes in the greyness. And I got my drink, ice-cold, and I thought it steadied my mind. But would a river flowing in the god's secret valley do that, or the clean contrary? This is another of the things to be guessed. For when I lifted my head and looked once more into the mist across the water, I saw that which brought my heart into my throat. There stood the palace; grey, as all things were grey in that hour and place, but solid and motionless, wall within wall, pillar and arch and architrave, acres of it, a labyrinthine beauty. As she had said, it was like no house ever seen in our land or age. Pinnacles and buttresses leaped up — no memories of mine, you would think, could help me to imagine them — unbelievably tall and slender, pointed and prickly as if stone were shooting out into branch and flower. No light showed from any window. It was a house asleep. And somewhere within it, asleep also, someone or something — how holy, or horrible, or beautiful or strange? — with Psyche in its arms. And I, what had I done and said? what would it do to me for my blasphemies and unbelievings? I never doubted that I must now cross the river, or try to cross it, even if it should drown me. I must lie on the steps at the great gate of that house and make my petition. I must ask forgiveness of Psyche as well as of the god. I had dared to scold her — dared, what was worse, to try to comfort her as a child — but all the time she was far above me; herself now hardly mortal, if what I saw was real. I was in great fear. Perhaps it was not real. I looked and looked to see if it would not fade or change. Then as I rose (for all this time I was still kneeling where I had drunk), almost before I stood on my feet, the whole thing had vanished. There was a tiny space of

time in which I thought I could see how some swirlings of the mist had looked, for the moment, like towers and walls. But very soon, no likeness at all. I was staring simply into fog, and my eyes smarting with it.

And now, you who read, give judgement. That moment when I either saw or thought I saw the House — does it tell against the gods or against me? Would they (if they answered) make it a part of their defence? — say it was a sign, a hint, beckoning me to answer the riddle one way rather than the other? I'll not grant them that. What is the use of a sign which is itself only another riddle? It might — I'll allow so much — it might have been a true seeing; the cloud over my mortal eyes may have been lifted for a moment. It might not; what would be easier than for one distraught and not, maybe, so fully waking as she seemed, gazing at a mist, in a half-light, to fancy what had filled her thoughts for so many hours? What easier, even, than for the gods themselves to send the whole ferly for a mockery? Either way, there's divine mockery in it. They set the riddle and then allow a seeming that can't be tested and can only quicken and thicken the tormenting whirlpool of your guess-work. If they had an honest intention to guide us, why is their guidance not plain? Psyche could speak plain when she was three; do you tell me the gods have not yet come so far?

When I came back to Bardia he was just awake. I did not tell him what I had seen; until I wrote it in this book, I have never told it to anyone.

Our journey down was comfortless, for there was no sun and the wind was always in our faces, with scudding showers at times. I, sitting behind Bardia, got less of it than he.

We halted somewhere about noon, under the lee of a small wood, to eat what was left of our food. Of course my riddle had been working in my mind all morning, and it was there, out of the wind for a little and somewhat warmer (was Psyche warm? and worse weather soon to come) that I made up my mind to tell him the whole story; always excepting that moment when I looked into the mist. I knew he was an honest man, and secret, and (in his own way) wise.

He listened to it all very diligently but said nothing when I had ended. I had to draw his answer out of him.

"How do you read it all, Bardia?"

"Lady," says he, "it's not my way to say more than I can help of gods and divine matters. I'm not impious. I wouldn't eat with my left hand, or lie with my wife when the moon's full, or slit open a pigeon to clean it with an

iron knife, or do anything else that's unchancy and profane, even if the King himself were to bid me. And as for sacrifices, I've always done all that can be expected of a man on my pay. But for anything more — I think the less Bardia meddles with the gods, the less they'll meddle with Bardia."

But I was determined to have his counsel.

"Bardia," I said, "do you think my sister is mad?"

"Look, Lady," he answered, "there at your very first word you say what's better unsaid. Mad? the Blessed, mad? Moreover, we've seen her and anyone could tell she was in her right mind."

"Then you think there really was a palace in the valley though I couldn't see it?"

"I don't well know what's *really*, when it comes to houses of gods."

"And what of this lover who comes to her in the dark?"

"I say nothing about him."

"Oh, Bardia — and among the spears men say you're the bravest! Are you afraid even to whisper your thought to me? I am in desperate need of counsel."

"Counsel about what, Lady? What is there to do?"

"How do you read this riddle? Does anyone really come to her?"

"She says so, Lady. Who am I to give the Blessed One the lie?"

"Who is he?"

"She knows that best."

"She knows nothing. She confesses she has never seen him. Bardia, what kind of a lover must this be who forbids his bride to see his face?"

Bardia was silent. He had a pebble between his thumb and forefinger and was drawing little scratches in the earth.

"Well?" said I.

"There doesn't seem to be much of a riddle about it," he said at last.

"Then what's your answer?"

"I should say — speaking as mortal man, and likely enough the gods know better — I should say it was one whose face and form would give her little pleasure if she saw them."

"Some frightful thing?"

"They called her the Bride of the Brute, Lady. But it's time we were riding again. We're not much better than half-way home." He got up as he spoke.

His thought was not new to me; it was only the most horrible of the guesses which had been jostling and wrangling in my head. But the shock of hearing it from his lips lay in this, that I knew he had no doubt of it. I had come to know Bardia very well by now, and I could clearly see that all my difficulty in drawing out his answer came from his fear to say the thing and not from any uncertainty. As he had said, my riddle was no riddle to him. And it was as though all the people of Glome had spoken to me through him. As he thought, so, doubtless, every prudent, god-fearing man of our nation and our time would think too. My other guesses would not even come into their minds; here was the plain answer, clear as noonday. Why seek further? The god and the Shadowbrute were all one. She had been given to it. We had got our rain and water and (as seemed likely) peace with Phars. The gods, for their share, had her away into their secret places where something, so foul it would not show itself, some holy and sickening thing, ghostly or demonlike or bestial — or all three (there's no telling, with gods) — enjoyed her at its will.

I was so dashed that, as we continued our journey, nothing in me even fought against this answer of Bardia's. I felt as, I suppose, a tortured prisoner feels when they dash water in his face to rouse him from his faint, and the truth, worse than all his fantasies, becomes clear and hard and unmistakable again around him. It now seemed to me that all my other guesses had been only self-pleasing dreams spun out of my wishes, but now I was awake. There never had been any riddle; the worst was the truth, and truth as plain as the nose on a man's face. Only terror would have blinded me to it so long.

My hand stole to the sword-hilt under my cloak. Before my sickness, I had sworn that, if there were no other way, I would have killed Psyche rather than leave her to the heat or hunger of a monster. Now again I made a deep resolve. I was half frightened when I perceived what I was resolving. "So it might come even to that," my heart said; even to killing her (Bardia had already taught me the straight thrust, and where to strike). Then my tenderness came over me again, and I cried, never more bitterly, till I could not tell whether it was tears or rain that had most drenched my veil. (It was settling down to steadier rain as the day went on.) And in that tenderness I even asked myself why I should save her from the Brute, or warn her against the Brute, or meddle with the matter at all. "She is happy," said my heart. "Whether it's madness or a god or a monster, or whatever it is, she is

happy. You have seen that for yourself. She is ten times happier, there in the Mountain, than you could ever make her. Leave her alone. Don't spoil it. Don't mar what you've learnt you can't make."

We were down in the foothills now, almost (if one could have seen through the rain) in sight of the house of Ungit. My heart did not conquer me. I perceived now that there is a love deeper than theirs who seek only the happiness of their beloved. Would a father see his daughter happy as a whore? Would a woman see her lover happy as a coward? My hand went back to the sword. "She shall not," I thought. Come what might, she should not. However things might go, whatever the price, by her death or mine or a thousand deaths, by fronting the gods "beard to beard" as the soldiers say. Psyche should not — least of all, contentedly — make sport for a demon.

"We are king's daughters still," I said.

I had hardly said it when I had good cause to remember, in a different fashion, that I was a king's daughter, and what king's. For now we were fording the Shennit again and Bardia (whose mind was ever on next things) was saying that when we had passed the city, and before we had reached the palace, I had best slip off the horse and go up that little lane — where Redival first saw Psyche being worshipped — and so through the gardens and into the women's quarters by the back way. For it was easy to guess how my father would take it if he found that I (supposed too sick to work with him in the Pillar Room) had journeyed to the Holy Tree.

XIII

It was nearly dark in the palace, and as I came to my chamber door a voice said in Greek, “Well?” It was the Fox, who had been squatting there, as my women told me, like a cat at a mouse-hole.

“Alive, Grandfather,” said I, and kissed him. Then, “Come back as soon as you can. I am wet as a fish and must wash and change and eat. I’ll tell you all when you come.”

When I was re-clothed and finishing my supper, his knock came to the door. I made him come and sit with me at table and poured him drink. There was no one with us but little Poobi, my dark-skinned maid, who was faithful and loving and knew no Greek.

“You said *alive*,” the Fox began, raising his cup. “See. I make a libation to Zeus the Saviour.” He did it Greek fashion with a clever twist of the cup that lets fall just one drop.

“Yes, Grandfather, alive and well and says she’s happy.”

“I feel as if my heart would crack for joy, child,” said he. “You tell me things almost beyond belief.”

“You’ve had the sweet, Grandfather. There’s sour to follow.”

“Let me hear it. All is to be borne.”

Then I told him the whole story, always excepting that one glimpse in the fog. It was dreadful to me to see the light die out of his face as I went on, and to feel that I was darkening it. And I asked myself, “If you can hardly bear to do this, how will you bear to wipe out Psyche’s happiness?”

“Alas, alas, poor Psyche!” said the Fox. “Our little child! And how she must have suffered! Hellebore’s the right medicine; with rest, and peace, and loving care . . . oh, we’d bring her into frame again, I don’t doubt it, if we could nurse her well. But how are we to give her all or any of the things she needs? My wits are dry, daughter. We must think, though, contrive. I wish I were Odysseus, aye, or Hermes.”

“You think, then, she’s mad, for certain?”

He darted a quick glance at me. “Why, daughter, what then have you been thinking?”

“You’ll call it folly, I suppose. But you weren’t with her, Grandfather. She talked so calmly. There was nothing disordered in her speech. She

could laugh merrily. Her glance wasn't wild. If I'd had my eyes shut, I would have believed her palace was as real as this."

"But, your eyes being open, you saw no such thing."

"You don't think — not possibly — not as a mere hundredth chance — there might be things that are real though we can't see them?"

"Certainly I do. Such things as Justice, Equality, the Soul, or musical notes."

"Oh, Grandfather, I don't mean things like that. If there are souls, could there not be soul-houses?"

He ran his hands through his hair with an old, familiar gesture of teacher's dismay.

"Child," he said, "you make me believe that, after all these years, you have never even begun to understand what the word *soul* means."

"I know well enough what you mean by it, Grandfather. But do you, even you, know all? Are there no things — I mean *things* — but what we see?"

"Plenty. Things behind our backs. Things too far away. And all things, if it's dark enough." He leaned forward and put his hand on mine. "I begin to think, daughter, that if I can get that hellebore, yours had better be the first dose," he said.

I had had half a thought, at the outset, of telling him about the ferly, my glimpse of the palace. But I couldn't bring myself to it; he was the worst hearer in the world for such a story. Already he was making me ashamed of half the things I had been thinking. And now a more cheering thought came to me.

"Then, perhaps," said I, "this lover who comes to her in darkness is also part of the madness."

"I wish I could believe it," said the Fox.

"Why not, Grandfather?"

"You say she's plump and rosy? not starveling?"

"Never better."

"Then who's fed her all this time?"

I was silenced.

"And who took her out of the irons?"

I had never thought of this question at all. "Grandfather!" I said. "What is in your mind? You — you of all men — are not hinting that it is the god. You'd laugh at me if I said so."

“I’d be more likely to weep. Oh, child, child, child, when shall I have washed the nurse and the grandam and the priest and the soothsayer out of your soul? Do you think the Divine Nature — why, it’s profane, ridiculous. You might as well say the universe itched or the Nature of Things sometimes tippled in the wine cellar.”

“I haven’t said it was a god, Grandfather,” said I. “I am asking who you think it was.”

“A man, a man, of course,” said the Fox, beating his hands on the table. “What? Are you still a child? Didn’t you know there were men on the Mountain?”

“Men!” I gasped.

“Yes. Vagabonds, broken men, outlaws, thieves. Where are your wits?”

Indignation came burning into my cheeks and I sprang up. For any daughter of our house to mix, even in lawful marriage, with those who have not (at least by one grandparent) divine descent, is an utter abomination. The Fox’s thought was unendurable.

“What are you saying?” I asked him. “Psyche would die on sharp stakes sooner than — —”

“Peace, daughter,” said the Fox. “Psyche doesn’t know. As I read it, some robber or runaway has found the poor child, half-crazed with terror and loneliness, and with thirst too (likely enough), and got her out of her irons. And if she were not in her right mind, what would she most probably babble of in her ravings? Her gold and amber house on the Mountain, of course. She has had that fantasy from her childhood. The fellow would fall in with it. He’d be the god’s messenger . . . why, that’s where her god of the westwind comes from. It would be the man himself. He’d take her to this valley. He’d whisper to her that the god, the bridegroom, would come to her that night. And after dark, he’d come back.”

“But the palace?”

“Her old fantasy, raised up by her madness and taken by her for reality. And whatever she tells the rascal about her fine house, he echoes it all. Perhaps adds more of his own. And so the delusion is built up stronger and stronger.”

For the second time that day I was utterly aghast. The Fox’s explanation seemed too plain and evident to allow me any hope of doubt. While Bardia was speaking, his had seemed the same.

“It looks, Grandfather,” said I dully, “as if you had read the riddle right.”

“It needs no Oedipus. But the real riddle’s still to guess. What must we do? Oh, I’m barren, barren. I think your father has addled my brains with beating me about the ears. There must be some way . . . yet we’ve so little time.”

“And so little freedom. I can’t pretend to be on my sick-bed much longer. And once the King knows I’m whole, how shall I ever get to the Mountain again?”

“Oh, for that — but I’d forgotten. There’s been news today. The lions have been seen again.”

“What?” I cried in terror. “On the Mountain?”

“No, no, not so bad as that. Indeed, rather good than bad. Somewhere down south, and west of Ringal. The King will have a great lion-hunt.”

“The lions back . . . so Ungit has played us false after all. Perhaps he’ll sacrifice Redival this time. Is the King in a great rage?”

“Rage? No. Why, you’d think the loss of a herdsman and (what he values far more) some of the best dogs, and I don’t know how many bullocks, was the best news he’d ever heard! I never saw him in better spirits. There’s been nothing in his mouth all day but dogs and beaters and weather . . . and such rummage and bustle — messages to this lord and that lord — deep talks with the huntsman — inspecting of kennels — shoeing of horses — beer flowing like water — even I have been slapped on the back in pure good-fellowship till my ribs ache with it. But what concerns us is that he’ll be out at the hunting the next two days at least. With luck it might be five or six.”

“Then that’s the time we have to work in.”

“No more than that. He goes at daybreak tomorrow. And anyway, we’d have little longer. She’ll die if winter catches her on the Mountain. Living without a roof. And she’ll be with child, no doubt, before we’ve time to look about us.”

It was as if I’d been hit about the heart. “Leprosy and scabs on the man!” I gasped. “Curse him, curse him! Psyche to carry a beggar’s brat? We’ll have him impaled if ever we catch him. He shall die for days. Oh, I could tear his body with my bare teeth.”

“You darken our counsels — and your own soul — with these passions,” said the Fox. “If there were anywhere she could lie hidden (if we could get her)!”

“I had thought,” said I, “we could hide her in Bardia’s house.”

“Bardia! He’d never take one who’s been sacrificed into his house. He’s afraid of his own shadow where gods and old wives’ tales are concerned. He’s a fool.”

“That he is not,” said I; sharply enough, for the Fox often nettled me with his contempt for very brave and honest people if they had no tincture of his Greek wisdom.

“And if Bardia would,” the Fox added, “that wife of his wouldn’t let him. And everyone knows that Bardia’s tied to his wife’s apron-strings.”

“Bardia! And such a man. I couldn’t have believed — —”

“Pah! He’s as amorous as Alcibiades. Why, the fellow married her undowered — for her beauty, if you please. The whole town knows of it. And she rules him like her slave.”

“She must be a very vile woman, Grandfather.”

“What does it matter to us whether she is or no? But you needn’t think to find refuge for our darling in that house. I’ll go further, daughter. There’s nothing for it but to send her right out of Glome. If anyone in Glome knew that she had not died, they would seek her out and sacrifice her again. If we could get her to her mother’s family . . . but I see no way of doing it. Oh Zeus, Zeus, Zeus, if I had ten hoplites and a sane man to command them!”

“I can’t see,” said I, “even how to get her to leave the Mountain. She was obstinate, Grandfather. She obeys me no more. I think we must use force.”

“And we have no force. I am a slave and you are a woman. We can’t lead a dozen spears up the Mountain. And if we could, the secret would never be kept.”

After that we sat silent for a long time; the fire flickering, Poobi sitting cross-legged by the hearth, feeding the logs into it, and playing a strange game of her own people’s with beads (she once tried to teach it to me, but I could never learn). The Fox made as if to speak a dozen times but always checked himself. He was quick to devise plans, but no less quick to see the faults in them.

At last I said, “It all comes to this, Grandfather. I must go back to Psyche. I must overrule her somehow. Once she is on our side, once she knows her shame and danger, then the three of us must devise as best we can. It may be that she and I must go out into the wide world together; wander like Oedipus.”

“And I with you,” said the Fox. “You once bade me run away. This time I’ll do it.”

“One thing’s certain,” said I. “She shall not be left to the felon who has abused her. I will choose any way — any way — rather than that. It rests on me. Her mother’s dead (what mother but me has she ever known?). Her father’s nothing; nothing for a father, and nothing for a king either. The honour of our house — the very being of Psyche — only I am left to care for them. She shall not be left. I’ll — I’ll — —”

“What, child? You are pale! Are you fainting?”

“If there is no other way, I will kill her.”

“Babai!” said the Fox, so loud that Poobi stopped her game and stared at him. “Daughter, daughter. You are transported beyond all reason and nature. Do you know what it is? There’s one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride. The gods know, I love Psyche too. And you know it; you know I love her as well as you do. It’s a bitter grief that our child — our very Artemis and Aphrodite all in one — should live a beggar’s life and lie in a beggar’s arms. Yet even this . . . it is not to be named beside such detested impieties as you speak of. Why, look at it squarely, as reason and nature have made it, not as passion would paint it. To be poor and in hardship, to be a poor man’s wife — —”

“Wife! You mean his trull, his drab, his whore, his slut.”

“Nature knows nothing of these names. What you call marriage is by law and custom, not nature. Nature’s marriage is but the union of the man who persuades with the woman who consents. And so — —”

“The man who persuades — or, more likely, forces or deceives — being some murderer, alien, traitor, runaway slave or other filth?”

“Filth? Perhaps I do not see it as you do. I am an alien and a slave myself; and ready to be a runaway — to risk the flogging and impaling — for your love and hers.”

“You are ten times my father,” said I, raising his hand to my lips. “I meant no such thing. But, Grandfather, there are matters you don’t understand. Psyche said so herself.”

“Sweet Psyche,” he said. “I have often told her so. I am glad she has mastered the lesson. She was ever a good pupil.”

“You don’t believe in the divine blood of our house,” I said.

“Oh yes. Of all houses. All men are of divine blood, for there is the god in every man. We are all one. Even the man who has taken Psyche. I have called him rascal and villain. Too likely he is. But it may not be. A good man might be an outlaw and a runaway.”

I was silent. All this meant nothing to me.

“Daughter,” said the Fox suddenly (I think no woman, at least no woman who loved you, would have done it). “Sleep comes early to old men. I can hardly keep my eyes open. Let me go. Perhaps we shall see more clearly in the morning.”

What could I do but send him away? This is where men, even the trustiest, fail us. Their heart is never so wholly given to any matter but that some trifle of a meal, or a drink, or a sleep, or a joke, or a girl, may come in between them and it, and then (even if you are a queen) you’ll get no more good out of them till they’ve had their way. In those days I had not yet understood this. Great desolation came over me.

“Everyone goes from me,” I said. “None of them cares for Psyche. She lives at the very outskirts of their thoughts. She is less to them, far less, than Poobi is to me. They think of her a little and then get tired and go to something else; the Fox to his sleep, and Bardia to his doll or scold of a wife. You are alone, Orual. Whatever is to be done, you must devise and do it. No help will come. All gods and mortals have drawn away from you. You must guess the riddle. Not a word will come to you until you have guessed wrong and they all come crowding back to accuse and mock and punish you for it.”

I sent Poobi to bed. Then I did a thing which I think few have done. I spoke to the gods; myself, alone, in such words as came to me, not in a temple, without a sacrifice. I stretched myself face downward on the floor and called upon them with my whole heart. I took back every word I had said against them. I promised anything they might ask of me, if only they would send me a sign. They gave me none. When I began there was red firelight in the room and rain on the roof; when I rose up again the fire had sunk a little lower, and the rain drummed on as before.

Now, when I knew that I was left utterly to myself, I said, “I must do it . . . whatever I do . . . tomorrow. I must, then, rest tonight.” I lay down on the bed. I was in that state when the body is so tired that sleep comes soon, but the mind is in such anguish that it will wake you the moment the body’s sated. It woke me a few hours past midnight, with no least possibility of further sleep in me. The fire was out; the rain had stopped. I went to my window and stood looking out into the gusty blackness, twisting my hair in my fists and my knuckles against my temples, and thought.

My mind was much clearer. I now saw that I had, strangely, taken both Bardia's explanation and the Fox's (each while it lasted) for certain truth. Yet one must be false. And I could not find out which, for each was well rooted in its own soil. If the things believed in Glome were true, then what Bardia said stood; if the Fox's philosophy were true, what the Fox said stood. But I could not find out whether the doctrines of Glome or the wisdom of Greece were right. I was the child of Glome and the pupil of the Fox; I saw that for years my life had been lived in two halves, never fitted together.

I must give up, then, trying to judge between Bardia and my master. And as soon as I said that, I saw (and wondered I had not seen before) that it made no difference. For there was one point on which both agreed. Both thought that some evil or shameful thing had taken Psyche for its own. Murdering thief or spectral Shadowbrute — did it matter which? The one thing neither of them had believed was that anything good or fair came to her in the night. No one but myself had dallied with that thought even for a moment. Why should they? Only my desperate wishes could have made it seem possible. The thing came in darkness and forbade itself to be seen. What lover would shun his bride's eyes unless he had some terrible reason for it?

Even I had thought the opposite only for an instant, while I looked at that likeness of a house across the river.

"It shall not have her," I said. "She shall not lie in those detestable embraces. Tonight must be the last night of that."

Suddenly there rose up before me the memory of Psyche in the mountain valley, brightface, brimming over with joy. My terrible temptation came back; to leave her to that fool-happy dream, whatever came of it, to spare her, not to bring her down from it into misery. Must I be to her an avenging fury, not a gentle mother? And part of my mind now was saying, "Do not meddle. Anything might be true. You are among marvels that you do not understand. Carefully, carefully. Who knows what ruin you might pull down on her head and yours?" But with the other part of me I answered that I was indeed her mother and her father too (all she had of either), that my love must be grave and provident, not slipshod and indulgent, that there is a time for love to be stern. After all, what was she but a child? If the present case were beyond my understanding, how much more must it be beyond hers?

Children must obey. It had hurt me, long ago, when I made the barber pull out the thorn. Had I not none the less done well?

I hardened my resolution. I knew now what (which of two things) I must do; and no later than the day which would soon be breaking. Provided only that Bardia were not going on the lion-hunt; and that I could get him clear of this wife of his. As a man, even in great pain or sorrow, can still be fretted by a fly that buzzes in his face, I was fretted by the thought of this wife, this petted thing, suddenly starting up to delay or to hinder.

I lay down on my bed to wait for morning; calmed and quiet in a way, now that I knew what I would do.

XIV

It seemed long to me before the palace was stirring, though it stirred early because of the King's hunting. I waited till that noise was well begun. Then I rose and dressed in such clothes as I had worn the day before; and took the same urn. This time I put in it a lamp and a little pitcher of oil and a long band of linen about a span and a half broad, such as bridesmaids wear in Glome, wrapped over and over round them. Mine had lain in my chest ever since the marriage night of Psyche's mother. Then I called up Poobi and had food brought to me, of which I ate some, and some I put in the urn under the band. When I knew by the horse-hooves and horns and shoutings that the King's party was gone, I put on my veil and a cloak and went down. I sent the first slave I met to find whether Bardia were gone to the hunting; and if he were in the palace, to send him to me. I waited for him in the Pillar Room. It was a strange freedom to be in there alone; and indeed, amid all my cares, I could not help perceiving how the house was, as it were, lightened and set at liberty by the absence of the King. I thought, from their looks, that all the family felt it.

Bardia came to me.

"Bardia," said I, "I must go again to the Mountain."

"It's impossible you should go with me, Lady," he said. "I was left out of the hunting (ill luck for me) for one purpose only; to watch over the house. I must even lie here at nights till the King's back."

This dashed me very much. "Oh, Bardia," said I, "what shall we do? I am in great straits. It's on my sister's business."

Bardia rubbed his forefinger across his upper lip in a way he had when he was gravelled. "And you can't ride," he said. "I wonder now — but no, that's foolishness. There's no horse to be trusted with a rider that can't ride. And a few days hence won't serve? The best would be to give you another man."

"But, Bardia, it must be you. No one else would be able . . . it's a very secret errand."

"I could let Gram off with you for two days and a night."

"Who is Gram?"

"The small, dark one. He's a good man."

"But can he hold his tongue?"

“It’s more a question if he can ever loosen it. We get hardly ten words from him in as many days. But he’s a true man; true to me, above all, for I once had the chance to do him a good turn.”

“It will not be like going with you, Bardia.”

“It’s the best you can do, Lady, unless you can wait.”

But I said I could not wait, and Bardia had Gram called. He was a thin-faced man, very black-eyed, and (I thought) looked at me as if he feared me. Bardia told him to get his horse and await me where the little lane meets the road into the city.

As soon as he was gone, I said, “Now, Bardia, get me a dagger.”

“A dagger, Lady? And for what?”

“To use as a dagger. Come, Bardia, you know I mean no ill.”

He looked strangely at me, but got it. I put it on, at my belt, where the sword had hung yesterday. “Farewell, Bardia,” said I.

“*Farewell*, Lady? Do you go for longer than a night?”

“I don’t know, I don’t know,” said I. Then, all in haste, and leaving him to wonder, I went out and went on foot, by the lane and joined Gram. He set me up on the horse (touching me, unless it was my fantasy, as one who touched a snake or a witch) and we began.

Nothing could be less like than that day’s journey and the last. I never got more than “Yes, Lady”, or “No, Lady”, out of Gram all day. There was much rain and even between the showers the wind was wet. There was a grey, driving sky and the little hills and valleys, which had been so distinct with brightness and shade for Bardia and me the other day, were all sunk into one piece. We had started many hours later, and it was nearer evening than noon when we came down from the saddle into that secret valley. And there at last, as if by some trick of the gods (which perhaps it was), the weather cleared; so that it was hard not to think the valley had a sunlight of its own and the blustering rains merely ringed it about as the mountains did.

I brought Gram to the place where Bardia and I had passed the night and told him to await me there, and not to cross the river. “I must go over it myself. It may be I shall re-cross it to your side by nightfall, or in the night. But I think that whatever time I spend on this side I will spend over yonder, near the ford. Do not come to me there unless I call you.”

He said, as always, “Yes, Lady”, and looked as if he liked this adventure very little.

I went to the ford; about a long bow-shot from Gram. My heart was still as ice, heavy as lead, cold as earth, but I was free now from all doubting and deliberating. I set my foot on the first stone of the crossing and called Psyche's name. She must have been very close, for almost at once I saw her coming down to the bank. We might have been two images of love, the happy and the stern; she so young, so brightface, joy in her eyes and limbs; I, burdened and resolute, bringing pain in my hand.

"So I spoke truly, Maia," she said as soon as I had crossed the water and we had embraced. "The King has been no hindrance to you, has he? Salute me for a prophetess!"

This startled me a moment, for I had forgotten her foretelling. But I put it aside to be thought of later. Now, I had my work to do; I must not, now of all times, begin doubting and pondering again.

She brought me a little way from the water — I don't know into what part of her phantom palace — and we sat down. I threw back my hood and put off my veil and set down the urn beside me.

"Oh, Orual," said Psyche, "what a storm-cloud in your face! That's how you looked when you were most angry with me as a child."

"Was I ever angry? Ah, Psyche, do you think I ever scolded or denied you without grieving my heart ten times more than yours?"

"Sister, I meant to find no fault with you."

"Then find no fault with me today either. For indeed we must talk very gravely. Now listen, Psyche. Our father is no father. Your mother (peace upon her!) is dead, and you have never seen her kindred. I have been — I have tried to be and still I must be — all the father and mother and kin you have. And all the King too."

"Maia, you have been all this and more since the day I was born. You and the dear Fox are all I ever had."

"Yes, the Fox. I'll have something to say of him too. And so, Psyche, if anyone is to care for you or counsel you or shield you, or if anyone is to tell you what belongs to the honour of our blood, it can be only I."

"But why are you saying all this, Orual? You do not think I have left off loving you because I now have a husband to love as well? If you would understand it, that makes me love you — why, it makes me love everyone and everything — more."

This made me shudder, but I hid it and went on. "I know you love me, Psyche," said I. "And I think I should not live if you didn't. But you must

trust me too."

She said nothing. And now I was right on top of the terrible thing, and it almost struck me dumb. I cast about for ways to begin it.

"You spoke last time," I said, "of the day we got the thorn out of your hand. We hurt you that time, Psyche. But we did right. Those who love must hurt. I must hurt you again today. And, Psyche, you are still little more than a child. You cannot go your own way. You will let me rule and guide you."

"Orual, I have a husband to guide me now."

It was difficult not to be angered or terrified by her harping on it. I bit my lip; then said, "Alas, child, it is about that very husband (as you call him) that I must grieve you." I looked straight at her eyes and said sharply, "Who is he? What is he?"

"A god," she said, low and quivering. "And I think, the god of the Mountain."

"Alas, Psyche, you are deceived. If you knew the truth, you would die rather than lie in his bed."

"The truth?"

"We must face it, child. Be very brave. Let me pull out this thorn. What sort of god would he be who dares not show his face?"

"Dares not! You come near to making me angry, Orual."

"But think, Psyche. Nothing that's beautiful hides its face. Nothing that's honest hides its name. No, no, listen. In your heart you must see the truth, however you try to brazen it out with words. Think. Whose bride were you called? The Brute's. And think again. If it's not the Brute, who else dwells in these mountains? Thieves and murderers; men worse than brutes; and lecherous as goats, we may be sure. Are you a prize they'd let pass if you fell in their way? There's your lover, child. Either a monster — shadow and monster in one, maybe, a ghostly, un-dead thing — or a salt villain whose lips, even on your feet or the hem of your robe, would be a stain to our blood."

She was silent a long time, her eyes on her lap.

"And so, Psyche," I began at last, tenderly as I could — but she tossed away the hand that I had laid on hers.

"You mistake me, Orual. If I am pale, it is with anger. There, Sister; I have conquered it. I'll forgive you. You mean — I'll believe you mean — nothing but good. Yet how — or why — you can have blackened and

tormented your soul with such thoughts . . . but no more of that. If ever you loved me, put them away now."

"Blackened my thoughts? They're not only mine. Tell me, Psyche, who are the two wisest men we know?"

"Why, the Fox for one. For the second — I know so few. I suppose Bardia is wise; in his own way."

"You said yourself, that night in the five-walled room, that he was a prudent man. Now, Psyche, these two — so wise and so different — are both agreed with each other and with me concerning this love of yours. Agreed without doubt. All three of us are certain. Either Shadowbrute or felon."

"You have told them my story, Orual? It was ill done. I gave you no leave. My lord gave no leave. Oh, Orual! It was more like Batta than you."

I could not help it if my face reddened with anger, but I would not be turned aside. "Doubtless," I said. "There is no end to the secrecy of this — this *husband* as you call him. Child, has his vile love so turned your brain that you can't see the plainest thing? A god? Yet on your own showing he hides and slinks and whispers 'Mum', and 'Keep counsel', and 'Don't betray me', like a runaway slave."

I am not certain that she had listened to this. What she said was, "The Fox too! That is very strange. I never thought he would have believed in the Brute at all."

I had not said he did. But if that was what she took out of my words, I thought it no part of my duty to set her right. It was an error helping her towards the main truth. I had need of all help to drive her thither.

"Neither he nor I nor Bardia," said I, "believes for one moment in your fancy that it is the god; no more than that this wild heath is a palace. And be sure, Psyche, that if we could ask every man and woman in Glome, all would say the same. The truth is too clear."

"But what is all this to me? How should they know? I am his wife. I know."

"How can you know if you have never seen him?"

"Orual, how can you be so simple? I — how could I not know?"

"But how, Psyche?"

"What am I to answer to such a question? It's not fitting . . . it is . . . and especially to you, Sister, who are a virgin."

That matronly primness, from the child she was, went near to ending my patience. It was almost (but I think now she did not mean it so) as if she taunted me. Yet I ruled myself.

“Well, if you are so sure, Psyche, you will not refuse to put it to the test.”

“What test? Though I need none myself.”

“I have brought a lamp, and oil. See. Here they are.” (I set them down beside her.) “Wait till he — or it — sleeps. Then look.”

“I cannot do that.”

“Ah! . . . you see! You will abide no test. And why? Because you are not sure yourself. If you were, you’d be eager to do it. If he is, as you say, a god, one glimpse will set all our doubts at rest. What you call our dark thoughts will be put to flight. But you daren’t.”

“Oh, Orual, what evil you think! The reason I cannot look at him — least of all by such trickery as you’d have me do — is that he has forbidden me.”

“I can think — Bardia and the Fox can think — of one reason only for such a forbidding. And of one only for your obeying it.”

“Then you know little of love.”

“You fling my virginity in my face again, do you? Better it than the stye you’re in. So be it. Of what you now call love, I do know nothing. You can whisper about it to Redival better than to me — or to Ungit’s girls, maybe, or the King’s doxies. I know another sort of love. You shall find what it’s like. You shall not — —”

“Orual, Orual, you are raving,” said Psyche; herself unangered, gazing at me large-eyed, sorrowful, but nothing humble about her sorrow. You would have thought she was my mother, not I (almost) hers. I had known this long time that the old meek, biddable Psyche was gone for ever; yet it shocked me afresh.

“Yes,” I said. “I was raving. You had made me angry. But I had thought (you will set me right, I don’t doubt, if I am mistaken) that all loves alike were eager to clear the thing they loved of vile charges brought against it; if they could. Tell a mother her child is hideous. If it’s beautiful she’ll show it. No forbidding would stop her. If she keeps it hidden, the charge is true. You’re afraid of the test, Psyche.”

“I am afraid — no, I am ashamed . . . to disobey him.”

“Then, even at the best, look what you make of him! Something worse than our father. Who that loved you could be angry at your breaking so unreasonable a command — and for so good a reason?”

“Foolishness, Orual,” she answered, shaking her head. “He is a god. He has good grounds for what he does, be sure. How should I know of them? I am only his simple Psyche.”

“Then you will not do it? You think — you say you think — that you can prove him a god and set me free from the fears that sicken my heart. But you will not do it.”

“I would if I could, Orual.”

I looked about me. The sun was almost setting behind the saddle. In a little while she would send me away. I rose up.

“An end of this must be made,” I said. “You shall do it. Psyche, I command you.”

“Dear Maia, my duty is no longer to you.”

“Then my life shall end with it,” said I. I flung back my cloak further, thrust out my bare left arm, and struck the dagger into it till the point pricked out on the other side. Pulling the iron back through the wound was the worse pain; but I can hardly believe now how little I felt it.

“Orual! Are you mad?” cried Psyche, leaping up.

“You’ll find linen in that urn. Tie up my wound,” said I, sitting down and holding the arm out to let the blood fall on the heather.

I had thought she might scream and wring her hands or faint. But I was deceived. She was pale enough but had all her wits about her. She bound my arm. The blood came seeping through fold after fold, but she staunched it in the end. (My stroke had been lucky enough. If I had known as much then as I do now about the inside of an arm, I might not — who knows? — have had the resolution to do it.)

The bandaging could not be done in a moment. The sun was lower and the air colder when we were able to talk again.

“Maia,” said Psyche, “what did you do that for?”

“To show you I’m in earnest, girl. Listen. You have driven me to desperate courses. I give you your choice. Swear on this edge, with my blood still wet on it, that you will this very night do as I have commanded you; or else I’ll first kill you and then myself.”

“Orual,” says she, very queenlike, raising her head, “you might have spared that threat of killing me. All your power over me lies in the other.”

“Then swear, girl. You never knew me break my word.”

The look in her face now was one I did not understand. I think a lover — I mean, a man who loved — might look so on a woman who had been false

to him. And at last she said:

“You are indeed teaching me about kinds of love I did not know. It is like looking into a deep pit. I am not sure whether I like your kind better than hatred. Oh, Orual — to take my love for you, because you know it goes down to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other, newer love, and then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture . . . I begin to think I never knew you. Whatever comes after, something that was between us dies here.”

“Enough of your subtleties,” said I. “Both of us die here, in plainest truth and blood, unless you swear.”

“If I do,” said she hotly, “it will not be for any doubt of my husband or his love. It will only be because I think better of him than of you. He cannot be cruel like you. I’ll not believe it. He will know how I was tortured into my disobedience. He will forgive me.”

“He need never know,” said I.

The look of scorn she gave me flayed my soul. And yet, this very nobleness in her — had I not taught it to her? What was there in her that was not my work? And now she used it to look at me as if I were base beneath all baseness.

“You thought I would hide it? Thought I would not tell him?” she said; each word like the rubbing of a file across raw flesh. “Well. It’s all of a piece. Let us, as you say, make an end. You grow more and more a stranger to me at each word. And I had loved you so; loved, honoured, trusted, and (while it was fit) obeyed. And now; but I can’t have your blood, on my threshold. You chose your threat well. I’ll swear. Where’s your dagger?”

So I had won my victory and my heart was in torment. I had a terrible longing to unsay all my words and beg her forgiveness. But I held out the dagger. (The “oath on edge”, as we call it, is our strongest in Glome.)

“And even now,” said Psyche, “I know what I do. I know that I am betraying the best of lovers and that perhaps, before sunrise, all my happiness may be destroyed for ever. This is the price you have put upon your life. Well, I must pay it.”

She took her oath. My tears burst out, and I tried to speak, but she turned her face away.

“The sun is almost down,” she said. “Go. You have saved your life; go and live it as you can.”

I found I was becoming afraid of her. I made my way back to the stream; crossed it somehow. And the shadow of the saddle leaped across the whole valley as the sun set.

XV

I think I must have fainted when I got to this side of the water, for there seems to be some gap in my memory between the fording and being fully aware again of three things: cold, and the pain in my arm, and thirst. I drank ravenously. Then I wanted food, and now first remembered that I had left it in the urn with the lamp. My soul rose up against calling Gram, who was very irksome to me. I felt (though I saw it to be folly even at the time) that if Bardia had come with me instead, all might have been different and better. And away my thoughts wandered to imagine all he would be doing and saying now if he had, till suddenly I remembered what business had brought me there. I was ashamed that I had thought, even for a moment, of anything else.

My purpose was to sit by the ford, watching till I should see a light (which would be Psyche lighting her lamp). It would vanish when she covered and hid it. Then, most likely far later, there would be a light again; she would be looking at her vile master in its sleep. And after that — very, very soon after it, I hoped — there would be Psyche creeping through the darkness and sending a sort of whispered call (“Maia, Maia”) across the stream. And I would be half-way over it in an instant. This time it would be I who helped her at the ford. She would be all weeping and dismayed as I folded her in my arms and comforted her; for now she would know who were her true friends, and would love me again, and would thank me, shuddering, for saving her from the thing the lamp had shown. These were dear thoughts to me when they came and while they lasted.

But there were other thoughts too. Try as I would, I could not quite put out of my head the fear that I had been wrong. A real god . . . was it impossible? But I could never dwell on that part of it. What came back and back to my mind was the thought of Psyche herself somehow (I never knew well how) ruined, lost, robbed of all joy, a wailing, wandering shape, for whom I had wrecked everything. More times than I could count, that night, I had the wish, tyrannously strong, to re-cross the cold water, to shout out that I forgave her her promise, that she was not to light the lamp, that I had advised her wrongly. But I governed it.

Neither the one sort of thoughts nor the other were more than the surface of my mind. Beneath them, deep as the deep ocean-sea whereof the Fox

spoke, was the cold, hopeless abyss of her scorn, her un-love, her very hatred.

How could she hate me, when my arm throbbed and burned with the wound I had given it for her love? “Cruel Psyche, cruel Psyche,” I sobbed. But then I saw that I was falling back to the dreams of my sickness. So I set my wits against it and bestirred myself. Whatever happened I must watch and be sane.

The first light came soon enough; and vanished again. I said to myself — though indeed once I had her oath I never doubted her faith to it— “So. All’s well this far.” It made me wonder, as at a new question, what I meant by *well*. But the thought passed.

The cold grew bitter. My arm was a bar of fire, the rest of me an icicle, chained to that bar but never melted. I began to see that I was doing a perilous thing. I might die, thus wounded and fasting, or at least get such a chill as would bring my death soon after. And out of that seed there grew up, in one moment, a huge, foolish flower of fancies. For at once (leaping over all question of how it should come about) I saw myself laid on the pyre, and Psyche — she knew now, she loved me again now — beating her breast and weeping and repenting all her cruelties. The Fox and Bardia were there too; Bardia wept fast. Everyone loved me once I was dead. But I am ashamed to write all these follies.

What checked them was the next appearing of the light. To my eyes, long swilled with darkness, it seemed brighter than you would have thought possible. Bright and still, a homelike thing in that wild place. And for a time longer than I had expected, it shone and was still, and the whole world was still around it. Then the stillness broke.

The great voice, which rose up from somewhere close to the light, went through my whole body in such a swift wave of terror that it blotted out even the pain in my arm. It was no ugly sound; even in its implacable sternness it was golden. My terror was the salute that mortal flesh gives to immortal things. And after — barely after — the strong soaring of its incomprehensible speech, came the sound of weeping. I think (if those old words have a meaning) my heart broke then. But neither the immortal sound nor the tears of her who wept lasted for more than two heartbeats. Heartbeats, I say; but I think my heart did not beat till they were over.

A great flash laid the valley bare to my eyes. Then it thundered as if the sky broke in two straight above my head. Lightnings, thick-following one

another, pricked the valley, left, right, near and far, everywhere. Each flash showed falling trees; the imagined pillars of Psyche's house were going down. They seemed to fall silently, for the thunder hid their crashing. But there was another noise it could not hide. Somewhere away on my left the walls of the Mountain itself were breaking. I saw (or I think I saw) fragments of rock hurled about and striking on other rocks and rising into the air again like a child's ball that bounces. The river rose, so quickly that I was overtaken by its rush before I could stumble back from it, wet to my middle; but that made little odds, for with the storm there had come a tyrannous pelting rain. Hair and clothes were already a mere sponge.

But, beaten and blinded though I was, I took these things for a good sign. They showed (so it seemed to me) that I was right. Psyche had roused some dreadful thing and these were its ragings. It had waked, she had not hidden her light soon enough; or else — yes, that was most likely — it had only feigned to be sleeping; it might be a thing that never needed sleep. It might, no doubt, destroy both her and me. But she would know. She would, at worst, die undeceived, disenchanted, reconciled to me. Even now, we might escape. Failing that, we could die together. I rose up, bent double under the battery of the rain, to cross the stream.

I believe I could never have crossed it — the deep, foaming death-race it had now become — even if I had been left free to try. I was not left free. There came as if it were a lightning that endured. That is, the look of it was the look of lightning, pale, dazzling, without warmth or comfort, showing each smallest thing with fierce distinctness, but it did not go away. This great light stood over me as still as a candle burning in a curtained and shuttered room. In the centre of the light was something like a man. It is strange that I cannot tell you its size. Its face was far above me, yet memory does not show the shape as a giant's. And I do not know whether it stood, or seemed to stand, on the far side of the water or on the water itself.

Though this light stood motionless, my glimpse of the face was as swift as a true flash of lightning. I could not bear it for longer. Not my eyes only, but my heart and blood and very brain were too weak for that. A monster — the Shadowbrute that I and all Glome had imagined — would have subdued me less than the beauty this face wore. And I think anger (what men call anger) would have been more supportable than the passionless and measureless rejection with which it looked upon me. Though my body crouched where I could almost have touched his feet, his eyes seemed to

send me from him to an endless distance. He rejected, denied, answered, and (worst of all) he knew, all I had thought, done or been. A Greek verse says that even the gods cannot change the past. But is it true? He made it to be as if, from the beginning, I had known that Psyche's lover was a god, and as if all my doubtings, fears, guessings, debatings, questionings of Bardia, questionings of the Fox, all the rummage and business of it, had been trumped-up foolery, dust blown in my own eyes by myself. You, who read my book, judge. Was it so? Or, at least, had it been so in the very past, before this god changed the past? And if they can indeed change the past, why do they never do so in mercy?

The thunder had ceased, I think, the moment the still light came. There was great silence when the god spoke to me. And as there was no anger (what men call anger) in his face, so there was none in his voice. It was unmoved and sweet; like a bird singing on the branch above a hanged man.

"Now Psyche goes out in exile. Now she must hunger and thirst and tread hard roads. Those against whom I cannot fight must do their will upon her. You, woman, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche."

The voice and the light both ended together as if one knife had cut them short. Then, in the silence, I heard again the noise of the weeping.

I never heard weeping like that before or after; not from a child, nor a man wounded in the palm, nor a tortured man, nor a girl dragged off to slavery from a taken city. If you heard the woman you most hate in the world weep so, you would go to comfort her. You would fight your way through fire and spears to reach her. And I knew who wept, and what had been done to her, and who had done it.

I rose to go to her. But already the weeping was further away. She went wailing far off to my right, down to the end of the valley where I had never been, where doubtless it fell away, or dropped in sheer cliffs, towards the south. And I could not cross the stream. It would not even drown me. It would bruise and freeze and bemire me, but somehow whenever I grasped a rock — earth was no use now, for great slabs of the bank were slipping into the current every moment — I found I was still on this side. Sometimes I could not even find the river; I was so bewildered in the dark, and all the ground was now little better than a swamp, so that pools and new-formed brooks lured me now this way, now that.

I cannot remember more of that night. When day began to break, I could see what the god's anger had done to the valley. It was all bare rock, raw earth, and foul water; trees, bushes, sheep, and here and there a deer, floated in it. If I could have crossed the first river in the night it would not have profited me; I should have reached only the narrow bank of mud between it and the next. Even now I could not help calling out Psyche's name, calling till my voice was gone, but I knew it was foolishness. I had heard her leaving the valley. She had already gone into the exile which the god foretold. She had begun to wander, weeping, from land to land; weeping for her lover, not (I mustn't so cheat myself) for me.

I went and found Gram; a wet, shivering wretch he was, who gave one scared glance at my bandaged arm, and no more, and asked no questions. We ate food from the saddle-bags and began our journey. The weather was fair enough.

I looked on the things about me with a new eye. Now that I'd proved for certain that the gods are and that they hated me, it seemed that I had nothing to do but to wait for my punishment. I wondered on which dangerous edge the horse would slip and fling us down a few hundred feet into a gully; or what tree would drop a branch on my neck as we rode under it; or whether my wound would corrupt and I should die that way. Often, remembering that it is sometimes the gods' way to turn us into beasts, I put my hand up under my veil to see if I could feel cat's fur, or dog's muzzle, or hog's tusks beginning to grow there. Yet with it all I was not afraid; never less. It is a strange, yet somehow a quiet and steady thing, to look round on earth and grass and the sky and say in one's heart to each, "You are all my enemies now. None of you will ever do me good again. I see now only executioners."

But I thought it most likely those words *You also shall be Psyche* meant that if she went into exile and wandering, I must do the same. And this, I had thought before, might very easily come about, if the men of Glome had no will to be ruled by a woman. But the god had been wide of the mark — so then they don't know all things? — if he thought he could grieve me most by making my punishment the same as Psyche's. If I could have borne hers as well as my own . . . but next best was to share. And with this I felt a sort of hard and cheerless strength rising in me. I would make a good beggarwoman. I was ugly; and Bardia had taught me how to fight.

Bardia . . . that set me thinking how much of my story I would tell him. Then, how much I would tell the Fox. I had not thought of this at all.

XVI

I crept in by the back parts of the palace and soon learned that my father had not yet come home from the hunting. But I went as soft and slinking to my place as if he had. When it became clear to my own mind (it did not at first) that I was hiding now not from the King but from the Fox, it was a trouble to me. Always before he had been my refuge and comforter.

Poobi cried over my wound and when she had the bandage off — that part was bad — laid good dressings on it. That was hardly done, and I was eating (hungrily enough) when the Fox came.

"Daughter, daughter," he said. "Praise the gods who have sent you back. I have been in pain for you all day. Where have you been?"

"To the Mountain, Grandfather," said I, keeping my left arm out of sight. This was the first of my difficulties. I could not tell him of the self-wounding. I knew, now I saw him (I had not thought of it before), that he would rebuke me for putting that kind of force upon Psyche. One of his maxims was that if we cannot persuade our friends by reasons we must be content "and not bring a mercenary army to our aid". (He meant passions.)

"Oh, child, that was sudden," he said. "I thought we parted that night to talk it over again in the morning."

"We parted to let you sleep," said I. The words came fiercely, without my will and in my father's own voice. Then I was ashamed.

"So that's my sin," said the Fox, smiling sadly. "Well, Lady, you have punished it. But what's your news? Would Psyche hear you?"

I said nothing to that question but told him of the storm and the flood and how that mountain valley was now a mere swamp, and how I had tried to cross the stream and could not, and how I had heard Psyche go weeping away, on the south side of it, out of Glome altogether. There was no use in telling him about the god; he would have thought I had been mad or dreaming.

"Do you mean, child, you never came to speech with her at all?" said the Fox, looking very haggard.

"Yes," I said. "We did talk a little; earlier."

"Child, what is wrong? Was there a quarrel? What passed between you?"

This was harder to answer. In the end, when he questioned me closely, I told him about my plan of the lamp.

“Daughter, daughter!” cried the Fox, “what demon put such a device in your thoughts? What did you hope to do? Would not the villain by her side — he, a hunted man and an outlaw — be certain to wake? And what would he do then but snatch her up and drag her away to some other lair? Unless he stabbed her to the heart for fear she’d betray him to his pursuers. Why, the light alone would convince him she’d betrayed him already. How if it were a wound that made her weep? Oh, if you’d only taken counsel!”

I could say nothing. For now I wondered why indeed I had not thought of any of these things and whether I had ever at all believed her lover was a mountainy man.

The Fox stared at me, wondering more and more, I saw, at my silence. At last he said, “Did you find it easy to make her do this?”

“No,” said I. I had taken off, while I ate, the veil I had worn all day; now I greatly wished I had it on.

“And how did you persuade her?” he asked.

This was the worst of all. I could not tell him what I had really done. Nor much of what I’d said. For when I told Psyche that he and Bardia were both agreed about her lover I meant what was very true; both agreed it was some shameful or dreadful thing. But if I said this to the Fox, he would say that Bardia’s belief and his were sheer contraries, the one all old wives’ tales and the other plain workaday probabilities. He would make it seem that I had lied. I could never make him understand how different it had looked on the Mountain.

“I — I spoke with her,” said I at last. “I persuaded her.”

He looked long and searchingly at me, but never so tenderly since those old days when he used to sing The Moon’s gone down . . . I on his knee.

“Well. You have a secret from me,” he said in the end. “No, don’t turn away from me. Did you think I would try to press or conjure it out of you? Never that. Friends must be free. My tormenting you to find it would build a worse barrier between us than your hiding it. Some day — but you must obey the god within you, not the god within me. There, do not weep. I shall not cease to love you if you have a hundred secrets. I’m an old tree and my best branches were lopped off me the day I became a slave. You and Psyche were all that remained. Now — alas, poor Psyche! I see no way to her now. But I’ll not lose you.”

He embraced me (I bit my lip not to scream when his arm touched the wound) and went away. I had hardly ever before been glad of his going. But

I thought too how much kinder he was than Psyche.

I never told Bardia the story of that night at all.

I made one resolve before I slept, which, though it seems a small matter, made much difference to me in the years that followed. Hitherto, like all my countrywomen, I had gone bareface; on those two journeys up the Mountain I had worn a veil because I wished to be secret. I now determined that I would go always veiled. I have kept this rule, within doors and without, ever since. It is a sort of treaty made with my ugliness. There had been a time in childhood when I didn't yet know I was ugly. Then there was a time (for in this book I must hide none of my shames or follies) when I believed, as girls do — and as Batta was always telling me — that I could make it more tolerable by this or that done to my clothes or my hair. Now, I chose to be veiled. The Fox, that night, was the last man who ever saw my face; and not many women have seen it either.

My arm healed well (and so all wounds have done in my body) and when the King returned, about seven days later, I no longer pretended to be ill. He came home very drunk, for there'd been as much feasting as hunting on that party, and very out of humour, for they had killed only two lions and he'd killed neither and a favourite dog had been ripped up.

A few days later he sent for the Fox and me again to the Pillar Room. As soon as he saw me veiled, he shouted, "Now, girl, what's this? Hung your curtains up, eh? Were you afraid we'd be dazzled by your beauty? Take off that frippery!"

It was then I first found what that night on the Mountain had done for me. No one who had seen and heard the god could much fear this roaring old King.

"It's hard if I'm to be scolded both for my face and for hiding it," said I; putting no hand to the veil.

"Come here," he said, not at all loud this time. I went up and stood so close to his chair that my knees almost touched his, still as a stone. To see his face while he could not see mine seemed to give me a kind of power. He was working himself into one of those white rages.

"Do you begin to set your wits against mine?" he said almost in a whisper.

"Yes," said I, no louder than he, but very clearly. I had not known a moment before what I would do or say; that one little word came out of itself.

He stared at me while you could count seven and I half thought he might stab me dead. Then he shrugged, and snarled out, “Oh, you’re like all women. Talk, talk, talk . . . you’d talk the moon out of the sky if a man’d listen to you. Here, Fox, are those lies you’ve been writing ready for her to copy?”

He never struck me, and I never feared him again. And from that day I never gave back an inch before him. Rather, I pressed on; so well that I told him not long after how impossible it was that I and the Fox should guard Redival if we were to work for him in the Pillar Room. He growled and cursed, yet henceforth he made Batta her jailer. Batta had grown very familiar with him of late and spent many hours in the Bedchamber. Not, I suppose, that he had her to his bed — even in the best of her days she had scarcely been what he called savoury — but she tattled and whispered and flattered him and stirred his possets; for he began to show his years. She was equally thick, for the most part, with Redival; but those were a pair who could be ready to scratch each other’s eyes out one moment, and snuggling up for gossip and bawdy the next.

This, and all other things that were happening in the palace, mattered to me not at all. I was like a condemned man waiting for his executioner, for I believed that some sudden stroke of the gods would fall on me very soon. But as day came after day and nothing happened, I began to see, at first very unwillingly, that I might be doomed to live, and even to live an unchanged life, some while longer.

When I understood this I went to Psyche’s room, alone, and put everything in it as it had been before all our sorrows began. I found some verses in Greek which seemed to be a hymn to the god of the Mountain. These I burned. I did not choose that any of that part of her should remain. Even the clothes that she had worn in the last year I burned also; but those she had worn earlier, and especially what were left of those she wore in childhood, and any jewels she had loved as a child, I hung in their proper places. I wished all to be so ordered that if she could come back she would find all as it had been when she was still happy, and still mine. Then I locked the door and put a seal on it. And, as well as I could, I locked a door in my mind. Unless I were to go mad I must put away all thoughts of her save those that went back to her first, happy years. I never spoke of her. If my women mentioned her name I bade them be silent. If the Fox mentioned

it I was silent myself and led him to other things. There was less comfort than of old in being with the Fox.

Yet I questioned him much about what he called the physical parts of philosophy, about the seminal fire, and how soul arises from blood, and the periods of the universe; and also about plants and animals, and the positions, soils, airs, and governments of cities. I wanted hard things now, and to pile up knowledge.

As soon as my wound was well enough I returned very diligently to my fencing lessons with Bardia. I did it even before my left arm could bear a shield, for he said that fighting without shields was also a skill that ought to be learned. He said (and I now know it was true) that I made very good progress.

My aim was to build up more and more that strength, hard and joyless, which had come to me when I heard the god's sentence; by learning, fighting, and labouring, to drive all the woman out of me. Sometimes at night, if the wind howled or the rain fell, there would leap upon me, like water from a bursting dam, a great and anguished wonder; whether Psyche was alive, and where she was on such a night, and whether hard wives of peasants were turning her, cold and famished, from their door. But then, after an hour or so of weeping and writhing and calling out upon the gods, I would set to and re-build the dam.

Soon Bardia was teaching me to ride on horseback as well as to fence with the sword. He used me, and talked to me, more and more like a man. And this both grieved and pleased me.

So things went on till the Midwinter, which is a great feast in our country. On the day after it the King came home from some revels he had been at in a lord's house, about three hours after noon, and in mounting the steps that go up into the porch he fell. It was so cold that day that the water the house-boys had used for scouring the steps had frozen on them. He fell with his right leg under him across the edge of a step, and when men ran to help him he roared out with pain and was ready to set his teeth in the hands of anyone who touched him. Next minute he was cursing them for leaving him to lie there and freeze. As soon as I came I nodded to the slaves to lift him up and carry him in, whatever he said or did. We got him to his bed, with great agony, and had the barber to him; who said (as we all guessed) that his thigh was broken. "But I've no skill to set it, Lady, even if the King would let my fingers near it." I sent a messenger over to the house of Ungit

to the Second Priest, who had the name of a good surgeon. Before he came the King had filled himself up with enough strong wine to throw a sound man into a fever, and as soon as the Second Priest got his clothes out of the way and began handling the leg, he started screaming like a beast and tried to pluck out his dagger. Then Bardia and I whispered to one another, and we got in six of the guards and held the King down. Between his screams he kept on pointing at me with his eyes (they had his hands fast) and crying out:

"Take her away! Take away that one with the veil. Don't let her torture me. I know who she is. I know."

He had no sleep that night or the day and night after (on top of the pain from his leg, he coughed as if his chest would burst), and whenever our backs were turned Batta would be taking him in more wine. I was not much in the Bedchamber myself, for the sight of me made him frantic. He kept on saying he knew who I was for all my veil.

"Master," said the Fox, "it is only the Princess Orual, your daughter."

"Aye, so she tells you," the King would say. "But I know better. Wasn't she using red-hot iron on my leg all night? I know who she is . . . Aiai! Aiai! Guards! Bardia! Orual! Batta! Take her away!"

On the third night the Second Priest and Bardia and the Fox and I all stood just outside his door and talked in whispers. The Second Priest's name was Arnom; he was a dark man, no older than I, smooth-cheeked as a eunuch (which he cannot have been, for though Ungit has eunuchs, only a weaponed man can hold the full priesthood).

"It's likely," said Arnom, "that this will end in the King's death."

"So," thought I. "This is how it will begin. There'll be a new world in Glome, and if I get off with my life, I shall be driven out. I too shall be a Psyche."

"I think the same," said the Fox. "And it comes at a ticklish time. There's much business before us."

"More than you think, Lysias," said Arnom (I had never heard the Fox called by his real name before). "The house of Ungit is in the very same plight as the King's house."

"What do you mean, Arnom?" said Bardia.

"The Priest is dying at last. If I have any skill, he'll not last five days."

"And you to succeed him?" said Bardia. The priest bowed his head.

"Unless the King forbids," added the Fox. This was good law in Glome.

“It’s very necessary,” said Bardia, “that Ungit and the palace should be of one mind at such a moment. There are those who’d see their chance of setting Glome by the ears otherwise.”

“Yes, very necessary,” said Arnom. “No one will rise against us both.”

“It’s our good fortune,” said Bardia, “that there’s no cause of quarrel between the Queen and Ungit.”

“The Queen?” said Arnom.

“The Queen,” said Bardia and the Fox now both together.

“If only the Princess were married, now!” said Arnom, bowing very courteously. “A woman cannot lead the armies of Glome in war.”

“This Queen can,” said Bardia; and the way he thrust out his lower jaw made him seem a whole army himself. I saw Arnom looking at me hard, and I think my veil served me better than the boldest countenance in the world; maybe better than beauty would have done.

“There is only one difference between Ungit and the King’s house,” he said, “and that concerns the Crumbles. But for the King’s sickness and the Priest’s I would have been here before now to speak of it.”

I knew all about this and saw now where we were. The Crumbles was good land on the far side of the river, and it had been a cat-and-dog quarrel ever since I started working for my father as to whether they belonged, or how much of them belonged, to the King or to Ungit. I had always thought (little cause as I had to love Ungit) that they should belong to her house; which was indeed poorly provided for the charge of continual sacrifices. And I thought too that if once Ungit were reasonably furnished with land, the priests could be stopped from wringing so much out of the common people by way of gifts.

“The King still lives,” said I; I had not spoken before, and my voice surprised them all. “But because of his sickness I am now the King’s mouth. It is his wish to give the Crumbles to Ungit, free and for ever, and the covenant to be cut in stone, upon one condition.”

Bardia and the Fox looked at me with wonder. But Arnom said, “What is that, Lady?”

“That Ungit’s guards be henceforward under the captain of the King’s guard, and chosen by the King (or his successor), and under his obedience.”

“And paid by the King (or his successors) too?” says Arnom quick as lightning.

I had not thought of this stroke, but I judged any resolute answer better than the wisest pondering. “That,” said I, “must be according to the hours of duty they spend in Ungit’s house and here.”

“You drive — that is, the King drives — a hard bargain, Lady,” said the priest. But I knew he would take it, for I knew that Ungit had more need of good land than of spears. Also, it would be hard for Arnom to succeed to the Priesthood if the palace was against him. Then my father began roaring out from within and the priest went back to him.

“Well done, daughter,” whispered the Fox.

“Long live the Queen,” whispered Bardia. Then they both followed Arnom.

I stood outside in the great hall, which was empty, and the fire low. It was as strange a moment as any in my life. To be a queen — that would not sweeten the bitter water against which I had been building the dam in my soul. It might strengthen the dam, though. Then, as a quite different thing, came the thought that my father would be dead. That struck me dizzy. The largeness of a world in which he was not . . . the clear light of a sky in which that cloud would no longer hang . . . freedom. I drew in a long breath; one way, the sweetest I had ever drawn. I came near to forgetting my great central sorrow.

But only for a moment. It was very still, and most of the household was in bed. I thought I heard a sound of weeping; a girl’s weeping; the sound for which always, with or without my will, I was listening. It seemed to come from without, from behind the palace. Instantly crowns and policies and my father were a thousand leagues from my mind. In a torture of hope I went swiftly to the other end of the hall and then out by the little door between the dairy and the guard’s quarters. The moon was shining, but the air was not so still as I thought. And where now was the weeping? Then I thought I heard it again. “Psyche,” I called. “Istra! Psyche!” I went to the sound. Now I was less sure what it was. I remembered that when the chains of the well swung a little (and there had been breeze enough to sway them just now) they could make a noise something like that. Oh, the cheat of it, the bitterness!

I stood and listened. There was no more weeping. But something was moving somewhere. Then I saw a cloaked form dart across a patch of moonlight and bury itself in some bushes. I was after it, quick as I could.

Next moment I plunged my hand in among the branches. Another hand met it.

"Softly, sweetheart," said a voice. "Take me to the King's threshold."

It was a wholly strange voice, and a man's.

XVII

“Who are you?” said I, wrenching my hand free and leaping back as if I had touched a snake. “Come out and show yourself.” My thought was that it must be a lover of Redival’s, and that Batta was playing bawd as well as jailer.

A slender, tall man stepped out. “A suppliant,” he said, but with a merriment in his voice that did not sound like supplication. “And one who never let a pretty girl go without a kiss.”

He’d have had an arm around my neck in a moment if I hadn’t avoided him. Then he saw my dagger point twinkle in the moonlight; and laughed.

“You’ve good eyes if you can see beauty in this face,” said I, turning it on him to make sure he saw the blank wall of the veil.

“Only good ears, sister,” said he. “I’ll bet a girl with a voice like yours is beautiful.”

The whole adventure was, for such a woman as I, so unusual that I almost had a fool’s wish to lengthen it. The very world was strange that night. But I came to my senses.

“Who are you?” I said. “Tell me quick, or I’ll call the guards.”

“I’m no thief, pretty one,” said he, “though I confess you caught me slinking in a thief’s fashion. I thought there might already be some kindred of my own in your garden whom I had no mind to meet. I am a suppliant to the King. Can you bring me to him?” He let me hear a couple of coins jingle in his hand.

“Unless the King’s health mends suddenly, I am the Queen,” said I.

He gave a low whistle and laughed. “If that’s so, Queen,” he said. “I’ve played the fool to admiration. Then it’s your suppliant I am; suppliant for a few nights’ — it might be only one — lodging and protection. I am Trunia of Phars.”

The news struck me almost stupid. I have written before how this prince was at war with his brother Argan and the old king their father.

“Defeated, then?” I said.

“Beaten in a cavalry skirmish,” he said, “and had to ride for it, which would be little odds but that I missed my way and blundered into Glome. And then my horse went lame, not three miles back. The worst of it is, my brother’s strength lies all along the border. If you can hide me for a day or

so — his messengers will be at your door by daybreak, no doubt — so that I can get into Essur and so round to my main army in Phars, I'll soon show him and all the world whether I'm defeated."

"This is all very well, Prince," said I. "But if we receive you as a suppliant we must, by all law, defend you. I'm not so young a queen as to think I can go to war with Phars at this time."

"It's a cold night to lie out," he said.

"You'd be very welcome if you were not a suppliant, Prince. But in that character you're too dangerous. I can give you lodging only as a prisoner."

"Prisoner?" said he. "Then, Queen, good night."

He darted away as if he were not weary at all (though I had heard weariness in his voice) and ran as one who is used to it. But that flight was his undoing. I could have told him where the old millstone lay. He fell sprawling, made to leap up again with wonderful quickness, then gave a sharp hiss of pain, struggled, cursed, and was still.

"Sprained, if not broken," he said. "Plague on the god that invented man's ankle. Well, you may call your spears, Queen. Prisoner it is. And that prison leads to my brother's hangman?"

"We'll save you if we can," said I. "If we can do it any way without full war against Phars, we'll do it."

The guards' quarters were on that side of the house, as I have said, and it was easy enough to go within calling distance of the men and yet keep my eye on the Prince. As soon as I heard them turning out I said, "Pull your hood over your face. The fewer who know my prisoner's name, the freer my hands will be."

They got him up and brought him hobbling into the hall and put him on the settle by the hearth, and I called for wine and victuals to be brought him, and for the barber to bind up his ankle. Then I went into the Bedchamber. Arnom had gone. The King was worse; his face a darker red, his breathing hoarse. It seemed he could not speak; but I wondered, as his eyes wandered from one to another of us three, what he thought and felt.

"Where have you been, daughter?" said the Fox. "Here's terribly weighty news. A post has just ridden in to tell us that Argan of Phars with three — or maybe four — score of horse has crossed the border and now lies but ten miles away. He gives out that he is seeking his brother Trunia."

How quickly we learn to queen or king it! Yesterday I should have cared little how many aliens in arms crossed our borders; tonight, it was as if

someone had struck me in the face.

"And," said Bardia, "whether he really believes that we have Trunia here — or whether he's crossed the border of a crippled land only to make a cheap show of valour and mend his mouldy reputation — either way — —"

"Trunia is here," said I. Before their surprise let them speak, I made them come into the Pillar Room, for I found I could not bear my father's eyes on us. The others seemed to make no more account of him than of a dead man. I ordered lights and fire in the tower room, Psyche's old prison, and that the Prince should be taken there when he had eaten. Then we three went busily to our talking.

On three things we were all of one mind. First, that if Trunia weathered his present misfortune, he was likely enough to beat Argan in the end and rule Phars. The old king was in his dotage and counted for nothing. The longer the broils lasted, the more Trunia's party would probably increase, for Argan was false, cruel, and hated by many, and had, moreover, from his first battle (long before these troubles) an old slur of cowardice upon him which made him contemptible. Second, that Trunia as King of Phars would be a far better neighbour to us than Argan; especially if we had befriended him when he was lowest. But thirdly, that we were in no plight to take on a war with Phars, nor even with Argan's party in Phars; the pestilence had killed too many of our young men and we still had almost no corn.

Then a new thought, as if from nowhere, came scalding hot into my head.

"Bardia," said I, "what is Prince Argan worth as a swordsman?"

"There are two better at this table, Queen."

"And he'd be very chary of doing anything that would revive the old story against his courage?"

"It's to be supposed so."

"Then if we offered him a champion to fight against him for Trunia — pawned Trunia's head on the single combat — he'd be in a manner bound to take it up."

Bardia thought for a time. "Why," he said, "it sounds like something out of an old song. Yet, by the gods, the longer I look at it the better I like it. Weak though we are, he'll not want war with us while he has war at home. Not if we leave him any other choice. And his hope hangs on keeping or getting his people's favour. He has none of it to spare even now. And it's an odious thing to be pursuing his brother at our gates as if he were digging out

a fox. That won't have made him more loved. If on top of it all he refuses the combat, his name will stink worse still. I think your plan has life in it, Queen."

"This is very wise," said the Fox. "Even if our man's killed and we have to hand Trunia over, no man can say we've treated him ill. We save our good name and yet have no war with Phars."

"And if our champion kills Argan," said Bardia, "then we've done the next thing to setting Trunia on the throne and earned a good friend; for all say Trunia's a right-minded man."

"To make it surer still, friends," said I, "let our champion be one so contemptible that it would be shame beneath all shame for Argan to draw back."

"That's too subtle, daughter," said the Fox. "And hard on Trunia. We don't want our man beaten."

"What are you thinking of, Queen?" said Bardia, teasing his moustache in the old way. "We can't ask him to fight a slave, if that's what you mean."

"No. A woman," said I.

The Fox stared in bewilderment. I had never told him of my exercises with the sword, partly because I had a tenderness about mentioning Bardia to him at all, for to hear Bardia called fool or barbarian angered me. (Bardia called the Fox Greekling and "word-weaver" in return, but that never fretted me in the same way.)

"A woman?" said the Fox. "Am I mad, or are you?"

And now a great smile that would do any heart good to see it broke over Bardia's face. But he shook his head.

"I've played chess too long to hazard my Queen," he said.

"What, Bardia?" said I, steadying my voice as best I could. "Were you only flattering when you said I was a better swordsman than Argan?"

"Not so. I'd lay my money on you if it came to a wager. But there's always luck as well as skill in these things."

"And courage too, you'd say."

"I've no fear of you for that, Queen."

"I have no idea what you are both talking about," said the Fox.

"The Queen wants to fight for Trunia herself, Fox," said Bardia. "And she could do it too. We've had scores of matches together. The gods never made anyone — man or woman — with a better natural gift for it. Oh, Lady, Lady, it's a thousand pities they didn't make you a man." (He spoke it

as kindly and heartily as could be; as if a man dashed a gallon of cold water in your broth and never doubted you'd like it all the better.)

"Monstrous — against all custom — and nature — and modesty," said the Fox. On such matters he was a true Greek; he still thought it barbarous and scandalous that the women in our land go bareface. I had sometimes said to him when we were merry that I ought to call him not Grandfather but Grandam. That was another reason why I had never told him of the fencing.

"Nature's hand slipped when she made me anyway," said I. "If I'm to be hard-featured as a man, why shouldn't I fight like a man too?"

"Daughter, daughter," said the Fox. "In mercy to me, if for nothing else, put this horrible thought out of your head. The plan of a champion and a combat was good. How would this folly make it better?"

"It makes it far better," said I. "Do you think I'm so simple as to fancy I'm safe on my father's throne yet? Arnom is with me. Bardia is with me. But what of the nobles and the people? I know nothing of them nor they of me. If either of the King's wives had lived, I suppose I might have known the lords' wives and daughters. My father never let us see them; much less the lords themselves. I have no friends. Is this combat not the very thing to catch their fancy? Won't they like a woman for their ruler better if she has fought for Glome and killed her man?"

"Oh, for that," said Bardia, "it'd be incomparable. There'll be no one but you in their mouths and hearts for a twelvemonth."

"Child, child," said the Fox, his eyes full of tears, "it's your life. Your life. First my home and freedom gone; then Psyche; now you. Will you not leave one leaf on this old tree?"

I could see right into his heart, for I knew he now implored me with the same anguish I had felt when I implored Psyche. The tears that stood in my eyes behind my veil were tears of pity for myself more than for him. I did not let them fall.

"My mind's made up," I said. "And none of you can think of a better way out of our dangers. Do we know where Argan lies, Bardia?"

"At the Red Ford, the post said."

"Then let our herald be sent at once. The fields between the city and the Shennit to be the place of the combat. The time, the third day from now. The terms, these. If I fall, we deliver Trunia to him and condone his unlawful entering into our land. If he falls, Trunia is a free man and has a

safe conduct to go over the border to his own people in Phars or where he will. Either way, all the aliens to be out of the land of Glome in two days."

They both stared and said nothing.

"I'll go to bed now," said I. "See to the sending, Bardia, and then to bed yourself. A good night to you both."

I knew from Bardia's face that he would obey, though he could not bring himself to assent in words. I turned quickly away and went to my own room.

To be alone there and in silence was like coming suddenly under the lee of a wall on a wild, windy day, so that one can breathe and collect oneself again. Ever since Arnom had said, hours ago, that the King was dying, there seemed to have been another woman acting and speaking in my place. Call her the Queen; but Orual was someone different and now I was Orual again. (I wondered if this was how all princes felt.) I looked back on the things the Queen had done and wondered at them. Did that Queen truly think she would kill Argan? I, Orual, as I now saw, did not believe it. I was not even sure that I could fight him. I had never used sharps before; nothing hung on my sham battles but the hope of pleasing my teacher (not that that was a small thing to me either). How would it be if, when the day came, and the trumpets had blown, and the swords were out, my courage failed me? I'd be the mockery of the whole world; I could see the shamed look on the Fox's face, on Bardia's. I could hear them saying, "And yet how bravely her sister went to the offering! How strange that she, who was so meek and gentle, should have been the brave one after all!" And so she would be far above me in everything; in courage as well as in beauty and in those eyes which the gods favoured with sight of things invisible, and even in strength (I remembered her grip when we had wrestled). "She shall not," I said with my whole soul. "Psyche? She's never had a sword in her hand in her life, never done man's work in the Pillar Room, never understood (hardly heard of) affairs of state . . . a girl's life, a child's life. . . ."

I asked myself suddenly what I was thinking. "Can it be my sickness coming back?" I thought. For it began to be like those vile dreams I had had in my ravings when the cruel gods put into my mind the horrible, mad fancy that it was Psyche who was my enemy. Psyche my enemy? — she, my child, the very heart of my heart, whom I had wronged and ruined, for whose sake the gods were right to kill me? And now I saw my challenge to the Prince quite differently. Of course he would kill me. He was the gods'

executioner. And this would be the best thing in the world; far better than some of the dooms I had looked for. All my life must now be a sandy waste; who could have dared to hope it would be so short? And this accorded so well with all my daily thoughts since the god's sentence, that I now wondered how I could have forgotten that sandy waste for the past few hours.

It was queenship that had done it — all those decisions to make, coming pell-mell upon me without a breathing space, and so much hanging on each; all the speed, skill, peril, and dash of the game. I resolved that for the two days left to me I'd queen it with the best of them; and if by any chance Argan didn't kill me, I'd queen it as long as the gods let me. It was not pride — the glitter of the name — that moved me; or not much. I was taking to queenship as a stricken man takes to the wine-pot or as a stricken woman, if she had beauty, might take to lovers. It was an art that left you no time to mope. If Orual could vanish altogether into the Queen, the gods would almost be cheated.

But had Arnom said my father was dying? No; not quite that.

I rose up and went back to his Bedchamber; without a taper, feeling my way along the walls, for I would have been ashamed if anyone saw me. There were still lights in the Bedchamber. They had left Batta to be with him. She sat in his own chair, close to the fire, sleeping the noisy sleep of a sodden old woman. I went over to the bedside. He was seemingly wide awake. Whether the noises he was making were an attempt at speech, who knows? But the look in his eyes, when he saw me, was not to be mistaken. It was terror. Did he know me and think I came to murder him? Did he think I was Psyche come back from the deadlands to bring him down there?

Some will say (perhaps the gods will say) that if I had murdered him indeed, I should have been no less impious than I was. For as he looked at me with fear, so I looked at him; but all my fear was lest he should live.

What do the gods expect of us? My deliverance was now so near. A prisoner may come to bear his dungeon with patience; but if he has almost escaped, tasted his first draught of the free air . . . to be retaken then, to go back to the clanking of that fetter, the smell of that straw?

I looked again at his face; terrified, idiotic, almost an animal's face. A thought of comfort came to me: "Even if he lives, he will never have his mind again."

I went back and slept soundly.

XVIII

Next day I went as soon as I was risen to the Bedchamber to take my first look at the King; for indeed no lover nor doctor ever watched each change of a sick man's breath and pulse so closely as I. While I was still at his bedside (I could see no difference in him) in came Redival, all in a flurry and her face blubbered, and "Oh, Orual," she said, "is the King dying? And what was going on all last night? And who's the young stranger? They say he's a wonderful, handsome man and looks as brave as a lion. Is he a prince? And oh, Sister, what will happen to us if the King dies?"

"I shall be Queen, Redival. Your treatment shall be according to your behaviour."

Almost before the words were out of my mouth she was fawning upon me and kissing my hand and wishing me joy and saying she had always loved me better than anyone in the world. It sickened me. None of the slaves would cringe to me like that. Even when I was angry and they feared me, all knew better than to put on a beggar's whine; there's nothing moves my pity less.

"Don't be a fool, Redival," said I, shoving her away from my hand. "I'm not going to kill you. But if you put your nose out of the house without my leave, I'll have you whipped. Now be off."

At the door she turned and said, "But you'll get me a husband, Queen, won't you?"

"Yes; probably two," said I. "I've a dozen sons of kings hanging in my wardrobe. But go."

Then came the Fox, who looked at the King, muttered, "He might last for days yet," and then said, "Daughter, I did badly last night. I think this offer to fight the Prince yourself is foolish and, what's more, unseemly. But I was wrong to weep and beg and try to force you by your love. Love is not a thing to be so used."

He broke off because just then Bardia came to the door. "Here's a herald back from Argan already, Queen," he said. "Our man met the Prince (curse his insolence) a great deal nearer than ten miles."

We went into the Pillar Room (my father's eyes followed me terribly) and had the herald in. He was a great, tall man, dressed as fine as a peacock. His message, stripped of many high words, was that his master accepted the

combat. But he said his sword should not be stained with woman's blood, so he'd bring a rope with him to hang me when he'd disarmed me.

"That's a weapon in which I profess no skill," said I. "And therefore it's barely justice that your master should bring it. But then he's older than I (his first battle was, I think, long ago), so we'll concede it to make up for his years."

"I can't say that to the Prince, Queen," said the herald.

Then I thought I had done enough (I knew others would hear my gibe even if Argan didn't) and we went orderly to work on all the conditions of the fight and the hundred small things that had to be agreed on. It was the best part of an hour before the herald was gone. The Fox, I could see, was in great pain while all these provisions were being made; the thing growing more real and more irrevocable at each word. I was mostly the Queen now, but Orual would whisper a cold word in the Queen's ear at times.

After that came Arnom, and even before he spoke we knew the old Priest was dead and Arnom had succeeded him. He wore the skins and the bladders, the bird-mark hung at his chest. The sight of all that gave me a sudden shock, like a vile dream, forgotten on waking but suddenly remembered at noon. But my second glance braced me. He would never be terrible like the old Priest. He was only Arnom, with whom I had driven a very good bargain yesterday; there was no feeling that Ungit came into the room with him. And that started strange thoughts in my mind.

But I had no time to follow them. Arnom and the Fox went to the Bedchamber and fell into talk about the King's condition (those two seemed to understand each other well) and Bardia beckoned me out of the room. We went out by the little eastern door, where the Fox and I had gone on the morning Psyche was born, and there paced up and down between the herb-beds while we talked.

"Now, Queen," said he, "this is your first battle."

"And you doubt my courage?"

"Not your courage to be killed, Queen. But you've never killed; and this must be a killing matter."

"What then?"

"Why, just this. Women and boys talk easily about killing a man. Yet, believe me, it's a hard thing to do; I mean, the first time. There's something in a man that goes against it."

"You think I'd pity him?"

“I don’t know if it’s pity. But the first time I did it — it was the hardest thing in the world to make my own hand plunge the sword into all that live flesh.”

“But you did.”

“Yes; my enemy was a bungler. But how if he’d been quick? That’s the danger, you see. There’s a moment when one pause — the fifth part of the time it takes to wink your eye — may lose a chance. And it might be your only chance, and then you’d have lost the battle.”

“I don’t think my hand would delay, Bardia,” said I. I was trying to test it in my mind. I pictured my father, well again, and coming at me in one of his old rages; I felt sure my hand would not fail me to stab him. It had not failed when I stabbed myself.

“We’ll hope not,” said Bardia. “But you must go through the exercise. I make all the recruits do it.”

“The exercise?”

“Yes. You know they’re to kill a pig this morning. You must be the butcher, Queen.”

I saw in a flash that if I shrank from this there would at once be less Queen and more Orual in me.

“I am ready,” said I. I understood the work pretty well, for of course we had seen the slaughtering of beasts ever since we were children. Redival had always watched and always screamed; I had watched less often and held my tongue. So now I went and killed my pig. (We kill pigs without sacrifice, for these beasts are an abomination to Ungit; there is a sacred story that explains why). And I swore that if I came back alive from the combat Bardia and the Fox and Trunia and I should eat the choicest parts of it for our supper. Then, when I had taken off my butcher’s apron and washed, I went back to the Pillar Room; for I had thought of something that must be done, now that my life might be only two days. The Fox was already there; I called Bardia and Arnom for witnesses and declared the Fox free.

Next moment I was plunged in despair. I cannot now understand how I had been so blind as not to foresee it. My only thought had been to save him from being mocked and neglected and perhaps sold by Redival if I were dead. But now, as soon as the other two were done wishing him joy and kissing him on the cheeks, it all broke on me. “You’ll be a loss to our

councils — —” “There are many in Glome who’ll be sorry to see you go — —” “Don’t make your journey in winter — —” What were they saying?

“Grandfather!” I cried, no Queen now; all Orual, even all child. “Do they mean you’ll leave me? Go away?”

The Fox raised towards me a face full of infinite trouble, twitching. “Free?” he muttered. “You mean I could . . . I can . . . it wouldn’t matter much even if I died on the way. Not if I could get down to the sea. There’d be tunnies; olives. No, it’d be too early in the year for olives. But the smell of the harbours. And walking about the market talking; real talk. But you don’t know, this is all foolishness, none of you know. I should be thanking you, daughter. But if ever you loved me, don’t speak to me now. Tomorrow. Let me go.” He pulled his cloak over his head and groped his way out of the room.

And now this game of queenship, which had buoyed me up and kept me busy ever since I woke that morning, failed me utterly. We had made all our preparations for the combat. There was the rest of the day, and the whole of the next, to wait; and hanging over it, this new desolation, that if I lived I might have to live without the Fox.

I went out into the gardens. I would not go up to that plot behind the pear trees; that was where he, and Psyche, and I had often been happiest. I wandered, miserably, out on the other side, on the west of the apple orchard, till the cold drove me in; it was a bitter, black frost that day, with no sun. I am both ashamed and afraid to revive, by writing of them, the thoughts I had. In my ignorance I could not understand the strength of the desire which must be drawing my old master to his own land. I had lived in one place all my life; everything in Glome was to me stale, common, and taken for granted, even filled with memories of dread, sorrow, and humiliation. I had no notion how the remembered home looks to an exile. It embittered me that the Fox should even desire to leave me. He had been the central pillar of my whole life, something (I thought) as sure and established, and indeed as little thanked, as sunrise and the mere earth. In my folly I had thought I was to him as he was to me. “Fool!” said I to myself. “Have you not yet learned that you are that to no one? What are you to Bardia? as much perhaps as the old King was. His heart lies at home with his wife and her brats. If you mattered to him he’d never have let you fight. What are you to the Fox? His heart was always in the Greeklands. You were, maybe, the solace of his captivity. They say a prisoner will tame a rat. He comes to love

the rat; after a fashion. But throw the door open, strike off his fetters, and how much'll he care for the rat then?" And yet, how could he leave us, after so much love? I saw him again with Psyche on his knees. "Prettier than Aphrodite," he had said. "Yes, but that was Psyche," said my heart. "If she were still with us, he would stay. It was Psyche he loved. Never me." I knew while I said it that it was false, yet I would not, or could not, put it out of my head.

But the Fox sought me out before I slept; his face very grey, and his manner very quiet. But that he did not limp, you would have thought he had been in the hands of the torturers. "Wish me well, daughter," he said. "For I have won a battle. What's best for his fellows must be best for a man. I am but a limb of the whole and must work in the socket where I'm put. I'll stay, and — —"

"Oh, Grandfather!" said I, and wept.

"Peace, peace," he said, embracing me. "What would I have done in Greece? My father is dead. My sons have, no doubt, forgotten me. My daughter . . . should I not be only a trouble — *a dream strayed into daylight* as the verse says? Anyhow, it's a long journey and beset with dangers. I might never have reached the sea."

And so he went on, making little of his deed, as if he feared I would dissuade him from it. But I, with my face on his breast, felt only the joy.

I went to look at my father many times that day, but could see no change in him.

That night I slept ill. It was not fear of the combat, but a restlessness that came from the manifold changes which the gods were sending upon me. The old Priest's death, by itself, would have been matter for a week's thought. I had hoped it before (and then, if he had died, it might have saved Psyche) but never really reckoned to see him go more than to wake one morning and find the Grey Mountain gone. The freeing of the Fox, though I had done it myself, felt to me like another impossible change. It was as if my father's sickness had drawn away some prop and the whole world — all the world I knew — had fallen to pieces. I was journeying into a strange, new land. It was so new and strange that I could not, that night, even feel my great sorrow. This astonished me. One part of me made to snatch that sorrow back; it said, "Orual dies if she ceases to love Psyche." But the other said, "Let Orual die. She would never have made a queen."

The last day, the eve of the battle, shows like a dream. Every hour made it more unbelievable. The noise and fame of my combat had got abroad (it was no part of our policy to be secret) and there were crowds of the common people at the palace gates. Though I valued their favour no more than it deserved — I remembered how they had turned against Psyche — yet, willy-nilly, their cheering quickened my pulse and sent a kind of madness into my brain. Some of the better sort, lords and elders, came to wait upon me. They all accepted me for Queen, and I spoke little but, I think, well — Bardia and the Fox praised it — and watched their eyes staring at my veil and manifestly wondering what it hid. Then I went to Prince Trunia in the tower room and told him we had found a champion (I did not say whom) to fight for him and how he would be brought in honourable custody to see the fight. Though this must have been uneasy news for him, he was too just a man not to see that we were using him as well as our weakness would bear. Then I called for wine that we might drink together. But when the door opened — this angered me for the moment — instead of my father's butler it was Redival who came in bearing the flagon and the cup. I was a fool not to have foreseen it. I knew her well enough to guess that once there was a strange man in the house she'd eat her way through stone walls in order to be seen. Yet even I was astonished to see what a meek, shy, modest, dutiful younger sister (perhaps even a somewhat downtrodden and spirit-broken sister) she could make of herself carrying that wine; with her downcast eyes (which missed nothing from Trunia's bandaged foot to the hair of his head) and her child's gravity.

"Who's that beauty?" said Trunia as soon as she was gone.

"That's my sister, the Princess Redival," said I.

"Glome is a rose garden; even in winter," said he. "But why, cruel Queen, do you hide your own face?"

"If you become better known to my sister, she'll doubtless tell you," said I; more sharply than I had intended.

"Why, that might be," said the Prince. "If your champion wins tomorrow; otherwise death's my wife. But if I live, Queen, I wouldn't let this friendship between our houses die away. Why should I not marry into your line? Perhaps yourself, Queen?"

"There's no room for two on my throne, Prince."

"Your sister then?"

It was of course an offer to be seized. Yet for a moment, saying yes to it irked me; most likely because I thought this prince twenty times too good for her.

“For all I can see,” said I, “this marriage can be made. I must speak to my wise men first. For my own part, I like it well.”

The day ended more strangely than it began. Bardia had had me into the quarters for my last practice. “There’s that old fault of yours, Queen,” he said, “in the feint reverse. I think we’ve conquered it; but I must see you perfect.” We went it for half an hour and when we stopped to breathe he said, “That’s as perfect as skill can go. It’s my belief that if you and I were to fight with sharps you’d kill me. But there are two things more to say. This first. If it should happen, Queen — and most likely it won’t happen to you, because of your divine blood — but if it should happen that when your cloak’s off and the crowd’s hushed and you’re walking out into the empty space to meet your man — if you should then feel fear, never heed it. We’ve all felt it at our first fight. I feel it myself before every fight. And the second’s this. That hauberk you’ve been wearing is excellent for weight and fit. But it’s a poor thing to look at. A trace of gilding would suit a queen and a champion better. Let’s see what the Bedchamber has.”

I have said before that the King kept all manner of arms and armours in there. So in we went. The Fox was sitting by the bedside; why, or with what thoughts, I don’t know. It was not possible he should love his old master. “Still no change,” he said. Bardia and I fell to rummaging among the mail, and soon to disputing; for I thought I’d be safer and more limber in the chain-shirt which I knew than in any other, and he kept on saying, “But wait — wait — now here’s a better.” And it was when we were most busied that the Fox’s voice from behind said, “It’s finished.” We turned and looked. The thing on the bed which had been half-alive for so long was dead; had died (if he understood it) seeing a girl ransacking his armoury.

“Peace be upon him,” said Bardia. “We’ll be done here very shortly. Then the women can come and wash the body.” And we turned again at once to settle the matter of the hauberks.

And so the thing that I had thought of for so many years at last slipped by in a huddle of business which was, at that moment, of more consequence. An hour later, when I looked back, it astonished me. Yet I have often noticed since how much less stir nearly everyone’s death makes

than you might expect. Men better loved and more worth loving than my father go down making only a small eddy.

I kept to my old hauberk, but we told the armourer to scour it well, so that it might pass for silver.

XIX

On a great day the thing that makes it great may fill the least part of it, as a meal takes little time to eat, but the killing, baking and dressing, and the swilling and scraping after it, take long enough. My fight with the Prince took about the sixth part of an hour; yet the business about it, more than twelve.

First of all, now that the Fox was a freeman and the Queen's Lantern (so we call it, though my father had let the office sleep) I would have him at the fight and splendidly dressed. But you never had more trouble with a peevish girl going to her first feast. He said all barbarians' clothes were barbarous and the finer the worse. He would go in his old moth-eaten gown. And when we had brought him into some kind of order, then Bardia wanted me to fight without my veil. He thought it would blind me and did not see how it could well be worn either over or under my helmet. But I refused altogether to fight bareface. In the end I had Poobi to stitch me up a hood or mask of fine stuff, but such as could not be seen through; it had two eyeholes and covered the whole helmet. All this was needless, for I had fought Bardia himself in my old veil a dozen times; but the mask made me look very dreadful, as a ghost might look. "If he's the coward they'd make him," said Bardia, "that'll cool his stomach." And then we had to start very early, it seemed, for the crowd in the streets would make us ride slowly. So we had Trunia down and were all presently on horseback. There was some talk of dressing him fine too, but he refused this.

"Whether your champion kills or is killed," he said, "I'll fare no better in purple than in my old battle order. But where is your champion, Queen?"

"You shall see when we come to the field, Prince," said I.

Trunia had started when he first saw me shrouded like a ghost; neither throat nor helmet to be seen, but two eyeholes in a white hummock; scarecrow or leper. I thought his starting boded well how it would taste to Argan.

Several lords and elders waited for us at the gate to bring us through the city. It's easy to guess what I was thinking. So Psyche had gone out that day to heal the people; and so she had gone out that other day to be offered to the Brute. Perhaps, thought I, this is what the god meant when he said *You also shall be Psyche*. I also might be an offering. That was a good, firm

thought to lay hold of. But the thing was so near now that I could think very little of my own death or life. With all those eyes upon me, my only care was to make a brave show both now and in the fight. I'd have given ten talents to any prophet who could have foretold me that I'd fight well for five minutes and then be killed.

The lords who rode nearest me were very grave. I supposed (and indeed one or two confessed as much to me afterwards when I came to know them) they thought Argan would soon have me disarmed, but that my mad challenge was as good a way as any of getting him and Trunia both out of our country. But if the lords were glum, the common people in the streets were huzzaing and throwing caps in the air. It would have puffed me up if I had not looked in their faces. There, I could read their mind easily enough. Neither I nor Glome was in their thoughts. Any fight was a free show for them; and a fight of a woman with a man better still because an oddity; as those who can't tell one tune from another will crowd to hear the harp if a man plays it with his toes.

When at last we got down to the open field by the river there had to be more delays. Arnom was there, in his bird-mask, and there was a bull to be sacrificed; so well the gods have wound themselves into our affairs that nothing can be done but they have their bit. And opposite us, on the far side of the field, were the horsemen of Phars, and Argan sitting on his horse in the midst of them. It was the strangest thing in the world to look upon him, a man like any other man, and think that one of us presently would kill the other. *Kill*; it seemed like a word I'd never spoken before. He was a man with straw-coloured hair and beard, thin, yet somehow bloated, with pouting lips; a very unpleasing person. Then he and I dismounted and came close and each had to taste a tiny morsel of the bull's flesh, and take oaths on behalf of our peoples that all the agreements would be kept.

And now, I thought, surely now they'll let us begin. (There was a pale white sun in a grey sky that day, and a biting wind; "Do they want us to freeze before we fight?" I thought.) But now the people had to be pressed back with the butt-ends of spears, and the field cleared, and Bardia must go across and whisper something to Argan's chief man, and both of them must go and whisper to Arnom, and Argan's trumpeter and mine must be placed side by side.

"Now, Queen," said Bardia suddenly, when I had half despaired of ever getting to the end of the preparations, "the gods guard you."

The Fox was standing with his face set like iron; he would have wept if he had tried to speak. I saw a great shock of surprise come over Trunia (and I never blamed him for turning pale) when I flung off my cloak, drew my sword, and stepped out on to the open grass.

The men from Phars roared with laughter. Our mob cheered. Argan was within ten paces of me, then five; then, we were at it.

I know he began despising me; there was a lazy insolence in his first passes. But I took the skin off his knuckles with one lucky stroke (and maybe numbed his hand a little) and that brought him to his senses. Though my eye never left his sword, yet I somehow saw his face as well. “Cross-patch,” thought I. He had a puckered brow and a sort of blackguardly fretfulness about his lip, which perhaps already masked some fear. For my part, I felt no fear because, now that we were really at it, I did not believe in the combat at all. It was so like all my sham fights with Bardia; the same strokes, feints, deadlocks. Even the blood on his knuckles made no difference; a blunt sword, or the flat of a sword, could have done as much.

You, the Greek for whom I write, may never have fought; or if you did you fought, most likely, as a hoplite. Unless I were with you and had a sword, or at least a stick, in my hand I could not make you understand the course of it. I soon felt sure he could not kill me. But I was less sure I could kill him. I was very afraid lest the thing should last too long and his greater strength would grind me down. What I shall remember for ever is the change that presently came over his face. It was to me an utter astonishment. I did not understand it. I should now. I have since seen the faces of other men as they began to believe, “This is death.” You will know it if you have seen it; life more alive than ever, a raging, tortured intensity of life. Then he made his first bad mistake, and I missed my chance. It seemed a long time (it was a few minutes really) before he made it again. That time I was ready for it. I gave the straight thrust and then, all in one motion, wheeled my sword round and cut him deeply in the inner leg, where no surgery will stop the bleeding. I jumped back of course, lest his fall should bear me down with him; so my first man-killing bespattered me less than my first pig-killing.

People ran to him, but there was no possibility of saving his life. The shouting of the mob dinned in my ears, sounding strange as all things sound when you’re in your helmet. I was scarcely out of breath even; most of my bouts with Bardia had been far longer. Yet I felt of a sudden very weak and

my legs were shaking; and I felt myself changed too, as if something had been taken away from me. I have often wondered if women feel like that when they lose their virginity.

Bardia (the Fox close behind him) came running up to me, with tears in his eyes and joy all over his face. “Blessed! Blessed!” he cried. “Queen! Warrior! My best scholar! Gods, how prettily you did it! A stroke to remember all one’s days.” And he raised my left hand to his lips. I wept hard and kept my head well down so that he should not see the tears dropping from under the mask. But long before I had my voice back they were all about me (Trunia still on horseback because he could not walk) with praises and thanks, till I was almost pestered with it, though a little sweet-sharp prickle of pride thrust up inside me. There was no peace. I must speak to the people, and to the men of Phars. I must, it seemed, do a score of things. And I thought, “Oh, for that bowl of milk, drunk alone in the cool dairy, the first day I ever used a sword!”

As soon as I had my voice I called for my horse, mounted, brought it alongside Trunia’s, and held out my hand to him. Thus we rode forward a few paces and faced the horsemen of Phars.

“Strangers,” said I, “you have seen Prince Argan killed in clean combat. Is there any more debate concerning the succession of Phars?”

About half a dozen of them, who had, no doubt, been Argan’s chief partisans, made no other answer than to wheel about and gallop off. The rest all raised their helmets on their spears and shouted for Trunia and peace. Then I let go his hand, and he rode forward and in among them and was soon talking with their captains.

“Now, Queen,” said Bardia in my ear, “it’s an absolute necessity that you should bid some of our notables and some of those from Phars (the Prince will tell us which) to a feast in the palace. And Arnom too.”

“A feast, Bardia? Of bean-bread? You know we’ve bare larders in Glome.”

“There’s the pig, Queen. And Ungit must let us have a share of the bull; I’ll speak to Arnom of it. You must let the King’s cellar blood to some purpose tonight, and then the bread will be less noticed.” Thus my fancy of a snug supper with Bardia and the Fox was dashed, and my sword not yet wiped from the blood of my first battle before I found myself all woman again and caught up in housewife’s cares. If only I could have ridden away from them all and got to the butler before they reached the palace and

learned what wine we really had! My father (and doubtless Batta) had had enough to swim in during his last few days.

In the end there were five-and-twenty of us (counting in myself) who rode back from that field to the palace. The Prince was at my side, saying all manner of fine things about me (as indeed he had some reason) and always begging me to let him see my face. It was only a kind of courteous banter and would have been nothing to any other woman. To me it was so new and (I must confess this also) so sweet that I could not choose but keep the sport up a little. I had been happy, far happier than I could hope to be again, with Psyche and the Fox, long ago, before our troubles. Now, for the first time in all my life (and the last), I was gay. A new world, very bright, seemed to be opening all round me.

It was of course the gods' old trick; blow the bubble up big before you prick it.

They pricked it a moment after I had crossed the threshold of my house. A little girl whom I'd never seen before, a slave, came out from some corner where she'd been lurking and whispered in Bardia's ear. He had been very merry up till now; the sunlight went out of his face. Then he came up to me, and said, half shamefacedly, "Queen, the day's work is over. You'll not need me now. I'd take it very kindly if you'll let me go home. My wife's taken with her pains. We had thought it could not be so soon. I'd be glad to be with her tonight."

I understood in that moment all my father's rages. I put terrible constraint on myself and said, "Why, Bardia, it is very fit you should. Commend me to your wife. And offer this ring to Ungit for her safe delivery." The ring which I took off my finger was the choicest I had.

His thanks were hearty; yet he had hardly time to utter them before he was speeding away. I suppose he never dreamed what he had done to me with those words the day's work is over. Yes, that was it; the day's work. I was his work; he earned his bread by being my soldier. When his tale of work for the day was done, he went home, like other hired men, and took up his true life.

That night's banquet was the first I had ever been at and the last I ever sat through (we do not lie at table like Greeks but sit on chairs or benches). After this, though I gave many feasts, I never did more than to come in three times and pledge the most notable guests and speak to all and then out again; always with two of my women attending me. This has saved me

much weariness, besides putting about a great notion either of my pride or my modesty which has been useful enough. That night I sat nearly to the end, the only woman in the whole mob of them. Three parts of me was a shamed and frightened Orual who looked forward to a scolding from the Fox for being there at all, and was bitterly lonely; the fourth part was Queen, proud (though dazed too) amid the heat and clamour, sometimes dreaming she could laugh loud and drink deep like a man and a warrior, next moment, more madly, answering to Trunia's daffing, as if her veil hid the face of a pretty woman.

When I got away and up into the cold and stillness of the gallery my head reeled and ached. And "Faugh!" I thought. "What vile things men are!" They were all drunk by now (except the Fox, who had gone early), but their drinking had sickened me less than their eating. I had never seen men at their pleasures before: the gobbling, snatching, belching, hiccuping, the greasiness of it all, the bones thrown on the floor, the dogs quarrelling under our feet. Were all men such? Would Bardia —— ? then back came my loneliness. My double loneliness, for Bardia, for Psyche. Not separable. The picture, the impossible fool's dream, was that all should have been different from the very beginning and he would have been my husband and Psyche our daughter. Then I would have been in labour . . . with Psyche . . . and to me he would have been coming home. But now I discovered the wonderful power of wine. I understand why men become drunkards. For the way it worked on me was not at all that it blotted out these sorrows, but that it made them seem glorious and noble, like sad music, and I somehow great and reverend for feeling them. I was a great, sad queen in a song. I did not check the big tears that rose in my eyes. I enjoyed them. To say all, I was drunk; I played the fool.

And so, to my fool's bed. What was that? No, no, not a girl crying in the garden. No one, cold, hungry, and banished, was shivering there, longing and not daring to come in. It was the chains swinging at the well. It would be folly to get up and go out and call again; Psyche, Psyche, my only love. I am a great queen. I have killed a man. I am drunk like a man. All warriors drink deep after the battle. Bardia's lips on my hand were like the touch of lightning. All great princes have mistresses or lovers. There's the crying again. No, it's only the buckets at the well. Shut the window, Poobi. To your bed, child. Do you love me, Poobi? Kiss me good night. Good night. The

King’s dead. He’ll never pull my hair again. A straight thrust and then a cut in the leg. That would have killed him. I am the Queen; I’ll kill Orual too.

XX

On the next day we burnt the old King; on the day after that we betrothed Redival to Trunia (and the wedding was made a month later); the third day all the strangers rode off and we had the house to ourselves. My real reign began.

I must now pass quickly over many years (though they made up the longest part of my life) during which the Queen of Glome had more and more part in me and Orual had less and less. I locked her up or laid her asleep as best I could somewhere deep down inside me; she lay curled there. It was like being with child, but reversed; the thing I carried in me grew slowly smaller and less alive.

It may happen that someone who reads this book will have heard tales and songs about my reign and my wars and great deeds. Let him be sure that most of it is false, for I know already that the common talk, and especially in neighbouring lands, has doubled and trebled the truth, and my deeds, such as they were, have been mixed up with those of some great fighting queen who lived long ago and (I think) further north, and a fine patchwork of wonders and impossibilities made out of both. But the truth is that after my battle with Argan there were only three wars that I fought, and one of them, the last, against the Wagon Men who live beyond the Grey Mountain, was a very slight thing. And though I rode out with my men in all these wars, I was never such a fool as to think myself a great captain. All that part of it was Bardia's and Penuan's. (I met him first the night after I fought Argan, and he became the trustiest of my nobles). I will also say this: I was never yet at any battle but that, when the lines were drawn up and the first enemy arrows came flashing in among us, and the grass and trees about you suddenly became a place, a Field, a thing to be put in chronicles, I wished very heartily that I had stayed at home. Nor did I ever do any notable deed with my own arm but once. That was in the war with Essur, when some of their horse came out of an ambush and Bardia, riding to his position, was surrounded all in a moment. Then I galloped in and hardly knew what I was doing till the matter was over, and they say I had killed seven men with my own strokes. (I was wounded that day). But to hear the common rumour you would think I had planned every war and every battle and killed more enemies than all the rest of our army put together.

My real strength lay in two things. The first was that I had, and especially for the first years, two very good counsellors. You couldn't have had better yokefellows, for the Fox understood what Bardia did not, and neither cared a straw for his own dignity or advancement when my needs were in question. And I came to understand (what my girl's ignorance had once hidden from me) that their girding and mocking at one another was little more than a sort of game. They were no flatterers either. In this way I had some profit of my ugliness; they did not think of me as a woman. If they had, it is impossible that we three, alone, by the hearth in the Pillar Room (as we were often) should have talked with such freedom. I learned from them a thousand things about men.

My second strength lay in my veil. I could never have believed, till I had proof of it, what it would do for me. From the very first (it began that night in the garden with Trunia) as soon as my face was invisible, people began to discover all manner of beauties in my voice. At first it was "deep as a man's, but nothing in the world less mannish"; later, and until it grew cracked with age, it was the voice of a spirit, a Siren, Orpheus, what you will. And as years passed and there were fewer in the city (and none beyond it) who remembered my face, the wildest stories got about as to what that veil hid. No one believed it was anything so common as the face of an ugly woman. Some said (nearly all the younger women said) that it was frightful beyond endurance; a pig's, bear's, cat's, or elephant's face. The best story was that I had no face at all; if you stripped off my veil you'd find emptiness. But another sort (there were more of the men among these) said that I wore a veil because I was of a beauty so dazzling that if I let it be seen all men in the world would run mad; or else that Ungit was jealous of my beauty and had promised to blast me if I went bareface. The upshot of all this nonsense was that I became something very mysterious and awful. I have seen ambassadors, who were brave men in battle, turn white like scared children in my Pillar Room when I turned and looked at them (and they couldn't see whether I was looking or not) and was silent. I have made the most seasoned liars turn red and blurt out the truth with the same weapon.

The first thing I did was to shift my own quarters over to the north side of the palace, in order to be out of that sound the chains made in the well. For though, by daylight, I knew well enough what made it, at night nothing I could do would cure me of taking it for the weeping of a girl. But the

change of my quarters, and later changes (for I tried every side of the house) did no good. I discovered that there was no part of the palace from which the swinging of those chains could not be heard; at night, I mean, when the silence grows deep. It is a thing no one would have found out who was not always afraid of hearing one sound; and at the same time (that was Orual, Orual refusing to die) terribly afraid of not hearing it if for once — if possibly, at last, after ten thousand mockeries — it should be real, if Psyche had come back. But I knew this was foolishness. If Psyche were alive and able to come back, and wanted to come back, she would have done it long ago. She must be dead by now; or caught by someone and sold into slavery. . . . When that thought came, my only resource was to rise, however late and cold it was, and go to my Pillar Room and find some work. I have read and written there till I could hardly see out of my eyes; my head on fire, my feet aching with cold.

Of course I had my bidders in every slave market, and my seekers in every land that I could reach, and listened to every traveller's tale that might put us on Psyche's track. I did these things for years, but they were infinitely irksome to me for I knew it was all hopeless.

Before I had reigned for a year (I remember the time well, for the men were picking the figs) I had Batta hanged. Following up a chance word which one of the horseboys said in my hearing, I found that she had long been the pest of the whole palace. No trifle could be given to any of the other slaves, and hardly a good bit could come on their trenchers, but Batta must have her share of it; otherwise she'd tell such tales of them as would lead to the whipping-post or the mines. And after Batta was hanged I went on and reduced the household to better order. There were far too many slaves. Some thieves and sluts I sold. Many of the good ones, both men and women, if they were sturdy and prudent (for otherwise to free a slave is but to have a new beggar at your door), I set free, and gave them land and cottages for their livelihood. I coupled them off in pairs and married them. Sometimes I even let them choose their own wives or husbands, which is a strange, unusual way of making even slaves' marriages, and yet it often turned out well enough. Though it was a great loss to me I set Poobi free, and she chose a very good man. Some of my happiest hours have been beside the fire in her cottage. And most of these freed people have become very thriving husbandmen, all living near the palace, and very faithful to me. It was like having a second body of guards.

I set the mines (they are silver mines) on a better footing. My father had never, it seems, thought of them save as a punishment. “Take him to the mines!” he’d say. “I’ll teach him. Work him to death.” But there was more death than work in the mines, and the yield was light. As soon as I could get an honest overseer (Bardia was incomparable for finding out such men) I bought strong, young slaves for the mines, saw that they had dry lodging and good feeding, and let every man know that he should go free when he had, adding day by day, dug so much ore. The tale was such that a steady man could hope for his freedom in ten years; later, we brought it down to seven. This lowered the yield for the first year, but had raised it by a tenth in the third; now, it is half as great again as in my father’s day. Ours is the best silver in all this part of the world, and a great root of our wealth.

I took the Fox out of the wretched dog-hole in which he had slept all these years and gave him noble apartments on the south side of the palace; and land for his living, so that he should not seem to hang by my bounties. I also put money into his hands for the buying (if it should prove possible) of books. It took a long time for traders, perhaps twenty kingdoms away, to learn that there was a vent for books in Glome, and longer still for the books to come up, changing hands many times and often delayed for a year or more on the journey. The Fox tore his hair at the cost of them. “An obol’s worth for a talent,” he said. We had to take what we could get, not what we chose. In this way we built up what was, for a barbarous land, a noble library: eighteen works in all. We had Homer’s poetry about Troy, imperfect, coming down to that place where he brings in Patroclus weeping. We had two tragedies of Euripides, one about Andromeda and another where Dionysus says the prologue and the chorus is the wild women. Also a very good, useful book (without metre) about the breeding and drenching of horses and cattle, the worming of dogs, and such matters. Also, some of the conversations of Socrates; a poem in honour of Helen by Hesias Stesichorus; a book of Heraclitus; and a very long, hard book (without metre) which begins *All men by nature desire knowledge*. As soon as the books began to come in, Arnom would often be with the Fox, learning to read in them; and presently other men, mostly younger sons of nobles, came too.

And now I began to live as a Queen should, and to know my own nobles, and to show courtesies to the great ladies of the land. In this way, of necessity, I came to meet Bardia’s wife, Ansit. I had thought she would be

of dazzling beauty; but the truth is she was very short, and now, having borne eight children, very fat and unshapely. All the women of Glome splay out like that, pretty early in their lives. (That was one thing, perhaps, which helped the fantasy that I had a lovely face behind my veil. Being a virgin, I had kept my shape, and that — if you didn't see my face — was for a long time very tolerable.) I put great force upon myself to be courteous to Ansit; more than courteous, even loving. More than that, I would have loved her indeed, for Bardia's sake, if I could have done it. But she was mute as a mouse in my presence; afraid of me, I thought. When we tried to talk together, her eyes would wander round the room as if she were asking, "Who will deliver me from this?" In a sudden flash, not without joy in it, the thought came to me, "Can she be jealous?" And so it was, through all those years, whenever we met. Sometimes I would say to myself, "She has lain in his bed, and that's bad. She has borne his children, and that's worse. But, has she ever crouched beside him in the ambush? Ever ridden knee to knee with him in the charge? Or shared a stinking water-bottle with him at the thirsty day's end? For all the dove's eyes they've made at one another, was there ever such a glance between them as well-proved comrades exchange in farewell when they ride different ways and both into desperate danger? I have known, I have had, so much of him that she could never dream of. She's his toy, his recreation, his leisure, his solace. I'm in his man's life."

It's strange to think how Bardia went to and fro daily between Queen and wife, well assured he did his duty by both (as he did) and without thought, doubtless, of the pother he made between them. This is what it is to be a man. The one sin the gods never forgive us is that of being born women.

The duty of queenship that irked me most was going often to the house of Ungit and sacrificing. It would have been worse but that Ungit herself (or my pride made me think so) was now weakened. Arnom had opened new windows in the walls and her house was not so dark. He also kept it differently, scouring away the blood after each slaughter and sprinkling fresh water; it smelled cleaner and less holy. And Arnom was learning from the Fox to talk like a philosopher about the gods. The great change came when he proposed to set up an image of her — a woman-shaped image in the Greek fashion — in front of the old shapeless stone. I think he would like to have got rid of the stone altogether, but it is, in a manner, Ungit herself and the people would have gone mad if she were moved; It was a

prodigious charge to get such an image as he wanted, for no one in Glome could make it; it had to be brought, not indeed from the Greeklands themselves, but from lands where men had learned of the Greeks. I was rich now and helped him with silver. I was not quite certain why I did this; I think I felt that an image of this sort would be somehow a defeat for the old, hungry, faceless Ungit whose terror had been over me in childhood. The new image, when at last it came, seemed to us barbarians wonderfully beautiful and lifelike, even when we brought her white and naked into her house; and when we had painted her and put her robes on, she was a marvel to all the lands about and pilgrims came to see her. The Fox, who had seen greater and more beautiful works at home, laughed at her.

I gave up trying to find a room where I should not hear that noise which was sometimes chains swinging in the wind and sometimes lost and beggared Psyche weeping at my door. Instead, I built stone walls round the well and put a thatched roof over it and added a door. The walls were very thick; my mason told me they were madly thick. “You’re wasting enough good stone, Queen,” he said, “to have made ten new pigsties.” For a while after that an ugly fancy used to come to me in my dreams, or between sleeping and waking, that I had walled up, gagged with stone, not a well but Psyche (or Orual) herself. But that also passed. I heard Psyche weeping no more. The year after that I defeated Essur.

The Fox was growing old now and needed rest; we had him less and less in my Pillar Room. He was very busy writing a history of Glome. He wrote it twice, in Greek and in our own tongue, which, he said, he now saw was capable of eloquence. It was strange for me to see our own speech written out in the Greek letters. I never told the Fox that he knew less of it than he believed, so that what he wrote in it was often laughable and most so where he thought it most eloquent. As he grew older he seemed to be ever less and less a philosopher, and to talk more of eloquence, and figures, and poetry. His voice grew always shriller and he talked more and more. He often mistook me for Psyche now; sometimes he called me Crethis, and sometimes even by boys’ names like Charmides or Glaucon.

But I was too busy to be with him much. What did I not do? I had all the laws revised and cut in stone in the centre of the city. I narrowed and deepened the Shennit till barges could come up to our gates. I made a bridge where the old ford had been. I made cisterns so that we should not go thirsty whenever there was a dry year. I became wise about stock and bought in

good bulls and rams and bettered our breeds. I did and I did and I did — and what does it matter what I did? I cared for all these things only as a man cares for a hunt or a game, which fills the mind and seems of some moment while it lasts, but then the beast's killed or the king's mated, and now who cares? It was so with me almost every evening of my life; one little stairway led me from feast or council, all the bustle and skill and glory of queenship, to my own chamber, to be alone with myself; that is, with a nothingness. Going to bed and waking in the morning (I woke, most often, too early) were bad times — so many hundreds of evenings and mornings. Sometimes I wondered who or what sends us this senseless repetition of days and nights and seasons and years; is it not like hearing a stupid boy whistle the same tune over and over, till you wonder how he can bear it himself?

The Fox died and I gave him a kingly funeral and made four Greek verses which were cut on his tomb; I will not write them here lest a true Greek should laugh at them. This happened about the end of harvest. The tomb is up behind the pear trees where he used to teach Psyche and me in summer. Then the days and months and years went on again as before, round and round like a wheel, till there came a day when I looked about me at the gardens and the palace and the ridge of the Grey Mountain out eastward, and thought I could no longer endure to see these same things every day till I died. The very blisters of the pitch on the wooden walls of the byres seemed to be the same ones I had seen before the Fox himself came to Glome. I resolved to go on a progress and travel in other lands. We were at peace with everyone. Bardia and Penuan and Arnom could do all that was needed while I was away; for indeed Glome had now been nursed and trained till it almost ruled itself.

I took with me Bardia's son Ilerdia, and Poobi's daughter Alit, and two of my women and a plump of spears (all honest men), and a cook and a groom with pack animals for the tents and victuals, and rode out of Glome three days later.

XXI

The thing for whose sake I tell of this journey happened at the very end of it; and even when I had thought it was finished. We had gone first into Phars, where they harvest later than we, so that it was like having that piece of the year twice over; we found what we had just left at home — the sound of the whetting, the singing of the reapers, the flats of stubble widening and the squares of standing corn diminishing, the piled wagons in the lanes, all the sweat and sunburn and merriment. We had lain ten nights or more in Trunia's palace, where I was astonished to see how Redival had grown fat and lost her beauty. She talked, as of old, everlastingly, but all about her children, and asked after no one in Glome except Batta. Trunia never listened to a word she said, but he and I had much talk together. I had already settled with my council that his second son, Daaran, was to be King of Glome after my day. This Daaran was (for the son of so silly a mother) a right-minded boy. I could have loved him if I had let myself and if Redival had been out of the way. But I would never give my heart again to any young creature.

Out of Phars we had turned westward into Essur by deep passes through the mountains. This was a country of forests greater than I had yet seen, and rushing rivers, with plenty of birds, deer, and other game. The people I had with me were all young and took great pleasure in their travels, and the journey itself had by now linked us all together; all burned brown, and with a world of hopes, cares, jests, and knowledge, all sprung up since we left home, and shared among us. At first they had been in awe of me and had ridden in silence; now we were good friends. My own heart lifted. The eagles wheeled above us and the waterfalls roared.

From the mountains we came down into Essur and lay three nights in the King's house. He was, I think, not a bad sort of man, but too slavish-courteous to me; for Glome and Phars in alliance had made Essur change her tune. His queen was manifestly terrified by my veil and by the stories she had heard of me. And from that house I had meant to turn homewards, but we were told of a natural hot spring fifteen miles further to the west. I knew Ilerdia longed to see it; and I thought (between sadness and smiling) how the Fox would have scolded me if I had been so near any curious work

of nature and not examined it. So I said we would go the day's journey further and turn then.

It was the calmest day; pure autumn; very hot, yet the sunlight on the stubble looked aged and gentle, not fierce like the summer heats. You would think the year was resting, its work done. And I whispered to myself that I too would begin to rest. When I was back at Glome I would no longer pile task on task. I would let Bardia rest too (I had often thought he began to look tired) and we would let younger heads be busy, while we sat in the sun and talked of our old battles. What more was there for me to do? Why should I not be at peace? I thought this was the wisdom of old age beginning.

The hot spring (like all such rarities) was only food for stupid wonder. When we had seen it we went further down the warm, green valley in which it rose and found a good camping place between a stream and a wood. While my people were busied with the tents and the horses, I went a little way into the wood and sat there in the coolness. Before long I heard the ringing of a temple bell (all temples, nearly, have bells in Essur) from somewhere behind me. Thinking it would be pleasant to walk a little after so many hours on horseback, I rose and went slowly through the trees to find the temple; very idly, not caring whether I found it or not. But in a few minutes I came out into a mossy place free of trees, and there it was; no bigger than a peasant's hut but built of pure white stone, with fluted pillars in the Greek style. Behind it I could see a small thatched house where, no doubt, the priest lived.

The place itself was quiet enough, but inside the temple there was a far deeper silence and it was very cool. It was clean and empty and there were none of the common temple smells about it, so that I thought it must belong to one of those small, peaceful gods who are content with flowers and fruit for sacrifice. Then I saw it must be a goddess, for there was on the altar the image of a woman, about two feet high, carved in wood; not badly done and all the fairer (to my mind) because there was no painting or gilding but only the natural pale colour of the wood. The thing that marred it was a band or scarf of some black stuff tied round the head of the image so as to hide its face — much like my own veil, but that mine was white.

I thought how much better all this was than the house of Ungit, and how unlike. Then I heard a step behind me and, turning, saw that a man in a

black robe had come in. He was an old man with quiet eyes; perhaps a little simple.

“Does the Stranger want to make an offering to the goddess?” he asked.

I slipped a couple of coins into his hand and asked what goddess she was.

“Istra,” he said.

The name is not so uncommon in Glome and the neighbouring lands that I had much cause to be startled; but I said I had never heard of a goddess called that.

“Oh, that is because she is a very young goddess. She has only just begun to be a goddess. For you must know that, like many other gods, she began by being a mortal.”

“And how was she godded?”

“She is so lately godded that she is still a rather poor goddess, Stranger. Yet for one little silver piece I will tell you the sacred story. Thank you, kind Stranger, thank you. Istra will be your friend for this. Now I tell you the sacred story. Once upon a time in a certain land there lived a king and a queen who had three daughters, and the youngest was the most beautiful princess in the whole world. . . .”

And so he went on, as such priests do, all in a singsong voice, and using words which he clearly knew by heart. And to me it was as if the old man’s voice, and the temple, and I myself and my journey, were all things in such a story; for he was telling the very history of our Istra, of Psyche herself — how Talapal (that’s the Essurian Ungit) was jealous of her beauty and made her to be offered to a brute on a mountain, and how Talapal’s son Ialim, the most beautiful of the gods, loved her and took her away to his secret palace. He even knew that Ialim had there visited her only in darkness and had forbidden her to see his face. But he had a childish reason for that: “You see, Stranger, he had to be very secret because of his mother Talapal. She would have been very angry with him if she had known he had married the woman she most hated in the world.”

I thought to myself, “It’s well for me I didn’t hear this story fifteen years ago; yes, or even ten. It would have reawakened all my sleeping miseries. Now, it moves me hardly at all.” Then, suddenly struck afresh with the queerness of the thing, I asked him, “Where did you learn all this?”

He stared at me as if he didn’t well understand such a question. “It’s the sacred story,” he said. I saw that he was rather silly than cunning and that it

would be useless to question him. As soon as I was silent he went on.

But now all the dreamlike feeling in me suddenly vanished. I was wide awake and I felt the blood rush into my face. He was telling it wrong; hideously and stupidly wrong. First of all, he made it that both Psyche's sisters had visited her in the secret palace of the god (to think of Redival going there!) "And so," he said, "when her two sisters had seen the beautiful palace and been feasted and given gifts, they — —"

"They *saw* the palace?"

"Stranger, you are hindering the sacred story. Of course they saw the palace. They weren't blind. And then — —"

It was as if the gods themselves had first laughed, and then spat, in my face. So this was the shape the story had taken. You may say, the shape the gods had given it. For it must be they who had put it into the old fool's mind or into the mind of some other dreamer from whom he'd learned it. How could any mortal have known of that palace at all? That much of the truth they had dropped into someone's mind, in a dream, or an oracle, or however they do such things. That much; and wiped clean out the very meaning, the pith, the central knot, of the whole tale. Do I not do well to write a book against them, telling what they have kept hidden? Never, sitting on my judgement seat, had I caught a false witness in a more cunning half-truth. For if the true story had been like their story, no riddle would have been set me; there would have been no guessing and no guessing wrong. More than that; it's a story belonging to a different world, a world in which the gods show themselves clearly and don't torment men with glimpses, nor unveil to one what they hide from another, nor ask you to believe what contradicts your eyes and ears and nose and tongue and fingers. In such a world (is there such? it's not ours, for certain) I would have walked aright. The gods themselves would have been able to find no fault in me. And now to tell my story as if I had had the very sight they had denied me . . . is it not as if you told a cripple's story and never said he was lame, or told how a man betrayed a secret but never said it was after twenty hours of torture? And I saw all in a moment how the false story would grow and spread and be told all over the earth; and I wondered how many of the other sacred stories are just such twisted falsities as this.

"And so," the priest was saying, "when these two wicked sisters had made their plan to ruin Istra, they brought her the lamp and — —"

“But why did she — they — want to separate her from the god, if they had seen the palace?”

“They wanted to destroy her *because* they had seen her palace.”

“But why?”

“Oh, because they were jealous. Her husband and her house were so much finer than theirs.”

That moment I resolved to write this book. For years now my old quarrel with the gods had slept. I had come into Bardia’s way of thinking; I no longer meddled with them. Often, though I had seen a god myself, I was near to believing that there are no such things. The memory of his voice and face was kept in one of those rooms of my soul that I didn’t lightly unlock. Now, instantly, I knew I was facing them; I with no strength and they with all; I visible to them, they invisible to me; I easily wounded (already so wounded all my life had been but a hiding and staunching of the wound), they invulnerable; I one, they many. In all these years they had only let me run away from them as far as the cat lets the mouse run; now, snatch! and the claw on me again. Well; I could speak. I could set down the truth. What had never perhaps been done in the world before should be done now. The case against them should be written.

Jealousy! I jealous of Psyche? I sickened not only at the vileness of the lie but at its flatness. It seemed as if the gods had minds just like the lowest of the people. What came easiest to them, what seemed the likeliest and simplest reason to put in a story, was the dull, narrow passion of the beggars’ streets, the temple brothels, the slave, the child, the dog. Could they not lie, if lie they must, better than that?

“. . . and wanders over the earth, weeping, weeping, always weeping.” How long had the old man been going on? That one word rang in my ears as if he had repeated it a thousand times. I set my teeth and my soul stood on guard. A moment more and I should have begun to hear the sound myself again. She would have been weeping in that little wood outside the temple door.

“That’s enough,” I shouted. “Do you think I don’t know a girl cries when her heart breaks? Go on, go on.”

“Wanders, weeping, weeping, always weeping,” he said. “And falls under the power of Talapal, who hates her. And of course Ialim can’t protect her because Talapal is his mother and he’s afraid of her. So Talapal torments Istra and sets her to all manner of hard labours, things that seem impossible.

But when Istra has done them all, then at last Talapal releases her, and she is reunited to Ialim and becomes a goddess. Then we take off her black veil, and I change my black robe for a white one, and we offer — —”

“You mean she will some day be reunited to the god; and you will take off her veil then? When is this to happen?”

“We take off the veil and I change my robe in the spring.”

“Do you think I care what you do? Has the thing itself happened yet or not? Is Istra now wandering over the earth or has she already become a goddess?”

“But, Stranger, the sacred story is about the sacred things; the things we do in the temple. In spring, and all summer, she is a goddess. Then when harvest comes we bring a lamp into the temple in the night and the god flies away. Then we veil her. And all winter she is wandering and suffering; weeping, always weeping. . . .”

He knew nothing. The story and the worship were all one in his mind. He could not understand what I was asking.

“I’ve heard your story told otherwise, old man,” said I. “I think the sister — or the sisters — might have more to say for themselves than you know.”

“You may be sure that they would have plenty to say for themselves,” he replied. “The jealous always have. Why, my own wife now — —”

I saluted him and went out of that cold place into the warmth of the wood. I could see through the trees the red light of the fire my people had already kindled. The sun had set.

I hid all the things I was feeling — and indeed I did not know what they were, except that all the peace of that autumnal journey was shattered — so as not to spoil the pleasure of my people. Next day I understood more clearly. I could never be at peace again till I had written my charge against the gods. It burned me from within. It quickened; I was with book, as a woman is with child.

And so it comes about that I can tell nothing of our journey back to Glome. There were seven or eight days of it, and we passed many notable places in Essur; and in Glome, after we had crossed the border, we saw everywhere such good peace and plenty and such duty and, I think, love towards myself as ought to have gladdened me. But my eyes and ears were shut up. All day, and often all night too, I was recalling every passage of the true story, dragging up terrors, humiliations, struggles, and anguish that I had not thought of for years, letting Orual wake and speak, digging her

almost out of a grave, out of the walled well. The more I remembered, the more still I could remember; often weeping beneath my veil as if I had never been Queen, yet never in so much sorrow that my burning indignation did not rise above it. I was in haste too. I must write it all quickly before the gods found some way to silence me. Whenever, towards evening, Ilerdia pointed and said, “There, Queen, would be a good place for the tents,” I said (before I had thought what I would say), “No, no. We can make three more miles tonight; or five.” Every morning I woke earlier. At first I endured the waiting; fretting myself in the cold mist, listening to the deep-breathed sleep of those young sleepers. But soon my patience would serve me no longer. I took to waking them. I woke them earlier each morning. In the end we were travelling like those who fly from a victorious enemy. I became silent, and this struck the others silent too. I could see they were bewildered and all the comfort of their travels was gone. I suppose they whispered together about the Queen’s moods.

When I reached home, even then I could not set about it so suddenly as I had hoped. All manner of petty work had piled up. And now, when I most needed help, word was sent me that Bardia was a little sick and kept his bed. I asked Arnom about Bardia’s sickness, and Arnom said, “It’s neither poison nor fever, Queen; a small matter for a strong man. But he’d best not rise. He’s ageing, you know.” It would have given me a thrust of fear but that I already knew (and had seen growing signs of it lately) how that wife of his cockered and cosseted him, like a hen with one chicken; not, I’d swear, through any true fears, but to keep him at home and away from the palace.

Yet at last, after infinite hindrances, I made my book and here it stands. Now, you who read, judge between the gods and me. They gave me nothing in the world to love but Psyche and then took her from me. But that was not enough. They then brought me to her at such a place and time that it hung on my word whether she should continue in bliss or be cast out into misery. They would not tell me whether she was the bride of a god, or mad, or a brute’s or villain’s spoil. They would give no clear sign, though I begged for it. I had to guess. And because I guessed wrong they punished me; what’s worse, punished me through her. And even that was not enough; they have now sent out a lying story in which I was given no riddle to guess, but knew and saw that she was the god’s bride, and of my own will destroyed her, and that for jealousy. As if I were another Redival. I say the gods deal very

unrightly with us. For they will neither (which would be best of all) go away and leave us to live our own short days to ourselves, nor will they show themselves openly and tell us what they would have us do. For that too would be endurable. But to hint and hover, to draw near us in dreams and oracles, or in a waking vision that vanishes as soon as seen, to be dead silent when we question them and then glide back and whisper (words we cannot understand) in our ears when we most wish to be free of them, and to show to one what they hide from another; what is all this but cat-and-mouse play, blindman's buff, and mere jugglery? Why must holy places be dark places?

I say, therefore, that there is no creature (toad, scorpion, or serpent) so noxious to man as the gods. Let them answer my charge if they can. It may well be that, instead of answering, they'll strike me mad or leprous or turn me into beast, bird, or tree. But will not all the world then know (and the gods will know it knows) that this is because they have no answer?

PART TWO

I

Not many days have passed since I wrote those words *No answer*, but I must unroll my book again. It would be better to re-write it from the beginning, but I think there's no time for that. Weakness comes on me fast, and Arnom shakes his head and tells me I must rest. They think I don't know they have sent a message to Daaran.

Since I cannot mend the book, I must add to it. To leave it as it was would be to die perjured; I know so much more than I did about the woman who wrote it. What began the change was the very writing itself. Let no one lightly set about such a work. Memory, once waked, will play the tyrant. I found I must set down (for I was speaking as before judges and must not lie) passions and thoughts of my own which I had clean forgotten. The past which I wrote down was not the past that I thought I had (all these years) been remembering. I did not, even when I had finished the book, see clearly many things that I see now. The change which the writing wrought in me (and of which I did not write) was only a beginning; only to prepare me for the gods' surgery. They used my own pen to probe my wound.

Very early in the writing there came also a stroke from without. While I related my first years, when I wrote how Redival and I built mud houses in the garden, a thousand other things came back into my mind, all about those days when there was no Psyche and no Fox; only I and Redival. Catching tadpoles in the brook, hiding from Batta in the hay, waiting at the door of the hall when our father gave a feast and wheedling titbits out of the slaves as they went in and out. And I thought, how terribly she changed. This, all within my own mind. But then the stroke from without. On top of many other hindrances came word of an embassy from the Great King who lives to the South and East.

"Another plague," said I. And when the strangers came (and there must be hours of talk, and a feast for them afterwards) I liked them none the better for finding that their chief man was a eunuch. Eunuchs are very great men at that court. This one was the fattest man I ever saw, so fat his eyes could hardly see over his cheeks, all shining and reeking with oil, and tricked out with as much doll-finery as one of Ungit's girls. But as he talked and talked I began to think there was a faint likeness in him to someone I had seen long ago. And, as we do, I chased it and gave it up, and chased it

and gave it up again, till suddenly, when I least thought of it, the truth started into my mind and I shouted out, “Tarin!”

“Oh yes, Queen, oh yes,” said he, spiteful-pleased (I thought) and leering. “Oh yes, I was him you called Tarin. Your father did not love me, Queen, did he? But . . . te-hee, te-hee . . . he made my fortune. Oh yes, he set me on the right road. With two cuts of a razor. But for him I should not have been the great man I am now.”

I wished him joy of his advancement.

“Thank you, Queen, thank you. It is very good. And to think (te-hee) that but for your father’s temper I might have gone on carrying a shield in the guard of a little barbarous king whose whole kingdom could be put into one corner of my master’s hunting park and never be noticed! You will not be angry, no?”

I said I had always heard that the Great King had an admirable park.

“And your sister, Queen?” said the eunuch. “Ah, she was a pretty little girl . . . though, te-hee, te-hee, I’ve had finer women through my hands since . . . is she still alive?”

“She is the Queen of Phars,” said I.

“Ah, so. Phars. I remember. One forgets the names of all these little countries. Yes . . . a pretty little girl. I took pity on her. She was lonely.”

“Lonely?” said I.

“Oh yes, yes, very lonely. After the other princess, the baby, came. She used to say, ‘First of all Orual loved me much; then the Fox came and she loved me little; then the baby came and she loved me not at all.’ So she was lonely. I was sorry for her . . . te-hee-hee . . . Oh, I was a fine young fellow then. Half the girls in Glome were in love with me.” I led him back to our affairs of state.

This was only the first stroke, a light one; the first snowflake of the winter that I was entering, regarded only because it tells us what’s to come. I was by no means sure that Tarin spoke truly. I am sure still that Redival was false and a fool. And for her folly the gods themselves cannot blame me; she had that from her father. But one thing was certain; I had never thought at all how it might be with her when I turned first to the Fox and then to Psyche. For it had been somehow settled in my mind from the very beginning that I was the pitiable and ill-used one. She had her gold curls, hadn’t she?

So back to my writing. And the continual labour of mind to which it put me began to overflow into my sleep. It was a labour of sifting and sorting, separating motive from motive and both from pretext; and this same sorting went on every night in my dreams, but in a changed fashion. I thought I had before me a huge, hopeless pile of seeds, wheat, barley, poppy, rye, millet, what not? and I must sort them out and make separate piles, each all of one kind. Why I must do it, I did not know; but infinite punishment would fall upon me if I rested a moment from my labour or if, when all was done, a single seed were in the wrong pile. In waking life a man would know the task impossible. The torment of the dream was that, there, it could conceivably be done. There was one chance in ten thousand of finishing the labour in time, and one in a hundred thousand of making no mistake. It was all but certain I should fail, and be punished; but not certain. And so to it: searching, peering, picking up each seed between finger and thumb. Yet not always finger and thumb. For in some dreams, more madly still, I became a little ant, and the seeds were as big as millstones; and labouring with all my might, till my six legs cracked, I carried them to their places; holding them in front of me as ants do, loads bigger than myself.

One thing that shows how wholly the gods kept me to my two labours, the day's and the night's, is that all this time I hardly gave Bardia a thought, save to grumble at his absence because it meant that I was more hindered in my writing. While the rage of it lasted nothing seemed to matter a straw except finishing my book. Of Bardia I only said (once and again), "Does he mean to slug abed for the rest of his life?" or, "It's that wife of his."

Then there came a day when that last line of the book (*they have no answer*) was still wet, and I found myself listening to Arnom and understanding, as if for the first time, what his looks and voice meant. "Do you mean," I cried, "that the Lord Bardia is in danger?"

"He's very weak, Queen," said the priest. "I wish the Fox were with us. We are bunglers, we of Glome. It seems to me that Bardia has no strength or spirit to fight the sickness."

"Good gods," said I, "why did you not make me understand this before? Ho! Slave! My horse. I will go and see him."

Arnom was an old and trusted counsellor now. He laid his hand on my arm. "Queen," he said gently and very gravely, "it would make him the less likely to recover if you now went to him."

“Do I carry such an infection about me?” said I. “Is there death in my aspect, even through a veil?”

“Bardia is your loyalest and most loving subject,” said Arnom. “To see you would call up all his powers; perhaps crack them. He’d rouse himself to his duty and courtesy. A hundred affairs of state on which he meant to speak to you would crowd into his mind. He’d rack his brains to remember things he has forgotten for these last nine days. It might kill him. Leave him to drowse and dream. It’s his best chance now.”

It was as bitter a truth as I’d ever tasted, but I drank it. Would I not have crouched silent in my own dungeons as long as Arnom bade me if it would add one featherweight to Bardia’s chance of life? Three days I bore it (I, the old fool, with hanging dugs and shrivelled flanks). On the fourth I said, “I can bear it no longer.” On the fifth Arnom came to me, himself weeping, and I knew his tidings without words. And this is a strange folly, that what seemed to me worst of all was that Bardia had died without ever hearing what it would have shamed him to hear. It seemed to me that all would be bearable if, once only, I could have gone to him and whispered in his ear, “Bardia, I loved you.”

When they laid him on the pyre I could only stand by to honour him. Because I was neither his wife nor kin, I might not wail nor beat the breast for him. Ah, if I could have beaten the breast, I would have put on steel gloves or hedgehog skins to do it.

I waited three days, as the custom is, and then went to comfort (so they call it) his widow. It was not only duty and usage that drove me. Because he had loved her she was, in a way, surely enough, the enemy; yet who else in the whole world could now talk to me?

They brought me into the upper room in her house where she sat at her spinning; very pale, but very calm. Calmer than I. Once I had been surprised that she was so much less beautiful than report had made her. Now, in her later years, she had won a new kind of beauty; it was a proud, still sort of face.

“Lady — Ansit,” I said, taking both her hands (she had not time to get them away from me), “what shall I say to you? How can I speak of him and not say that your loss is indeed without measure? And that’s no comfort. Unless you can think even now that it is better to have had and lost such a husband than to enjoy any man else in the world for ever.”

“The Queen does me great honour,” said Ansit, pulling her hands out of mine so as to stand with them crossed on her breast, her eyes cast down, in the court fashion.

“Oh, dear Lady, un-queen me a little, I beseech you. Is it as if you and I had never met till yesterday? After yours (never think I’d compare them) my loss is greatest. I pray you, your seat again. And your distaff; we shall talk better to that movement. And you will let me sit here beside you?”

She sat down and resumed her spinning; her face at rest and her lips a little pursed, very housewifely. She would give me no help.

“It was very unlooked for,” said I. “Did you at first see any danger in this sickness?”

“Yes.”

“Did you so? To me Arnom said it ought to have been a light matter.”

“He said that to me, Queen. He said it would be a light matter for a man who had all his strength to fight it.”

“Strength? But the Lord Bardia was a strong man.”

“Yes; as a tree that is eaten away within.”

“Eaten away? And with what? I never knew this,”

“I suppose not, Queen. He was tired. He had worked himself out; or been worked. Ten years ago he should have given over and lived as old men do. He was not made of iron or brass, but flesh.”

“He never looked nor spoke like an old man.”

“Perhaps you never saw him, Queen, at the times when a man shows his weariness. You never saw his haggard face in early morning. Nor heard his groan when you (because you had sworn to do it) must shake him and force him to rise. You never saw him come home late from the palace, hungry, yet too tired to eat. How should you, Queen? I was only his wife. He was too well-mannered, you know, to nod and yawn in a Queen’s house.”

“You mean that his work —— ?”

“Five wars, thirty-one battles, nineteen embassies, taking thought for this and thought for that, speaking a word in one ear, and another, and another, soothing this man and scaring that and flattering a third, devising, consulting, remembering, guessing, forecasting . . . and the Pillar Room and the Pillar Room. The mines are not the only place where a man can be worked to death.”

This was worse than the worst I had looked for. A flash of anger passed through me, then a horror of misgiving; could it (but that was fantastical) be

true? But the misery of that mere suspicion made my own voice almost humble.

“You speak in your sorrow, Lady. But (forgive me) this is mere fantasy. I never spared myself more than him. Do you tell me a strong man’d break under the burden a woman’s bearing still?”

“Who that knows men would doubt it? They’re harder, but we’re tougher. They do not live longer than we. They do not weather a sickness better. Men are brittle. And you, Queen, were the younger.”

My heart shrivelled up cold and abject within me. “If this is true,” said I, “I’ve been deceived. If he had dropped but a word of it, I’d have taken every burden from him; sent him home for ever, loaded with every honour I could give.”

“You know him little, Queen, if you think he’d ever have spoken that word. Oh, you have been a fortunate queen; no prince ever had more loving servants.”

“I know I have had loving servants. Do you grudge me that? Even now in your grief, will your heart serve you to grudge me that? Do you mock me because that is the only sort of love I ever had or could have? No husband; no child. And you — you who have had all — —”

“All you left me, Queen.”

“Left you, fool? What mad thought is in your mind?”

“Oh, I know well enough that you were not lovers. You left me that. The divine blood will not mix with subjects’, they say. You left me my share. When you had used him, you would let him steal home to me; until you needed him again. After weeks and months at the wars — you and he night and day together, sharing the councils, the dangers, the victories, the soldiers’ bread, the very jokes — he could come back to me, each time a little thinner and greyer and with a few more scars; and fall asleep before his supper was down; and cry out in his dream, ‘Quick, on the right there. The Queen’s in danger.’ And next morning — the Queen’s a wonderful early riser in Glome — the Pillar Room again. I’ll not deny it; I had what you left of him.”

Her look and voice now were such as no woman could mistake.

“What?” I cried. “Is it possible you’re jealous?”

She said nothing.

I sprang to my feet and pulled aside my veil. “Look, look, you fool!” I cried. “Are you jealous of this?”

She started back from me, gazing, so that for a moment I wondered if my face were a terror to her. But it was not fear that moved her. For the first time that prim mouth of hers twitched. The tears began to gather in her eyes. “Oh,” she gasped, “oh. I never knew . . . you also . . .?”

“What?”

“You loved him. You’ve suffered too. We both . . .”

She was weeping; and I. Next moment we were in each other’s arms. It was the strangest thing that our hatred should die out at the very moment she first knew her husband was the man I loved. It would have been far otherwise if he were still alive; but on that desolate island (our blank, un-Bardia’d life) we were the only two castaways. We spoke a language, so to call it, which no one else in the huge heedless world could understand. Yet it was a language only of sobs. We could not even begin to speak of him in words; that would have unsheathed both daggers at once.

The softness did not last. I have seen something like this happen in a battle. A man was coming at me, I at him, to kill. Then came a sudden great gust of wind that wrapped our cloaks over our swords and almost over our eyes, so that we could do nothing to one another but must fight the wind itself. And that ridiculous contention, so foreign to the business we were on, set us both laughing, face to face; friends for a moment, and then at once enemies again and for ever. So here.

Presently (I have no memory how it came about) we were apart again; I now resuming my veil; her face hard and cold.

“Well!” I was saying. “You have made me little better than the Lord Bardia’s murderer. It was your aim to torture me. And you chose your torture well. Be content; you are avenged. But tell me this. Did you speak only to wound, or did you believe what you said?”

“Believe? I do not believe. I know, that your queenship drank up his blood year by year and ate out his life.”

“Then why did you not tell me? A word from you would have sufficed. Or are you like the gods who will speak only when it is too late?”

“Tell you?” she said, looking at me with a sort of proud wonder. “Tell you? And so take away from him his work, which was his life (for what’s any woman to a man and a soldier in the end?) and all his glory and his great deeds? Make a child and a dotard of him? Keep him to myself at that cost? Make him so mine that he was no longer his?”

“And yet — he would have been yours.”

“But I would be his. I was his wife, not his doxy. He was my husband, not my house-dog. He was to live the life he thought best and fittest for a great man; not that which would most pleasure me. You have taken Ilerdia now too. He will turn his back on his mother’s house more and more; he will seek strange lands, and be occupied with matters I don’t understand, and go where I can’t follow, and be daily less mine; more his own and the world’s. Do you think I’d lift up my little finger if lifting it would stop it?”

“And you could — and you can — bear that?”

“You ask that? Oh, Queen Orual, I begin to think you know nothing of love. Or no; I’ll not say that. Yours is Queen’s love, not commoners’. Perhaps you who spring from the gods love like the gods. Like the Shadowbrute. They say the loving and the devouring are all one, don’t they?”

“Woman,” said I, “I saved his life. Thankless fool! You’d have been widowed many a year sooner if I’d not been there one day on the field of Ingarn — and got that wound which still aches at every change of weather. Where are *your* scars?”

“Where a woman’s are when she has borne eight children. Yes. Saved his life. Why, you had use for it. Thrift, Queen Orual. Too good a sword to throw away. Faugh! You’re full fed. Gorged with other men’s lives; women’s too. Bardia’s; mine; the Fox’s; your sister’s; both your sisters’.”

“It’s enough,” I cried. The air in her room was shot with crimson. It came horribly in my mind that if I ordered her to torture and death no one could save her. Arnom would murmur. Ilerdia would turn rebel. But she’d be twisting (cockchafer-like) on a sharp stake before anyone could help her.

Something (if it was the gods, I bless their name) made me unable to do this. I got somehow to the door. Then I turned and said to her:

“If you had spoken thus to my father, he’d have had your tongue cut out.”

“What? Afraid of it?” said she.

As I rode homeward I said to myself, “She shall have her Ilerdia back. He can go and live on his lands. Turn oaf. Grow fat and mumble between his belches about the price of bullocks. I would have made him a great man. Now he shall be nothing. He may thank his mother. She’ll not have need to say again that I devour her men-folk.”

But I did none of these things to Ilerdia.

And now those divine Surgeons had me tied down and were at work. My anger protected me only for a short time; anger wearies itself out and truth comes in. For it was all true; truer than Ansit could know. I had rejoiced when there was a press of work, had heaped up needless work, to keep him late at the palace; plied him with questions for the mere pleasure of hearing his voice. Anything to put off the moment when he would go and leave me to my emptiness. And I had hated him for going. Punished him too. Men have a hundred ways of mocking a man who's thought to love his wife too well, and Bardia was defenceless; everyone knew he'd married an undowered girl, and Ansit boasted that she'd no need (like most) to seek out the ugliest girls in the slave market for her household. I never mocked him myself; but I had endless sleights and contrivances (behind my veil) for pushing the talk in such directions as, I knew, would make others mock him. I hated them for doing it, but I had a bittersweet pleasure at his clouded face. Did I hate him, then? Indeed, I believe so. A love can grow to be nine-tenths hatred and still call itself love. One thing's certain; in my mad midnight fantasies (Ansit dead, or, better still, proved whore, witch, or traitress) when he was at last to be seeking my love, I always had him begin by imploring my forgiveness. Sometimes he had hard work to get it. I would bring him within an ace of killing himself first.

But the result, when all those bitter hours were over, was a strange one. The craving for Bardia was ended. No one will believe this who has not lived long and looked hard, so that he knows how suddenly a passion which has for years been wrapped round the whole heart will dry up and wither. Perhaps in the soul, as in the soil, those growths that show the brightest colours and put forth the most overpowering smell have not always the deepest root. Or perhaps it's age that does it. But most of all, I think, it was this. My love for Bardia (not Bardia himself) had become to me a sickening thing. I had been dragged up and out on to such heights and precipices of truth, that I came into an air where it could not live. It stank; a gnawing greed for one to whom I could give nothing, of whom I craved all. Heaven knows how we had tormented him, Ansit and I. For it needs no Oedipus to guess that, many and many a night, her jealousy of me had welcomed him home, late from the palace, to a bitter hearth.

But when the craving went, nearly all that I called myself went with it. It was as if my whole soul had been one tooth and now that tooth was drawn.

I was a gap. And now I thought I had come to the very bottom and that the gods could tell me no worse.

II

A few days after I had been with Ansit came the rite of the Year's birth. This is when the Priest is shut up in the house of Ungit from sunset, and on the following noon fights his way out and is said to be born. But of course, like all these sacred matters, it is and it is not (so that it was easy for the Fox to show its manifold contradictions). For the fight is with wooden swords, and instead of blood wine is poured over the combatants, and though they say he is shut into the house, it's only the great door to the city and the west that is shut, and the two smaller doors at the other end are open and common worshippers go in and out at will.

When there is a King in Glome he has to go in with the Priest at sunset and remain in the house till the Birth. But it is unlawful for a virgin to be present at the things which are done in the house that night; so I go in, by the north door, only an hour before the Birth. (The others who have to be there are one of the nobles, and one of the elders, and one of the people; chosen in a sacred manner of which I am not allowed to write.)

That year it was a fresh morning, very sweet, with a light wind from the south; and because of that freshness out of doors, I felt it, more than ever, a horrible thing to go into the dark holiness of Ungit's house. I have (I think) said before that Arnom had made it a little lighter and cleaner. But it was still an imprisoning, smothering sort of place; and especially on the morning of the Birth, when there had been censing and slaughtering, and pouring of wine and pouring of blood, and dancing and feasting and towsing of girls, and burning of fat, all night long. There was as much taint of sweat and foul air as (in a mortal's house) would have set the laziest slut to opening windows, scouring, and sweeping.

I came and sat on the flat stone which is my place, opposite the sacred stone which is Ungit herself; the new, woman-shaped image a little on my left. Arnom's seat was on my right. He was in his mask, of course, nodding with weariness. They were beating the drums, but not loud, and otherwise there was silence.

I saw the terrible girls sitting in rows down both sides of the house, each cross-legged at the door of her cell. Thus they sat year after year (and usually barren after a few seasons) till they turned into the toothless crones who were hobbling about the floor, tending fires and sweeping —

sometimes, after a swift glance round, stooping as suddenly as a bird to pick up a coin or a half-gnawed bone and hide it in their gowns. And I thought how the seed of men that might have gone to make hardy boys and fruitful girls was drained into that house, and nothing given back; and how the silver that men had earned hard and needed was also drained in there, and nothing given back; and how the girls themselves were devoured and were given nothing back.

Then I looked at Ungit herself. She had not, like most sacred stones, fallen from the sky. The story was that, at the very beginning, she had pushed her way up out of the earth; a foretaste of, or an ambassador from, whatever things may live and work down there, one below the other, all the way down, under the dark and weight and heat. I have said she had no face; but that meant she had a thousand faces. For she was very uneven, lumpy and furrowed, so that, as when we gaze into a fire, you could always see some face or other. She was now more rugged than ever because of all the blood they had poured over her in the night. In the little clots and chains of it I made out a face; a fancy at one moment, but then, once you had seen it, not to be evaded. A face such as you might see in a loaf, swollen, brooding, infinitely female. It was a little like Batta as I remembered her in certain of her moods. Batta, when we were very small, had her loving moods, even to me. I have run out into the garden to get free — and to get, as it were, freshened and cleansed — from her huge, hot, strong yet flabby-soft embraces, the smothering, engulfing tenacity of her.

“Yes,” I thought, “Ungit is very like Batta today.”

“Arnom,” said I, whispering, “who is Ungit?”

“I think, Queen,” said he (his voice strange out of the mask), “she signifies the earth, which is the womb and mother of all living things.” This was the new way of talking about the gods which Arnom, and others, had learned from the Fox.

“If she is the mother of all things,” said I, “in what way more is she the mother of the god of the Mountain?”

“He is the air and the sky; for we see the clouds coming up from the earth in mists and exhalations.”

“Then why do the stories sometimes say he’s her husband too?”

“That means that the sky by its showers makes the earth fruitful.”

“If that’s all they mean, why do they wrap it up in so strange a fashion?”

“Doubtless,” said Arnom (and I could tell that he was yawning inside the mask, being worn out with his vigil), “doubtless to hide it from the vulgar.”

I would torment him no more, but I said to myself, “It’s very strange that our fathers should first think it worth telling us that rain falls out of the sky, and then, for fear such a notable secret should get out (why not hold their tongues?) wrap it up in a filthy tale so that no one could understand the telling.”

The drums went on. My back began to ache. Presently the little door on my right opened and a woman, a peasant, came in. You could see she had not come for the Birth feast, but on some more pressing matter of her own. She had done nothing (as even the poorest contrive for that feast) to make herself gay, and the tears were wet on her cheeks. She looked as if she had cried all night, and in her hands she held a live pigeon. One of the lesser priests came forward at once, took the tiny offering from her, slit it open with his stone knife, splashed the little shower of blood over Ungit (where it became like dribble from the mouth of the face I saw in her) and gave the body to one of the temple slaves. The peasant woman sank down on her face at Ungit’s feet. She lay there a very long time, so shaking that anyone could tell how bitterly she wept. But the weeping ceased. She rose up on her knees and put back her hair from her face and took a long breath. Then she rose to go, and as she turned I could look straight into her eyes. She was grave enough; and yet (I was very close to her and could not doubt it) it was as if a sponge had been passed over her. The trouble was soothed. She was calm, patient, able for whatever she had to do.

“Has Ungit comforted you, child?” I asked.

“Oh yes, Queen,” said the woman, her face almost brightening, “oh yes. Ungit has given me great comfort. There’s no goddess like Ungit.”

“Do you always pray to *that* Ungit,” said I (nodding toward the shapeless stone), “and not to *that*?” Here I nodded towards our new image, standing tall and straight in her robes and (whatever the Fox might say of it) the loveliest thing our land has ever seen.

“Oh, always this, Queen,” said she. “That other, the Greek Ungit, she wouldn’t understand my speech. She’s only for nobles and learned men. There’s no comfort in her.”

Soon after that it was noon and the sham fight at the western door had to be done and we all came out into the daylight; after Arnom. I had seen often enough before what met us there; the great mob, shouting, “He is born! He

is born!” and whirling their rattles, and throwing wheat-seed into the air; all sweaty and struggling and climbing on one another’s backs to get a sight of Arnom and the rest of us. Today it struck me in a new way. It was the joy of the people that amazed me. There they stood, where they had waited for hours, so pressed together they could hardly breathe, each doubtless with a dozen cares and sorrows upon him (who has not?), yet every man and woman and the very children looking as if all the world was well because a man dressed up as a bird had walked out of a door after striking a few blows with a wooden sword. Even those who were knocked down in the press to see us made light of it and indeed laughed louder than the others. I saw two farmers whom I well knew for bitterest enemies (they’d wasted more of my time when I sat in judgement than half the remainder of my people put together) clap hands and cry, “He’s born!”, brothers for the moment.

I went home and into my own chamber to rest, for now that I am old that sitting on the flat stone wearies me cruelly. I sank into deep thought.

“Get up, girl,” said a voice. I opened my eyes. My father stood beside me. And instantly all the long years of my queenship shrank up small like a dream. How could I have believed in them? How could I ever have thought I should escape from the King? I got up from my bed obediently and stood before him. When I made to put on my veil, he said, “None of that folly, do you hear?” and I laid it obediently aside.

“Come with me to the Pillar Room,” he said.

I followed him down the stair (the whole palace was empty) and we went into the Pillar Room. He looked all round him, and I became very afraid because I felt sure he was looking for that mirror of his. But I had given it to Redival when she became Queen of Phars; and what would he do to me when he learned that I had stolen his favourite treasure? But he went to one corner of the room and found there (which were strange things to find in such a place) two pickaxes and a crowbar. “To your work, goblin,” he said, and made me take one of the picks. He began to break up the paved floor in the centre of the room, and I helped him. It was very hard labour because of the pain in my back. When we had lifted four or five of the big stone flags we found a dark hole, like a wide well, beneath them.

“Throw yourself down,” said the King, seizing me by the hand. And however I struggled, I could not free myself, and we both jumped together. When we had fallen a long way we alighted on our feet, nothing hurt by our fall. It was warmer down here and the air was hard to breathe, but it was not

so dark that I could not see the place we were in. It was another Pillar Room, exactly like the one we had left, except that it was smaller and all made (floor, walls, and pillars) of raw earth. And here also my father looked about him, and once again I was afraid he would ask what I had done with his mirror. But instead, he went into a corner of the earthen room and there found two spades and put one into my hand and said, “Now, work. Do you mean to slug abed all your life?” So then we had to dig a hole in the centre of the room. And this time the labour was worse than before, for what we dug was all tough, clinging clay, so that you had rather to cut it out in squares with the spade than to dig it. And the place was stifling. But at last we had done so much that another black hole opened beneath us. This time I knew what he meant to do to me, so I tried to keep my hand from his. But he caught it and said:

“Do you begin to set your wits against mine? Throw yourself down.”

“Oh no, no, no; no further down; mercy!” said I.

“There’s no Fox to help you here,” said my father. “We’re far below any dens that foxes can dig. There’s hundreds of tons of earth between you and the deepest of them.” Then we leaped down into the hole, and fell further than before, but again alighted unhurt. It was far darker here, yet I could see that we were in yet another Pillar Room; but this was of living rock, and water trickled down the walls of it. Though it was so like the two shallower rooms, this was far the smallest. And as I looked I could see that it was getting smaller still. The roof was closing in on us. I tried to cry out to him, “If you’re not quick, we shall be buried,” but I was smothering and no voice came from me. Then I thought, “He doesn’t care. It’s nothing for him to be buried, for he’s dead already.”

“Who is Ungit?” said he, still holding my hand.

Then he led me across the floor; and, a long way off before we came to it, I saw that mirror on the wall, just where it always had been. At the sight of it my terror increased, and I fought with all my strength not to go on. But his hand had grown very big now and it was as soft and clinging as Batta’s arms, or as the tough clay we had been digging, or as the dough of a huge loaf. I was not so much dragged as sucked along till we stood right in front of the mirror. And in it I saw him, looking as he had looked that other day when he led me to the mirror long ago.

But my face was the face of Ungit as I had seen it that day in her house.

“Who is Ungit?” asked the King.

“I am Ungit.” My voice came wailing out of me and I found that I was in the cool daylight and in my own chamber. So it had been what we call a dream. But I must give warning that from this time onward they so drenched me with seeings that I cannot well discern dream from waking nor tell which is the truer. This vision, anyway, allowed no denial. Without question it was true. It was I who was Ungit. That ruinous face was mine. I was that Batta-thing, that all-devouring, womblike, yet barren, thing. Glome was a web; I the swollen spider, squat at its centre, gorged with men’s stolen lives.

“I will not be Ungit,” said I. I got up, shivering as with fever, from my bed, and bolted the door. I took down my old sword, the very same that Bardia had taught me to use, and drew it. It looked such a happy thing (and it was indeed a most true, perfect, fortunate blade) that tears came into my eyes. “Sword,” said I, “you have had a happy life. You killed Argan. You saved Bardia. Now, for your masterpiece.”

It was all foolishness, though. The sword was too heavy for me now. My grip — think of a veined, claw-like hand, skinny knuckles — was childish. I would never be able to strike home; and I had seen enough of wars to know what a feeble thrust would do. This way of ceasing to be Ungit was now too hard for me. I sat down, the cold, small, helpless thing I was, on the edge of my bed, and thought again.

There must, whether the gods see it or not, be something great in the mortal soul. For suffering, it seems, is infinite, and our capacity without limit.

Of the things that followed I cannot at all say whether they were what men call real or what men call dream. And for all I can tell, the only difference is that what many see we call a real thing, and what one only sees we call a dream. But things that many see may have no taste or moment in them at all, and things that are shown only to one may be spears and waterspouts of truth from the very depth of truth.

The day passed somehow. All days pass, and that’s great comfort; unless there should be some terrible region in the deadlands where the day never passes. But when the house slept I wrapped myself in a dark cloak and took a stick to lean on; for I think the bodily weakness, which I die of now, must have begun about that time. Then a new thought came to me. My veil was no longer a means to be unknown. It revealed me; all men knew the veiled Queen. My disguise now would be to go bareface; there was hardly anyone

who had seen me unveiled. So, for the first time in many years, I went out bareface; showed that face which many had said, more truly than they could know, was too dreadful to be seen. It would have shamed me no more to go buff-naked. For I thought I would look as like Ungit to them as I had seen myself to be in that mirror beneath the earth. As like Ungit? I *was* Ungit; I in her and she in me. Perhaps if any saw me, they would worship me. I had become what the people, and the old Priest, called holy.

I went out, as often before, by the little eastern doorway that opens on the herb-garden. And thence, with endless weariness, through the sleeping city. I thought they would not sleep so sound if they knew what dark thing hobbled past their windows. Once I heard a child cry; perhaps it had dreamed of me. “If the Shadowbrute begins coming down into the city, the people will be greatly afraid,” said the old Priest. If I were Ungit, I might be the Shadowbrute also. For the gods work in and out of one another as of us.

So at last, fainting with weariness, out beyond the city and down to the river; I myself had made it deep. The old Shennit, as she was before my works, would not, save in spate, have drowned even a crone.

I had to go a little way along the river to a place where I knew that the bank was high, so that I could fling myself down; for I doubted my courage to wade in and feel death first up to my knee, and then to my belly, and then to my neck, and still to go on. When I came to the high bank I took my girdle and tied my ankles together with it, lest, even in my old age, I might save my life, or lengthen my death, by swimming. Then I straightened myself, panting from the labour, and stood footfast, like a prisoner.

I hopped (what blending of misery and buffoonery it would have looked if I could have seen it!) — hopped with my strapped feet a little nearer to the edge.

A voice came from beyond the river: “Do not do it.”

Instantly — I had been freezing cold till now — a wave of fire passed over me; even down to my numb feet. It was the voice of a god. Who should know better than I? A god’s voice had once shattered my whole life. They are not to be mistaken. It may well be that, by trickery of priests, men have sometimes taken a mortal’s voice for a god’s. But it will not work the other way. No one who hears a god’s voice takes it for a mortal’s.

“Lord, who are you?” said I.

“Do not do it,” said the god. “You cannot escape Ungit by going to the deadlands, for she is there also. Die before you die. There is no chance

after.”

“Lord, I am Ungit.”

But there was no answer. And that is another thing about the voices of the gods; when once they have ceased, though it is only a heartbeat ago and the bright, hard syllables, the heavy bars or mighty obelisks of sound, are still master in your ears, it is as if they had ceased a thousand years before, and to expect further utterance is like asking for an apple from a tree that fruited the day the world was made.

The voice of the god had not changed in all those years, but I had. There was no rebel in me now. I must not drown and doubtless should not be able to.

I crawled home, troubling the quiet city once more with my dark witch-shape and my tapping stick. And when I laid my head on my pillow it seemed but a moment before my women came to wake me; whether because the whole journey had been a dream or because my weariness (which would be no wonder) threw me into a very fast sleep.

III

Then the gods left me for some days to chew the strange bread they had given me. I was Ungit. What did it mean? Do the gods flow in and out of us as they flow in and out of each other? And again, they would not let me die till I had died. I knew there were certain initiations, far away at Eleusis in the Greeklands, whereby a man was said to die and live again before the soul left the body. But how could I go there? Then I remembered that conversation which his friends had with Socrates before he drank the hemlock, and how he said that true wisdom is the skill and practice of death. And I thought Socrates understood such matters better than the Fox, for in the same book he has said how the soul "is dragged back through the fear of the invisible"; so that I even wondered if he had not himself tasted this horror as I had tasted it in Psyche's valley. But by the death which is wisdom I supposed he meant the death of our passions and desires and vain opinions. And immediately (it is terrible to be a fool) I thought I saw my way clear and not impossible. To say that I was Ungit meant that I was as ugly in soul as she; greedy, blood-gorged. But if I practised true philosophy, as Socrates meant it, I should change my ugly soul into a fair one. And this, the gods helping me, I would do. I would set about it at once.

The gods helping . . . but would they help? Nevertheless I must begin. And it seemed to me they would not help. I would set out boldly each morning to be just and calm and wise in all my thoughts and acts; but before they had finished dressing me I would find that I was back (and knew not how long I had been back) in some old rage, resentment, gnawing fantasy, or sullen bitterness. I could not hold out half an hour. And a horrible memory crept into my mind of those days when I had tried to mend the ugliness of my body with new devices in the way I did my hair or the colours I wore. I'd a cold fear that I was at the same work again. I could mend my soul no more than my face. Unless the gods helped. And why did the gods not help?

Babai! A terrible, sheer thought, huge as a cliff, towered up before me; infinitely likely to be true. No man will love you, though you gave your life for him, unless you have a pretty face. So (might it not be?) the gods will not love you (however you try to pleasure them, and whatever you suffer) unless you have that beauty of soul. In either race, for the love of men or the

love of a god, the winners and losers are marked out from birth. We bring our ugliness, in both kinds, with us into the world; with it our destiny. How bitter this was, every ill-favoured woman will know. We have all had our dream of some other land, some other world, some other way of giving the prizes, which would bring us in as the conquerors; leave the smooth, rounded limbs, and the little pink and white faces, and the hair like burnished gold, far behind; their day ended, and ours come. But how if it's not so at all? How if we were made to be dregs and refuse everywhere and everyway?

About this time there came (if you call it so) another dream. But it was not like a dream, for I went into my chamber an hour after noon (none of my women being there) and without lying down, or even sitting down, walked straight into the vision by merely opening the door. I found myself standing on the bank of a bright and great river. And on the further bank I saw a flock; of sheep, I thought. Then I considered them more closely, and I saw that they were all rams, high as horses, mightily horned, and their fleeces such bright gold that I could not look steadily at them. (There was deep, blue sky above them, and the grass was a luminous green like emerald, and there was a pool of very dark shadow, clear-edged, under every tree. The air of that country was sweet as music.) "Now those," thought I, "are the rams of the gods. If I can steal but one golden flock off their sides, I shall have beauty. Redival's ringlets were nothing to that wool." And in my vision I was able to do what I had feared to do at the Shennit; for I went into the cold water, up to my knee, up to my belly, up to my neck, and then lost the bottom and swam and found the bottom again and came up out of the river into the pastures of the gods. And I walked forward over that holy turf with a good and glad heart. But all the golden rams came at me. They drew closer to one another as their onrush brought them closer to me, till it was a solid wall of living gold. And with terrible force their curled horns struck me and knocked me flat and their hooves trampled me. They were not doing it in anger. They rushed over me in their joy; perhaps they did not see me; certainly I was nothing in their minds. I understood it well. They butted and trampled me because their gladness led them on; the Divine Nature wounds and perhaps destroys us merely by being what it is. We call it the wrath of the gods; as if the great cataract in Phars were angry with every fly it sweeps down in its green thunder.

Yet they did not kill me. When they had gone over me, I lived and knew myself, and presently could stand on my feet. Then I saw that there was another mortal woman with me in the field. She did not seem to see me. She was walking slowly, carefully, along the hedge which bordered that grassland, scanning it like a gleaner, picking something out of it. Then I saw what. Bright gold hung in flecks upon the thorns. Of course! The rams had left some of their golden wool on them as they raced past. This she was gleaning, handful after handful, a rich harvest. What I had sought in vain by meeting the joyous and terrible brutes, she took at her leisure. She won without effort what utmost effort would not win for me.

I now despaired of ever ceasing to be Ungit. Though it was spring without, in me a winter which, I thought, must be everlasting, locked up all my powers. It was as if I were dead already, but not as the god, or Socrates, bade me die. Yet all the time I was able to go about my work, doing and saying whatever was needful, and no one knew that there was anything amiss. Indeed the dooms I gave, sitting on my judgment seat, about this time, were thought to be even wiser and more just than before; it was work on which I spent much pains and I know I did it well. But the prisoners and plaintiffs and witnesses and the rest now seemed to me more like shadows than real men. I did not care a straw (though I still laboured to discern) who had a right to the little field or who had stolen the cheeses.

I had only one comfort left me. However I might have devoured Bardia, I had at least loved Psyche truly. There, if nowhere else, I had the right of it and the gods were in the wrong. And as a prisoner in a dungeon or a sick man on his bed makes much of any little shred of pleasure he still has, so I made much of this. And one day, when my work had been very wearisome, I took this book, as soon as I was free, and went out into the garden to comfort myself, and gorge myself with comfort, by reading over how I had cared for Psyche and taught her and tried to save her and wounded myself for her sake.

What followed was certainly vision and no dream. For it came upon me before I had sat down or unrolled the book. I walked into the vision with my bodily eyes wide open.

I was walking over burning sands, carrying an empty bowl. I knew well what I had to do. I must find the spring that rises from the river that flows in the deadlands, and fill it with the water of death and bring it back without spilling a drop and give it to Ungit. For in this vision it was not I who was

Ungit; I was Ungit's slave or prisoner and if I did all the tasks she set me perhaps she would let me go free. So I walked in the dry sand up to my ankles, white with sand to my middle, my throat rough with sand; unmitigated noon above me, and the sun so high that I had no shadow. And I longed for the water of death; for however bitter it was, it must surely be cold, coming from the sunless country. I walked for a hundred years. But at last the desert ended at the foot of some great mountains; crags and pinnacles and rotting cliffs that no one could climb. Rocks were loosened and fell from the heights all the time; their booming and clanging, as they bounced from one jag to another, and the thud when they fell on the sand, were the only sounds there. Looking at the waste of rock, I first thought it empty, and that what flickered over its hot surface were the shadows of clouds. But there were no clouds. Then I saw what it really was. Those mountains were alive with innumerable serpents and scorpions that scuttled and slithered over them continually. The place was a huge torture chamber, but the instruments were all living. And I knew that the well I was looking for rose in the very heart of these mountains.

"I can never get up," said I.

I sat upon the sand gazing up at them, till I felt as if the flesh would be burned off my bones. Then at last there came a shadow. Oh, mercy of the gods, could it be a cloud? I looked up at the sky and was nearly blinded, for the sun was still straight above my head; I had come, it seemed, into that country where the day never passes. Yet at last, though the terrible light seemed to bore through my eyeballs into my brain, I saw something; black against the blue, but far too small for a cloud. Then by its circlings I knew it to be a bird. Then it wheeled and came lower and at last was plainly an eagle; but an eagle from the gods, far greater than those of the highlands in Phars. It lighted on the sand and looked at me. Its face was a little like the old Priest's, but it was not he; it was a divine creature.

"Woman," it said, "who are you?"

"Orual, Queen of Glome," said I.

"Then it is not you that I was sent to help. What is that roll you carry in your hands?"

I now saw, with great dismay, that what I had been carrying all this time was not a bowl but a book. This ruined everything.

"It is my complaint against the gods," said I.

The eagle clapped his wings and lifted his head and cried out with a loud voice, “She’s come at last. Here is the woman who has a complaint against the gods.”

Immediately a hundred echoes roared from the face of the mountain, “Here is the woman . . . a complaint against the gods . . . plaint against the gods.”

“Come,” said the eagle.

“Where?” said I.

“Come into court. Your case is to be heard.” And he called aloud once more, “She’s come. She’s come.” Then from every crack and hole in the mountains there came out dark things like men, so that there was a crowd of them all round me before I could fly. They seized on me and hustled me and passed me on from one to another, each shouting, towards the mountain-face, “Here she comes. Here is the woman”; and voices (as it seemed) from within the mountain answered them, “Bring her in. Bring her into court. Her case is to be heard.” I was dragged and pushed and sometimes lifted, up among the rocks, till at last a great black hole yawned before me. “Bring her in. The court waits,” came the voices. And with a sudden shock of cold I was hurried in out of the burning sunlight into the dark inwards of the mountain, and then further and further in, always in haste, always passed from hand to hand, and always with that din of shouts: “Here she is. She’s come at last. To the judge, to the judge.” Then the voices changed and grew quieter; and now it was, “Let her go. Make her stand up. Silence in the court. Silence for her complaint.”

I was free now from all their hands, alone (as I thought) in silent darkness. Then a sort of grey light came. I stood on a platform or pillar of rock in a cave so great that I could see neither the sides nor the roof of it. All round me, below me, up to the very edges of the stone I stood on, there surged a sort of unquiet darkness. But soon my eyes grew able to see things in that half-light. The darkness was alive. It was a great assembly, all staring upon me, and I uplifted on my perch above their heads. Never in peace or war have I seen so vast a concourse. There were tens of thousands of them, all silent; every face watching me. Among them I saw Batta, and the King my father, and the Fox, and Argan. They were all ghosts. In my foolishness I had not thought before how many dead there must be. The faces, one above the other (for the place was shaped that way) rose and rose and receded in the greyness till the very thought of counting — not the faces,

that would be madness — but the mere ranks of them, was tormenting. The endless place was packed full as it could hold. The court had met.

But on the same level with me, though far away, sat the judge. Male or female, who could say? Its face was veiled. It was covered from crown to toe in sweepy black.

“Uncover her,” said the judge.

Hands came from behind me and tore off my veil; after it, every rag I had on. The old crone with her Ungit face stood naked before those countless gazers. No thread to cover me, no bowl in my hand to hold the water of death; only my book.

“Read your complaint,” said the judge.

I looked at the roll in my hand and saw at once that it was not the book I had written. It couldn’t be; it was far too small. And too old — a little, shabby, crumpled thing, nothing like my great book that I had worked on all day, day after day, while Bardia was dying. I thought I would fling it down and trample on it. I’d tell them someone had stolen my complaint and slipped this thing into my hand instead. Yet I found myself unrolling it. It was written all over inside, but the hand was not like mine. It was all a vile scribble; each stroke mean and yet savage, like the snarl of my father’s voice, like the ruinous faces one could make out in the Ungit stone. A great terror and loathing came over me. I said to myself, “Whatever they do to me, I will never read out this stuff. Give me back my Book.” But already I heard myself reading it. And what I read out was like this:

“I know what you’ll say. You will say the real gods are not at all like Ungit, and that I was shown a real god and the house of a real god and ought to know it. Hypocrites! I do know it. As if that would heal my wounds! I could have endured it if you were things like Ungit and the Shadowbrute. You know well that I never really began to hate you until Psyche began talking of her palace and her lover and her husband. Why did you lie to me? You said a brute would devour her. Well, why didn’t it? I’d have wept for her and buried what was left and built her a tomb and . . . and . . . But to steal her love from me! Can it be that you really don’t understand? Do you think we mortals will find you gods easier to bear if you’re beautiful? I tell you that if that’s true we’ll find you a thousand times worse. For then (I know what beauty does) you’ll lure and entice. You’ll leave us nothing; nothing that’s worth our keeping or your taking Those we love best — whoever’s most worth loving — those are the very ones you’ll

pick out. Oh, I can see it happening, age after age, and growing worse and worse the more you reveal your beauty; the son turning his back on the mother and the bride on her groom, stolen away by this everlasting calling, calling, calling of the gods. Taken where we can't follow. It would be far better for us if you were foul and ravening. We'd rather you drank their blood than stole their hearts. We'd rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal. But to steal her love from me, to make her see things I couldn't see . . . oh, you'll say (you've been whispering it to me these forty years) that I'd signs enough her palace was real; could have known the truth if I'd wanted. But how could I want to know it? Tell me that. The girl was mine. What right had you to steal her away into your dreadful heights? You'll say I was jealous. Jealous of Psyche? Not while she was mine. If you'd gone the other way to work — if it was my eyes you had opened — you'd soon have seen how I would have shown her and told her and taught her and led her up to my level. But to hear a chit of a girl who had (or ought to have had) no thought in her head that I'd not put there, setting up for a seer and a prophetess and next thing to a goddess . . . how could anyone endure it? That's why I say it makes no difference whether you're fair or foul. That there should be gods at all, there's our misery and bitter wrong. There's no room for you and us in the same world. You're a tree in whose shadow we can't thrive. We want to be our own. I was my own and Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her. Oh, you'll say you took her away into bliss and joy such as I could never have given her, and I ought to have been glad of it for her sake. Why? What should I care for some horrible, new happiness which I hadn't given her and which separated her from me? Do you think I wanted her to be happy, that way? It would have been better if I'd seen the Brute tear her in pieces before my eyes. You stole her to make her happy, did you? Why, every wheedling, smiling, catfoot rogue who lures away another man's wife or slave or dog might say the same. Dog, now. That's very much to the purpose. I'll thank you to let me feed my own; it needed no titbits from your table. Did you ever remember whose the girl was? She was mine. *Mine*; do you not know what the word means? Mine! You're thieves, seducers. That's my wrong. I'll not complain (not now) that you're blood-drinkers and man-eaters. I'm past that. . . ."

"Enough," said the judge.

There was utter silence all round me. And now for the first time I knew what I had been doing. While I was reading, it had, once and again, seemed strange to me that the reading took so long; for the book was a small one. Now I knew that I had been reading it over and over; perhaps a dozen times. I would have read it for ever, quick as I could, starting the first word again almost before the last was out of my mouth, if the judge had not stopped me. And the voice I read it in was strange to my ears. There was given to me a certainty that this, at last, was my real voice.

There was silence in the dark assembly long enough for me to have read my book out yet again. At last the judge spoke.

“Are you answered?” he said.

“Yes,” said I.

IV

The complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered. Lightly men talk of saying what they mean. Often when he was teaching me to write in Greek the Fox would say, “Child, to say the very thing you really mean, the whole of it, nothing more or less or other than what you really mean; that’s the whole art and joy of words.” A glib saying. When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the centre of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you’ll not talk about joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?

“Best leave the girl to me,” said a well-known voice. “I’ll lesson her.” It was the spectre which had been my father.

Then a new voice spoke from beneath me. It was the Fox’s. I thought he too was going to give some terrible evidence against me. But he said, “Oh Minos, or Rhadamanthus, or Persephone, or by whatever name you are called, I am to blame for most of this, and I should bear the punishment. I taught her, as men teach a parrot, to say ‘Lies of poets’, and ‘Ungit’s a false image’. I made her think that ended the question. I never said, too true an image of the demon within. And then the other face of Ungit (she has a thousand) . . . something live anyway. And the real gods more alive. Neither they nor Ungit mere thoughts or words. I never told her why the old Priest got something from the dark House that I never got from my trim sentences. She never asked me (I was content she shouldn’t ask) why the people got something from the shapeless stone which no one ever got from that painted doll of Arnom’s. Of course, I didn’t know; but I never told her I didn’t know. I don’t know now. Only that the way to the true gods is more like the House of Ungit . . . oh, it’s unlike too, more unlike than we yet dream, but that’s the easy knowledge, the first lesson; only a fool would stay there, posturing and repeating it. The Priest knew at least that there must be sacrifices. They will have sacrifice; will have man. Yes, and the very heart, centre, ground, roots of a man; dark and strong and costly as blood. Send me away, Minos, even to Tartarus, if Tartarus can cure glibness. I made her

think that a prattle of maxims would do, all thin and clear as water. For of course water's good; and it didn't cost much, not where I grew up. So I fed her on words."

I wanted to cry out that it was false, that he had fed me not on words but on love, that he had given, if not to the gods, yet to me, all that was costliest. But I had not time. The trial, it seemed, was over.

"Peace," said the judge. "The woman is a plaintiff, not a prisoner. It is the gods who have been accused. They have answered her. If they in turn accuse her, a greater judge and a more excellent court must try the case. Let her go."

Which way should I turn, set up on that pillar of rock? I looked on every side. Then, to end it, I flung myself down into the black sea of spectres. But before I reached the floor of the cavern one rushed forward and caught me in strong arms. It was the Fox.

"Grandfather!" I cried. "But you're real and warm. Homer said one could not embrace the dead . . . they were only shadows."

"My child, my beloved," said the Fox, kissing my eyes and head in the old way. "One thing that I told you was true. The poets are often wrong. But for all the rest — ah, you'll forgive me?"

"I to forgive you, Grandfather? No, no, I must speak. I knew at the time that all those good reasons you gave for staying in Glome after you were a freeman were only disguises for your love. I knew you stayed only in pity and love for me. I knew you were breaking your heart for the Greeklands. I ought to have sent you away. I lapped up all you gave me like a thirsty animal. Oh, Grandfather, Ansit's right. I've battened on the lives of men. It's true. Isn't it true?"

"Why, child, it is. I could almost be glad; it gives me something to forgive. But I'm not your judge. We must go to your true judges now. I am to bring you there."

"My judges?"

"Why, yes, child. The gods have been accused by you. Now's their turn."

"I cannot hope for mercy."

"Infinite hopes — and fears — may both be yours. Be sure that, whatever else you get, you will not get justice."

"Are the gods not just?"

"Oh no, child. What would become of us if they were? But come and see."

He was leading me somewhere and the light was strengthening as we went. It was a greenish, summery light. In the end it was sunshine falling through vine leaves. We were in a cool chamber, walls on three sides of us, but on the fourth side only pillars and arches with a vine growing over them on the outside. Beyond, and between, the light pillars and the soft leaves I saw level grass and shining water.

"We must wait here till you are sent for," said the Fox. "But there is plenty here that's worth studying."

I now saw that the walls of the place were all painted with stories. We have little skill with painting in Glome, so that it's small praise to say they seemed wonderful to me. But I think all mortals would have wondered at these.

"They begin here," said the Fox, taking me by the hand and leading me to part of the wall. For an instant I was afraid that he was leading me to a mirror as my father had twice done. But before we came near enough to the picture to understand it, the mere beauty of the coloured wall put that out of my head.

Now we were before it and I could see the story it told. I saw a woman coming to the river bank. I mean that by her painted posture I could see it was a picture of one walking. That at first. But no sooner had I understood this than it became alive, and the ripples of the water were moving and the reeds stirred with the water and the grass stirred with the breeze, and the woman moved on and came to the river's edge. There she stood and stooped down and seemed to be doing something — I could not at first tell what — with her feet. She was tying her ankles together with her girdle. I looked closer at her. She was not I. She was Psyche.

I am too old, and I have no time, to begin to write all over again of her beauty. But nothing less would serve, and no words I have would serve even then, to tell you how beautiful she was. It was as though I had never seen her before. Or had I forgotten . . . no, I could never have forgotten her beauty, by day or by night, for one heartbeat. But all this was a flash of thought, swallowed up at once in my horror of the thing she had come to that river to do.

"Do not do it. Do not do it," I cried out; madly, as if she could hear me. Nevertheless she stopped, and untied her ankles and went away. The Fox led me to the next picture. And it too came alive, and there in some dark place, cavern or dungeon, when I looked hard into the murk I could see that

what was moving in it was Psyche; Psyche in rags and iron fetters, sorting out the seeds into their proper heaps. But the strangest thing was that I saw in her face no such anguish as I looked for. She was grave; her brow knitted as I have seen it knitted over a hard lesson when she was a child (and that look became her well; what look did not?). Yet I thought there was no despair in it. Then of course I saw why. Ants were helping her. The floor was black with them.

"Grandfather," said I, "did — —"

"Hush," said the Fox, laying his thick old finger (the very feel of that finger again, after so many years!) on my lips. He led me to the next.

Here we were back in the pasture of the gods. I saw Psyche creeping, cautious as a cat, along the hedgerow; then standing, her finger at her lip, wondering how she could ever get one curl of their golden wool. Yet now again, only more than last time, I marvelled at her face. For though she looked puzzled, it was only as if she were puzzled at some game; as she and I had both been puzzled over the game Poobi used to play with her beads. It was even as if she laughed inwardly a little at her own bewilderment. (And that too I'd seen in her before, when she blundered over her tasks as a child; she was never out of patience with herself, no more than with her teacher.) But she did not puzzle long. For the rams scented some intruder and turned their tails to Psyche and all lifted their terrible heads, and then lowered them again for battle, and all charged away together to the other end of the meadow, drawing nearer to their enemy, so that an unbroken wave or wall of gold overwhelmed her. Then Psyche laughed and clapped her hands and gathered her bright harvest off the hedge at ease.

In the next picture I saw both Psyche and myself; but I was only a shadow. We toiled together over those burning sands, she with her empty bowl, I with the book full of my poison. She did not see me. And though her face was pale with the heat and her lips cracked with thirst, she was no more pitiable than when I have seen her, often pale with heat and thirsty, come back with the Fox and me from a summer day's ramble on the old hills. She was merry and in good heart. I believe, from the way her lips moved, she was singing. When she came to the foot of the precipices I vanished away. But the eagle came to her, and took her bowl, and brought it back to her brim-full of the water of death.

We had now travelled round two of the three walls and the third remained.

“Child,” said the Fox, “have you understood?”

“But are these pictures true?”

“All here’s true.”

“But how could she — did she really — do such things and go to such places — and not . . .? Grandfather, she was all but unscathed. She was almost happy.”

“Another bore nearly all the anguish.”

“I? Is it possible?”

“That was one of the true things I used to say to you. Don’t you remember? We’re all limbs and parts of one Whole. Hence, of each other. Men, and gods, flow in and out and mingle.”

“Oh, I give thanks. I bless the gods. Then it was really I — —”

“Who bore the anguish. But she achieved the tasks. Would you rather have had justice?”

“Would you mock me, Grandfather? Justice? Oh, I’ve been a queen and I know the people’s cry for justice must be heard. But not my cry. A Batta’s muttering, a Redival’s whining: ‘Why can’t I?’ ‘Why should she?’ ‘It’s not fair.’ And over and over. Faugh!”

“That’s well, daughter. But now, be strong and look upon the third wall.”

We looked and saw Psyche walking alone in a wide way under the earth; a gentle slope, but downwards, always downwards.

“This is the last of the tasks that Ungit has set her. She must — —”

“Then there is a real Ungit?”

“All, even Psyche, are born into the house of Ungit. And all must get free from her. Or say that Ungit in each must bear Ungit’s son and die in childbed — or change. And now Psyche must go down into the deadlands to get beauty in a casket from the Queen of the Deadlands, from death herself; and bring it back to give it to Ungit so that Ungit will become beautiful. But this is the law for her journey. If, for any fear or favour or love or pity, she speaks to anyone on the way, then she will never come back to the sunlit lands again. She must keep straight on, in silence, till she stands before the throne of the Queen of Shadows. All’s at stake. Now watch.”

He needed not to tell me that. We both watched. Psyche went on and on, deeper into the earth; colder, deeper, darker. But at last there came a chilly light on one side of her way, and there (I think) the great tunnel or gallery in which she journeyed opened out. For there, in that cold light, stood a great

crowd of rabble. Their speech and clothes showed me at once that they were people of Glome. I saw the faces of some I knew.

"Istra! Princess! Ungit!" they called out, stretching their hands towards her. "Stay with us. Be our goddess. Rule us. Speak oracles to us. Receive our sacrifices. Be our goddess."

Psyche walked on and never looked at them.

"Whoever the enemy is," said I, "he's not very clever if he thinks she would falter for that."

"Wait," said the Fox.

Psyche, her eyes fixed straight ahead, went further on and further down, and again, on the left side of her road, there came a light. One figure rose up in it. I was startled at this one, and looked to my side. The Fox was with me still; but he who rose up in the cold light to meet Psyche by the wayside was also the Fox — but older, greyer, paler than the Fox who was with me.

"O Psyche, Psyche," said the Fox in the picture (say, in that other world; it was no painted thing), "what folly is this? What are you doing, wandering through a tunnel beneath the earth? What? You think it is the way to the Deadlands? You think the gods have sent you there? All lies of priests and poets, child. It is only a cave or a disused mine. There are no deadlands such as you dream of, and no such gods. Has all my teaching taught you no more than this? The god within you is the god you should obey; reason, calmness, self-discipline. Fie, child, do you want to be a barbarian all your days? I would have given you a clear, Greek, full-grown soul. But there's still time. Come to me and I'll lead you out of all this darkness; back to the grass plot behind the pear trees, where all was clear, hard, limited, and simple."

But Psyche walked on and never looked at him. And presently she came to a third place where there was a little light on the left of the dark road. Amid that light something like a woman rose up; its face was unknown to me. When I looked at it I felt a pity that nearly killed my heart. It was not weeping, but you could see from its eyes that it had already wept them dry. Despair, humiliation, entreaty, endless reproach: all these were in it. And now I trembled for Psyche. I knew the thing was there only to entrap her and turn her from her path. But did she know it? And if she did, could she, so loving and so full of pity, pass it by? It was too hard a test. Her eyes looked straight forward; but of course she had seen it out of the corner of her eye. A quiver ran through her. Her lip twitched, threatened with

sobbing. She set her teeth in the lip to keep it straight. “O great gods, defend her,” I said to myself. “Hurry, hurry her past.”

The woman held out her hands to Psyche, and I saw that her left arm dripped with blood. Then came her voice, and what a voice it was! So deep, yet so womanlike, so full of passion, it would have moved you even if it spoke happy or careless things. But now (who could resist it?) it would have broken a heart of iron.

“Oh, Psyche,” it wailed. “Oh, my own child, my only love. Come back. Come back. Back to the old world where we were happy together. Come back to Maia.”

Psyche bit her lip till the blood came and wept bitterly. I thought she felt more grief than that wailing Orual. But that Orual had only to suffer; Psyche had to keep on her way as well. She kept on; went on out of sight, journeying always further into death. That was the last of the pictures.

The Fox and I were alone again.

“Did we really do these things to her?” I asked.

“Yes. All here’s true.”

“And we said we loved her.”

“And we did. She had no more dangerous enemies than us. And in that far distant day when the gods become wholly beautiful, or we at last are shown how beautiful they always were, this will happen more and more. For mortals, as you said, will become more and more jealous. And mother and wife and child and friend will all be in league to keep a soul from being united with the Divine Nature.”

“And Psyche, in that old terrible time when I thought her cruel . . . she suffered more than I, perhaps?”

“She bore much for you then. You have borne something for her since.”

“And will the gods one day grow thus beautiful, Grandfather?”

“They say . . . but even I, who am dead, do not understand more than a few broken words of their language. Only this I know. This age of ours will one day be the distant past. And the Divine Nature can change the past. Nothing is yet in its true form.”

But as he said this many voices from without, sweet and to be feared, took up the cry, “She comes. Our lady returns to her house; the goddess Psyche, back from the lands of the dead, bringing the casket of beauty from the Queen of Shadows.”

“Come,” said the Fox. I think I had no will in me at all. He took my hand and led me out between the pillars (the vine leaves brushed my hair) into the warm sunlight. We stood in a fair, grassy court, with blue, fresh sky above us; mountain sky. In the centre of the court was a bath of clear water in which many could have swum and sported together. Then there was a moving and rustling of invisible people, and more voices (now somewhat hushed). Next moment I was flat on my face; for Psyche had come and I was kissing her feet.

“Oh, Psyche, oh, goddess,” I said. “Never again will I call you mine; but all there is of me shall be yours. Alas, you know now what’s it’s worth. I never wished you well, never had one selfless thought of you. I was a craver.”

She bent over me to lift me up. Then, when I would not rise, she said. “But Maia, dear Maia, you must stand up. I have not given you the casket. You know I went a long journey to fetch the beauty that will make Ungit beautiful.”

I stood up then; all wet in a kind of tears that do not flow in this country. She stood before me, holding out something for me to take. Now I knew that she was a goddess indeed. Her hands burned me (a painless burning) when they met mine. The air that came from her clothes and limbs and hair was wild and sweet; youth seemed to come into my breast as I breathed it. And yet (this is hard to say) with all this, even because of all this, she was the old Psyche still; a thousand times more her very self than she had been before the Offering. For all that had then but flashed out in a glance or a gesture, all that one meant most when one spoke her name, was now wholly present, not to be gathered up from hints nor in shreds, not some of it in one moment and some in another. Goddess? I had never seen a real woman before.

“Did I not tell you, Maia,” she said, “that a day was coming when you and I would meet in my house and no cloud between us?”

Joy silenced me. And I thought I had now come to the highest, and to the utmost fullness of being which the human soul can contain. But now, what was this? You have seen the torches grow pale when men open the shutters and broad summer morning shines in on the feasting-hall? So now. Suddenly, from a strange look in Psyche’s face (I could see she knew something she had not spoken of), or from a glorious and awful deepening of the blue sky above us, or from a deep breath like a sigh uttered all round

us by invisible lips, or from a deep, doubtful, quaking and surmise in my own heart, I knew that all this had been only a preparation. Some far greater matter was upon us. The voices spoke again; but not loud this time. They were awed and trembled. “He is coming,” they said. “The god is coming into his house. The god comes to judge Orual.”

If Psyche had not held me by the hand I should have sunk down. She had brought me now to the very edge of the pool. The air was growing brighter and brighter about us; as if something had set it on fire. Each breath I drew let into me new terror, joy, overpowering sweetness. I was pierced through and through with the arrows of it. I was being unmade. I was no one. But that’s little to say; rather, Psyche herself was, in a manner, no one. I loved her as I would once have thought it impossible to love; would have died any death for her. And yet, it was not, not now, she that really counted. Or if she counted (and oh, gloriously she did) it was for another’s sake. The earth and stars and sun, all that was or will be, existed for his sake. And he was coming. The most dreadful, the most beautiful, the only dread and beauty there is, was coming. The pillars on the far side of the pool flushed with his approach. I cast down my eyes.

Two figures, reflections, their feet to Psyche’s feet and mine, stood head downward in the water. But whose were they? Two Psyches, the one clothed, the other naked? Yes, both Psyches, both beautiful (if that mattered now) beyond all imagining, yet not exactly the same.

“You also are Psyche,” came a great voice. I looked up then, and it’s strange that I dared. But I saw no god, no pillared court. I was in the palace gardens, my foolish book in my hand. The vision to the eye had, I think, faded one moment before the oracle to the ear. For the words were still sounding.

That was four days ago. They found me lying on the grass, and I had no speech for many hours. The old body will not stand many more such seeings; perhaps (but who can tell?) the soul will not need them. I have got the truth out of Arnom; he thinks I am very near my death now. It’s strange he should weep; and my women too. What have I ever done to please them? I ought to have had Daaran here and learned to love him and taught him, if I could, to love them.

I ended my first book with the words *No answer*. I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice? Only words, words;

to be led out to battle against other words. Long did I hate you, long did I fear you. I might ——

(I, Arnom, priest of Aphrodite, saved this roll and put it in the temple. From the other markings after the word *might*, we think the Queen's head must have fallen forward on them as she died and we cannot read them. This book was all written by Queen Orual of Glome, who was the most wise, just, valiant, fortunate, and merciful of all the princes known in our parts of the world. If any stranger who intends the journey to Greece finds this book let him take it to Greece with him, for that is what she seems mostly to have desired. The Priest who comes after me has it in charge to give up the book to any stranger who will take an oath to bring it into Greece.)

TILL WE HAVE FACES

This re-interpretation of an old story has lived in the author’s mind, thickening and hardening with the years, ever since he was an undergraduate. That way, he could be said to have worked at it most of his life. Recently, what seemed to be the right form presented itself and themes suddenly interlocked: the straight tale of barbarism, the mind of an ugly woman, dark idolatry and pale enlightenment at war with each other and with vision, and the havoc which a vocation, or even a faith, works on human life.

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MINISTERING ANGELS

THE MONK, as they called him, settled himself on the camp chair beside his bunk and stared through the window at the harsh sand and black-blue sky of Mars. He did not mean to begin his “work” for ten minutes yet. Not, of course, the work he had been brought there to do. He was the meteorologist of the party, and his work in that capacity was largely done; he had found out whatever could be found out. There was nothing more, within the limited radius he could investigate, to be observed for at least twenty-five days. And meteorology had not been his real motive. He had chosen three years on Mars as the nearest modem equivalent to a hermitage in the desert. He had come there to meditate: to continue the slow, perpetual rebuilding of that inner structure which, in his view, it was the main purpose of life to rebuild. And now his ten minutes’ rest was over. He began with his well-used formula. “Gentle and patient Master, teach me to need men less and to love thee more.” Then to it. There was no time to waste. There were barely six months of this lifeless, sinless, unsuffering wilderness ahead of him. Three years were short... but when the shout came he rose out of his chair with the practised alertness of a sailor.

The Botanist in the next cabin responded to the same shout with a curse. His eye had been at the microscope when it came. It was maddening. Constant interruption. A man might as well try to work in the middle of Piccadilly as in this infernal camp. And his work was already a race against time. Six months more... and he had hardly begun. The flora of Mars, these tiny, miraculously hardy organisms, the ingenuity of their contrivances to live under all but impossible conditions — it was a feast for a lifetime. He would ignore the shout. But then came the bell. All hands to the main room.

The only person who was doing, so to speak, nothing when the shout came was the Captain. To be more exact, he was (as usual) trying to stop thinking about Clare, and get on with his official journal. Clare kept on interrupting from forty million miles away. It was preposterous. “*Would have needed all hands*” he wrote... hands... his own hands... his own hands, hands, he felt, with eyes in them, travelling over all the warm-cool, soft-firm, smooth, yielding, resisting aliveness of her. “Shut up, there’s a dear,” he said to the photo on his desk. And so back to the journal, until the fatal

words “*had been causing me some anxiety*” Anxiety — oh God, what might be happening to Clare now? How did he know there was a Clare by this time? Anything could happen. He’d been a fool ever to accept this job. What other newly married man in the world would have done it? But it had seemed so sensible. Three years of horrid separation but then... oh, they were made for life. He had been promised the post that, only a few months before, he would not have dared to dream of. He’d never need to go to Space again. And all the by products; the lectures, the book, probably a title. Plenty of children. He knew she wanted that, and so in a queer way (as he began to find) did he. But damn it, the journal. Begin a new paragraph... And then the shout came.

It was one of the two youngsters, technicians both, who had given it. They had been together since dinner. At least Paterson had been standing at the open door of Dickson’s cabin, shifting from foot to foot and swinging the door, and Dickson had been sitting on his berth and waiting for Paterson to go away.

“What are you talking about, Paterson?” he said. “Who ever said anything about a quarrel?”

“That’s all very well, Bobby,” said the other, “but were not friends like we used to be. You know we’re not. Oh, I’*m* not blind. I *did* ask you to call me Clifford. And you’re always so stand-offish.”

“Oh, get to Hell out of this!” cried Dickson. “I’m perfectly ready to be good friends with you and everyone else in an ordinary way, but all this gas — like a pair of school girls — I will not stand. Once and for all—”

“Oh look, look, look,” said Paterson. And it was then that Dickson shouted and the Captain came and rang the bell and within twenty seconds they were all crowded behind the biggest of the windows. A spaceship had just made a beautiful landing about a hundred and fifty yards from camp.

“Oh boy!” exclaimed Dickson. They’re relieving us before our time.”

“Damn their eyes. Just what they would do,” said the Botanist.

Five figures were descending from the ship. Even in space suits it was clear that one of them was enormously fat; they were in no other way remarkable.

“Man the air lock,” said the Captain.

Drinks from their limited store were going round. The Captain had recognised in the leader of the strangers an old acquaintance, Ferguson. Two were ordinary young men, not unpleasant. But the remaining two?

“I don’t understand,” said the Captain, “who exactly — I mean, were delighted to see you all of course — but what exactly...?”

“Where are the rest of your party?” said Ferguson.

“We’ve had two casualties, I’m afraid,” said the Captain. “Sackville and Dr. Burton. It was a most wretched business. Sackville tried eating the stuff we call Martian cress. It drove him fighting mad in a matter of minutes. He knocked Burton down and by sheer bad luck Burton fell in just the wrong position: across that table there. Broke his neck. We got Sackville tied down on a bunk but he was dead before the evening.”

“Hadna he even the gumption to try it on the guinea pig first?” said Ferguson.

“Yes,” said the Botanist. “That was the whole trouble. The funny thing is that the guinea pig lived. But its behaviour was remarkable. Sackville wrongly concluded that the stuff was alcoholic. Thought he’d invent a new drink. The nuisance is that once Burton was dead, none of us could do a reliable post-mortem on Sackville. Under analysis this vegetable shows—”

“A-a-a-h,” interrupted one of those who had not yet spoken. “We must beware of oversimplifications. I doubt if the vegetable substance is the real explanation. There are stresses and strains. You are all, without knowing it, in a highly unstable condition, for reasons which are no mystery to a trained psychologist.”

Some of those present had doubted the sex of this creature. Its hair was very short, its nose very long, its mouth very prim, its chin sharp, and its manner authoritative. The voice revealed it as, scientifically speaking, a woman. But no one had had any doubt about the sex of her nearest neighbour, the fat person.

“Oh, dearie,” she wheezed. “Not now. I tell you straight I’m that flustered and faint, I’ll scream if you go on so. Suppose there ain’t such a thing as a port and lemon handy? No? Well, a little drop more gin would settle me. It’s me stomach reelly.”

The speaker was infinitely female and perhaps in her seventies. Her hair had been not very successfully dyed to a colour not unlike that of mustard. The powder (scented strongly enough to throw a train off the rails) lay like snow drifts in the complex valleys of her creased, many-chinned face.

“Stop,” roared Ferguson. “Whatever ye do, dinna give her a drap mair to drink.”

“‘E’s no ‘art, ye see,” said the old woman with a whimper and an affectionate leer directed at Dickson.

“Excuse me,” said the Captain. “Who are these — ah — ladies and what is this all about?”

“I have been waiting to explain,” said the Thin Woman, and cleared her throat. “Anyone who has been following World-Opinion-Trends on the problems arising out of the psychological welfare aspect of interplanetary communication will be conscious of the growing agreement that such a remarkable advance inevitably demands of us far-reaching ideological adjustments. Psychologists are now well aware that a forcible inhibition of powerful biological urges over a protracted period is likely to have unforeseeable results. The pioneers of space travel are exposed to this danger. It would be unenlightened if a supposed ethicality were allowed to stand in the way of their protection. We must therefore nerve ourselves to face the view that immorality, as it has hitherto been called, must no longer be regarded as unethical—”

“I don’t understand that,” said the Monk.

“She means,” said the Captain, who was a good linguist, “that what you call fornication must no longer be regarded as immoral.”

“That’s right, dearie,” said the Fat Woman to Dickson, “she only means a poor boy needs a woman now and then. It’s only natural.”

“What was required, therefore,” continued the Thin Woman, “was a band of devoted females who would take the first step. This would expose them, no doubt, to obloquy from many ignorant persons. They would be sustained by the consciousness that they were performing an indispensable function in the history of human progress.”

“She means you’re to have tarts, duckie,” said the Fat Woman to Dickson.

“Now you’re talking,” said he with enthusiasm. “Bit late in the day, but better late than never. But you can’t have brought many girls in that ship. And why didn’t you bring them in? Or are they following?”

“We cannot indeed claim,” continued the Thin Woman, who had apparently not noticed the interruption, “that the response to our appeal was such as we had hoped. The personnel of the first unit of the Woman’s Higher Aphrodisio-Therapeutic Humane Organisation (abbreviated WHAT-HO) is not perhaps... well. Many excellent women, university colleagues of my own, even senior colleagues, to whom I applied, showed themselves

curiously conventional. But at least a start has been made. And here," she concluded brightly, "we are."

And there, for forty seconds of appalling silence, they were. Then Dickson's face, which had already undergone certain contortions, became very red; he applied his handkerchief and spluttered like a man trying to stifle a sneeze, rose abruptly, turned his back on the company, and hid his face. He stood slightly stooped and you could see his shoulders shaking.

Paterson jumped up and ran towards him; but the Fat Woman, though with infinite gruntings and upheavals, had risen too.

"Get art of it, Pansy," she snarled at Paterson. "Lot o' good your sort ever did." A moment later her vast arms were round Dickson; all the warm, wobbling matemalism of her engulfed him.

"There, sonny," she said, "it's goin' to be OK. Don't cry, honey. Don't cry. Poor boy, then. Poor boy. I'll give you a good time."

"I think," said the Captain, "the young man is laughing, not crying."

It was the Monk who at this" point mildly suggested a meal.

Some hours later the party had temporarily broken up.

Dickson (despite all his efforts the Fat Woman had contrived to sit next to him; she had more than once mistaken his glass for hers) hardly finished his last mouthful when he said to the newly arrived technicians:

"I'd love to see over your ship, if I could."

You might expect that two men who had been cooped up in that ship so long, and had only taken off their space suits a few minutes ago, would have been reluctant to re-assume the one and return to the other. That was certainly the Fat Woman's View. "Nar, nar," she said. "Don't you go fidgeting, sonny. They seen enough of that ruddy ship for a bit, same as me. 'Tain't good for you to go rushing about, not on a full stomach, like." But the two young men were marvellously obliging.

"Certainly. Just what I was going to suggest," said the first. "OK by me, chum," said the second. They were all three of them out of the air lock in record time.

Across the sand, up the ladder, helmets off, and then:

"What in the name of thunder have you dumped those two bitches on us for?" said Dickson.

"Don't fancy 'em?" said the Cockney stranger. "The people at 'ome thought as 'ow you'd be a bit sharp set by now. Ungrateful of you, I call it."

“Very funny to be sure,” said Dickson. “But it’s no laughing matter for us.”

“It hasn’t been for us either, you know,” said the Oxford stranger. “Cheek by jowl with them for eighty-five days. They palled a bit after the first month.”

“You’re telling me,” said the Cockney.

There was a disgusted pause.

“Can anyone tell me,” said Dickson at last, “who in the world, and why in the world, out of all possible women, selected those two horrors to send to Mars?”

“Can’t expect a star London show at the back of beyond,” said the Cockney.

“My dear fellow,” said his colleague, “isn’t the thing perfectly obvious? What kind of woman, without force, is going to come and live in this ghastly place — on rations — and play doxy to half a dozen men she’s never seen? The Good Time Girls won’t come because they know you can’t have a good time on Mars. An ordinary professional prostitute won’t come as long as she has the slightest chance of being picked up in the cheapest quarter of Liverpool or Los Angeles. And you’ve got one who hasn’t. The only other who’d come would be a crank who believes all that blah about the new ethicality. And you’ve got one of that too.”

“Simple, ain’t it?” said the Cockney.

“Anyone,” said the other, “except the Fools at the Top could of course have foreseen it from the word go.”

“The only hope now is the Captain,” said Dickson.

“Look, mate,” said the Cockney, “if you think there’s any question of our taking back returned goods, you’ve ‘ad it. Nothing doin’. Our Captain’ll ‘ave a munity to settle if he tries that. Also ‘e won’t.’E’s ‘ad ‘is turn. So’ve we. It’s up to you now.”

“Fair’s fair, you know,” said the other. “We’ve stood all we can.”

“Well,” said Dickson. “We must leave the two chiefs to fight it out. But discipline or not, there are some things a man can’t stand. That bloody schoolmarm—”

“She’s a lecturer at a Redbrick university, actually.”

“Well,” said Dickson after a long pause, “you were going to show me over the ship. It might take my mind off it a bit.”

The Fat Woman was talking to the Monk. “... and oh, Father dear, I know you’ll think that’s the worst of all. I didn’t give it up when I could. After me brother’s wife died... ‘e’d ‘av ‘ad me ome with ‘im, and money wasn’t that short. But I went on, Gawd ‘elp me, I went on.”

“Why did you do that, daughter?” said the Monk. “Did you *like* it?”

“Well not all that, Father. I was never partikler. But you see — oh, Father, I was the goods in those days, though you wouldn’t think it now... and the poor gentlemen, they did so enjoy it.”

“Daughter,” he said, “you are not far from the Kingdom. But you were wrong. The desire to give is blessed. But you can’t turn bad bank notes into good ones just by giving them away.”

The Captain had also left the table pretty quickly, asking Ferguson to accompany him to his cabin. The Botanist had leaped after them.

“One moment, sir, one moment,” he said excitedly. “I am a scientist. I’m working at very high pressure already. I hope there is no complaint to be made about my discharge of all those other duties which so incessantly interrupt my work. But if I am going to be expected to waste any more time entertaining those abominable females—”

“When I give you any orders which can be considered *ultra vires*” said the Captain, “it will be time to make your protest.”

Paterson stayed with the Thin Woman. The only part of any woman that interested him was her ears. He liked telling women about his troubles; especially about the unfairness and unkindness of other men. Unfortunately the lady’s idea was that the interview should be devoted either to Aphrodisio-Therapy or to instruction in psychology. She saw, indeed, no reason why the two operations should not be carried out simultaneously; it is only untrained minds that cannot hold more than one idea. The difference between these two conceptions of the conversation was well on its way to impairing its success. Paterson was becoming ill-tempered; the lady remained bright and patient as an iceberg.

“But as I was saying,” grumbled Paterson, “what I do think so rotten is a fellow being quite fairly decent one day and then—”

“Which just illustrates my point. These tensions and maladjustments are bound, under the unnatural conditions, to arise. And provided we disinfect the obvious remedy of all those sentimental or — which is quite as bad — prurient associations which the Victorian Age attached to it—”

“But I haven’t yet told you. Listen. Only two days ago—”

“One moment. This ought to be regarded like any other injection. If once we can persuade—”

“How any fellow can take a pleasure—”

“I agree. The association of it with pleasure (that is purely an adolescent fixation) may have done incalculable harm. Rationally viewed—”

“I say, you’re getting off the point!”

“One moment—”

The dialogue continued.

They had finished looking over the spaceship. It was certainly a beauty. No one afterwards remembered who had first said, “Anyone could manage a ship like this.”

Ferguson sat quietly smoking while the Captain read the letter he had brought him. He didn’t even look in the Captain’s direction. When at last conversation began there was so much circumambient happiness in the cabin that they took a long time to get down to the difficult part of their business. The Captain seemed at first wholly occupied with its comic side.

“Still,” he said at last, “it has its serious side too. The impertinence of it, for one thing! Do they think—”

“Ye maun recall,” said Fergson, “they’re dealing with an absolutely new situation.”

“Oh, *new* be damned! How does it differ from men on whalers, or even on windjammers in the old days? Or on the North West Frontier? It’s about as new as people being hungry when food was short.”

“Eh mon, but ye’re forgettin’ the new light of modern psychology.”

“I think those two ghastly women have already learned some newer psychology since they arrived. Do they really suppose every man in the world is so combustible that he’ll jump into the arms of any woman whatever?”

“Aye, they do. They’ll be sayin’ you and your party are verra abnormal. I wadna put it past them to be sending you out wee packets of hormones next.”

“Well, if it comes to that, do they suppose men would volunteer for a job like this unless they could, or thought they could, or wanted to try if they could, do without women?”

“Then there’s the new ethics, forbye.”

“Oh stow it, you old rascal. What is new there either? Who ever tried to live clean except a minority who had a religion or were in love? They’ll try

it still on Mars, as they did on Earth. As for the majority, did they ever hesitate to take their pleasures wherever they could get them? The ladies of the profession know better. Did you ever see a port or a garrison town without plenty of brothels? Who are the idiots on the Advisory Council who started all this nonsense?"

"Och, a pack o' daft auld women (in trousers for the maist part) who like onything sexy, and onything scientific, and onything that makes them feel important. And this gives them all three pleasures at once, ye ken."

"Well, there's only one thing for it, Ferguson. I'm not going to have either your Mistress Overdone or your Extension lecturer here. You can just —"

"Now there's no manner of use talkin' that way. I did my job. Another voyage with sic a cargo o' livestock I will not face. And my two lads the same. There'd be mutiny and murder."

"But you must, I'm—"

At that moment a blinding flash came from without and the earth shook.

"Ma ship! Ma ship!" cried Ferguson. Both men peered out on empty sand. The spaceship had obviously made an excellent take-off.

"But what's happened?" said the Captain. "They haven't—"

"Mutiny, desertion, and theft of a government ship, that's what's happened," said Ferguson. "Ma twa lads and your Dickson are awa' hame."

"But good Lord, they'll get Hell for this. They've ruined their careers. They'll be—"

"Aye. Nae dout. And they think it cheap at the price. Ye'll be seeing why, maybe, before ye are a fortnight older."

A gleam of hope came into the Captain's eyes. "They couldn't have taken the women with them?"

"Talk sense, mon, talk sense. Or if ye hanna ony sense, use your ears."

In the buzz of excited conversation which became every moment more audible from the main room, female voices could be intolerably distinguished.

As he composed himself for his evening meditation the Monk thought that perhaps he had been concentrating too much on "needing less" and that must be why he was going to have a course (advanced) in "loving more." Then his face twitched into a smile that was not all mirth. He was thinking of the Fat Woman. Four things made an exquisite chord. First the horror of all she had done and suffered. Secondly, the pity — thirdly, the comicality

— of her belief that she could still excite desire; fourthly, her bless'd ignorance of that utterly different loveliness which already existed within her and which, under grace, and with such poor direction as even he could supply, might one day set her, bright in the land of brightness, beside the Magdalene.

But wait! There was yet a fifth note in the chord. "Oh, Master," he murmured, "forgive — or can you enjoy? — my absurdity also. I had been supposing you sent me on a voyage of forty million miles merely for my own spiritual convenience."

SCREWTAPE PROPOSES A TOAST



(The scene is in Hell at the annual dinner of the Tempters' Training College for young devils. The principal, Dr. Slubgob, has just proposed the health of the guests. Screwtape, a very experienced devil, who is the guest of honour, rises to reply:)

It is customary on these occasions for the speaker to address himself chiefly to those among you who have just graduated and who will very soon be posted to official Temptorships on Earth. It is a custom I willingly obey. I well remember with what trepidation I awaited my own first appointment. I hope, and believe, that each one of you has the same uneasiness tonight. Your career is before you. Hell expects and demands that it should be — as mine was — one of unbroken success. If it is not, you know what awaits you.

I have no wish to reduce the wholesome and realistic element of terror, the unremitting anxiety, which must act as the lash and spur to your endeavours. How often you will envy the humans their faculty of sleep! Yet at the same time I would wish to put before you a moderately encouraging view of the strategical situation as a whole.

Your dreaded Principal has included in a speech full of points something like an apology for the banquet which he has set before us. Well, gentledevils, no one blames *him*. But it would be in vain to deny that the human souls on whose anguish we have been feasting tonight were of pretty poor quality. Not all the most skillful cookery of our tormentors could make them better than insipid.

Oh, to get one's teeth again into a Farinata, a Henry VIII, or even a Hitler! There was real crackling there; something to crunch; a rage, an egotism, a cruelty only just less robust than our own. It put up a delicious resistance to being devoured. It warmed your inwards when you'd got it down.

Instead of this, what have we had tonight? There was a municipal authority with Graft sauce. But personally I could not detect in him the flavour of a really passionate and brutal avarice such as delighted one in the great tycoons of the last century. Was he not unmistakably a Little Man — a

creature of the petty rake-off pocketed with a petty joke in private and denied with the stalest platitudes in his public utterances — a grubby little nonentity who had drifted into corruption, only just realizing that he was corrupt, and chiefly because everyone else did it? Then there was the lukewarm Casserole of Adulterers. Could you find in it any trace of a fully inflamed, defiant, rebellious, insatiable lust? I couldn't. They all tasted to me like undersexed morons who had blundered or trickled into the wrong beds in automatic response to sexy advertisements, or to make themselves feel modern and emancipated, or to reassure themselves about their virility or their "normalcy," or even because they had nothing else to do. Frankly, to me who have tasted Messalina and Cassanova, they were nauseating. The Trade Unionist stuffed with sedition was perhaps a shade better. He had done some real harm. He had, not quite unknowingly, worked for bloodshed, famine, and the extinction of liberty. Yes, in a way. But what a way! He thought of those ultimate objectives so little. Toeing the party line, self-importance, and above all mere routine, were what really dominated his life.

But now comes the point. Gastronomically, all this is deplorable. But I hope none of us puts gastronomy first. Is it not, in another and far more serious way, full of hope and promise?

Consider, first, the mere quantity. The quality may be wretched; but we never had souls (of a sort) in more abundance.

And then the triumph. We are tempted to say that such souls — or such residual puddles of what once was soul — are hardly worth damning. Yes, but the Enemy (for whatever inscrutable and perverse reason) thought them worth trying to save. Believe me, He did. You youngsters who have not yet been on active duty have no idea with what labour, with what delicate skill, each of these miserable creatures was finally captured.

The difficulty lay in their very smallness and flabbiness. Here were vermin so muddled in mind, so passively responsive to environment, that it was very hard to raise them to that level of clarity and deliberateness at which mortal sin becomes possible. To raise them just enough; but not that fatal millimetre of "too much." For then, of course, all would possibly have been lost. They might have seen; they might have repented. On the other hand, if they had been raised too little, they would very possibly have qualified for Limbo, as creatures suitable neither for Heaven nor for Hell;

things that, having failed to make the grade, are allowed to sink into a more or less contented subhumanity forever.

In each individual choice of what the Enemy would call the “wrong” turning, such creatures are at first hardly, if at all, in a state of full spiritual responsibility. They do not understand either the source or the real character of the prohibitions they are breaking. Their consciousness hardly exists apart from the social atmosphere that surrounds them. And of course we have contrived that their very language should be all smudge and blur; what would be a *bribe* in someone else’s profession is a *tip* or a *present* in theirs. The job of their Tempters was first, or course, to harden these choices of the Hellward roads into a habit by steady repetition. But then (and this was all-important) to turn the habit into a principle — a principle the creature is prepared to defend. After that, all will go well. Conformity to the social environment, at first merely instinctive or even mechanical — how should a *jelly* not conform? — now becomes an unacknowledged creed or ideal of Togetherness or Being Like Folks. Mere ignorance of the law they break now turns into a vague theory about it — remember, they know no history — a theory expressed by calling it *conventional* or *Puritan* or *bourgeois* “morality.” Thus gradually there comes to exist at the center of the creature a hard, tight, settled core of resolution to go on being what it is, and even to resist moods that might tend to alter it. It is a very small core; not at all reflective (they are too ignorant) nor defiant (their emotional and imaginative poverty excludes that); almost, in its own way, prim and demure; like a pebble, or a very young cancer. But it will serve our turn. Here at last is a real and deliberate, though not fully articulate, rejection of what the Enemy calls Grace.

These, then, are two welcome phenomena. First, the abundance of our captures: however tasteless our fare, we are in no danger of famine. And secondly, the triumph: the skill of our Tempters has never stood higher. But the third moral, which I have not yet drawn, is the most important of all.

The sort of souls on whose despair and ruin we have — well, I won’t say feasted, but at any rate subsisted — tonight are increasing in numbers and will continue to increase. Our advices from Lower Command assure us that this is so; our directives warn us to orient all our tactics in view of this situation. The “great” sinners, those in whom vivid and genial passions have been pushed beyond the bounds and in whom an immense concentration of will has been devoted to objects which the Enemy abhors,

will not disappear. But they will grow rarer. Our catches will be ever more numerous; but they will consist increasingly of trash — trash which we should once have thrown to Cerberus and the hellhounds as unfit for diabolical consumption. And there are two things I want you to understand about this: First, that however depressing it might seem, it is really a change for the better. And secondly, I would draw your attention to the means by which it has been brought about.

It is a change for the better. The great (and toothsome) sinners are made out of the very same material as those horrible phenomena the great Saints. The virtual disappearance of such material may mean insipid meals for us. But is it not utter frustration and famine for the Enemy? He did not create the humans — He did not become one of them and die among them by torture — in order to produce candidates for Limbo, "failed" humans. He wanted to make them Saints; gods; things like Himself. Is the dullness of your present fare not a very small price to pay for the delicious knowledge that His whole great experiment is petering out? But not only that. As the great sinners grow fewer, and the majority lose all individuality, the great sinners become far more effective agents for us. Every dictator or even demagogue — almost every film star or [rock star] — can now draw tens of thousands of the human sheep with him. They give themselves (what there is of them) to him; in him, to us. There may come a time when we shall have no need to bother about *individual* temptation at all, except for the few. Catch the bellwether, and his whole flock comes after him.

But do you realize how we have succeeded in reducing so many of the human race to the level of ciphers? This has not come about by accident. It has been our answer — and a magnificent answer it is — to one of the most serious challenges we ever had to face.

Let me recall to your minds what the human situation was in the latter half of the nineteenth century — the period at which I ceased to be a practising Tempter and was rewarded with an administrative post. The great movement toward liberty and equality among men had by then borne solid fruits and grown mature. Slavery had been abolished. The American War of Independence had been won. The French Revolution had succeeded. In that movement there had originally been many elements which were in our favour. Much Atheism, much Anticlericalism, much envy and thirst for revenge, even some (rather absurd) attempts to revive Paganism, were mixed in it. It was not easy to determine what our own attitude should be.

On the one hand it was a bitter blow to us — it still is — that any sort of men who had been hungry should be fed or any who had long worn chains should have them struck off. But on the other hand, there was in the movement so much rejection of faith, so much materialism, secularism, and hatred, that we felt we were bound to encourage it.

But by the latter part of the century the situation was much simpler, and also much more ominous. In the English sector (where I saw most of my front-line service) a horrible thing had happened. The Enemy, with His usual sleight of hand, had largely appropriated this progressive or liberalizing movement and perverted it to His own ends. Very little of its old anti-Christianity remained. The dangerous phenomenon called Christian Socialism was rampant. Factory owners of the good old type who grew rich on sweated labor, instead of being assassinated by their workpeople — we could have used that — were being frowned upon by their own class. The rich were increasingly giving up their powers, not in the face of revolution and compulsion, but in obedience to their own consciences. As for the poor who benefited by this, they were behaving in a most disappointing fashion. Instead of using their new liberties — as we reasonably hoped and expected — for massacre, rape, and looting, or even for perpetual intoxication, they were perversely engaged in becoming cleaner, more orderly, more thrifty, better educated, and even more virtuous. Believe me, gentledevils, the threat of something like a really healthy state of society seemed then perfectly serious.

Thanks to Our Father Below, the threat was averted. Our counterattack was on two levels. On the deepest level our leaders contrived to call into full life an element which had been implicit in the movement from its earliest days. Hidden in the heart of this striving for Liberty there was also a deep hatred of personal freedom. That invaluable man Rousseau first revealed it. In his perfect democracy, only the state religion is permitted, slavery is restored, and the individual is told that he has really willed (though he didn’t know it) whatever the Government tells him to do. From that starting point, via Hegel (another indispensable propagandist on our side), we easily contrived both the Nazi and the Communist state. Even in England we were pretty successful. I heard the other day that in that country a man could not, without a permit, cut down his own tree with his own axe, make it into planks with his own saw, and use the planks to build a toolshed in his own garden.

Such was our counterattack on one level. You, who are mere beginners, will not be entrusted with work of that kind. You will be attached as Tempters to private persons. Against them, or through them, our counterattack takes a different form.

Democracy is the word with which you must lead them by the nose. The good work which our philological experts have already done in the corruption of human language makes it unnecessary to warn you that they should never be allowed to give this word a clear and definable meaning. They won't. It will never occur to them that *democracy* is properly the name of a political system, even a system of voting, and that this has only the most remote and tenuous connection with what you are trying to sell them. Nor of course must they ever be allowed to raise Aristotle's question: whether "democratic behaviour" means the behaviour that democracies like or the behaviour that will preserve a democracy. For if they did, it could hardly fail to occur to them that these need not be the same.

You are to use the word purely as an incantation; if you like, purely for its selling power. It is a name they venerate. And of course it is connected with the political ideal that men should be equally treated. You then make a stealthy transition in their minds from this political ideal to a factual belief that all men *are* equal. Especially the man you are working on. As a result you can use the word *democracy* to sanction in his thought the most degrading (and also the least enjoyable) of human feelings. You can get him to practise, not only without shame but with a positive glow of self-approval, conduct which, if undefended by the magic word, would be universally derided.

The feeling I mean is of course that which prompts a man to say *I'm as good as you.*

The first and most obvious advantage is that you thus induce him to enthrone at the centre of his life a good, solid, resounding lie. I don't mean merely that his statement is false in fact, that he is no more equal to everyone he meets in kindness, honesty, and good sense than in height or waist measurement. I mean that he does not believe it himself. No man who says *I'm as good as you* believes it. He would not say it if he did. The St. Bernard never says it to the toy dog, nor the scholar to the dunce, nor the employable to the bum, nor the pretty woman to the plain. The claim to equality, outside the strictly political field, is made only by those who feel themselves to be in some way inferior. What it expresses is precisely the

itching, smarting, writhing awareness of an inferiority which the patient refuses to accept.

And therefore resents. Yes, and therefore resents every kind of superiority in others; denigrates it; wishes its annihilation. Presently he suspects every mere difference of being a claim to superiority. No one must be different from himself in voice, clothes, manners, recreations, choice of food: “Here is someone who speaks English rather more clearly and euphoniously than I — it must be a vile, upstage, la-di-da affectation. Here’s a fellow who says he doesn’t like hot dogs — thinks himself too good for them, no doubt. Here’s a man who hasn’t turned on the jukebox — he’s one of those goddamn highbrows and is doing it to show off. If they were honest-to-God all-right Joes they’d be like me. They’ve no business to be different. It’s undemocratic.”

Now, this useful phenomenon is in itself by no means new. Under the name of Envy it has been known to humans for thousands of years. But hitherto they always regarded it as the most odious, and also the most comical, of vices. Those who were aware of feeling it felt it with shame; those who were not gave it no quarter in others. The delightful novelty of the present situation is that you can sanction it — make it respectable and even laudable — by the incantatory use of the word *democratic.*

Under the influence of this incantation those who are in any or every way inferior can labour more wholeheartedly and successfully than ever before to pull down everyone else to their own level. But that is not all. Under the same influence, those who come, or could come, nearer to a full humanity, actually draw back from fear of being undemocratic. I am credibly informed that young humans now sometimes suppress an incipient taste for classical music or good literature because it might prevent their Being Like Folks; that people who would really wish to be — and are offered the Grace which would enable them to be — honest, chaste, or temperate refuse it. To accept might make them Different, might offend against the Way of Life, take them out of Togetherness, impair their Integration with the Group. They might (horror of horrors!) become individuals.

All is summed up in the prayer which a young female human is said to have uttered recently: “O God, make me a normal twentieth century girl!” Thanks to our labours, this will mean increasingly: “Make me a minx, a moron, and a parasite.”

Meanwhile, as a delightful by-product, the few (fewer every day) who will not be made Normal or Regular and Like Folks and Integrated increasingly become in reality the prigs and cranks which the rabble would in any case have believed them to be. For suspicion often creates what it expects. ("Since, whatever I do, the neighbors are going to think me a witch, or a Communist agent, I might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, and become one in reality.") As a result we now have an intelligentsia which, though very small, is very useful to the cause of Hell.

But that is a mere by-product. What I want to fix your attention on is the vast, overall movement towards the discrediting, and finally the elimination, of every kind of human excellence – moral, cultural, social, or intellectual. And is it not pretty to notice how "democracy" (in the incantatory sense) is now doing for us the work that was once done by the most ancient Dictatorships, and by the same methods? You remember how one of the Greek Dictators (they called them "tyrants" then) sent an envoy to another Dictator to ask his advice about the principles of government. The second Dictator led the envoy into a field of grain, and there he snicked off with his cane the top of every stalk that rose an inch or so above the general level. The moral was plain. Allow no preeminence among your subjects. Let no man live who is wiser or better or more famous or even handsomer than the mass. Cut them all down to a level: all slaves, all ciphers, all nobodies. All equals. Thus Tyrants could practise, in a sense, "democracy." But now "democracy" can do the same work without any tyranny other than her own. No one need now go through the field with a cane. The little stalks will now of themselves bite the tops off the big ones. The big ones are beginning to bite off their own in their desire to Be Like Stalks.

I have said that to secure the damnation of these little souls, these creatures that have almost ceased to be individual, is a laborious and tricky work. But if proper pains and skill are expended, you can be fairly confident of the result. The great sinners *seem* easier to catch. But then they are incalculable. After you have played them for seventy years, the Enemy may snatch them from your claws in the seventy-first. They are capable, you see, of real repentance. They are conscious of real guilt. They are, if things take the wrong turn, as ready to defy the social pressures around them for the Enemy's sake as they were to defy them for ours. It is in some ways more troublesome to track and swat an evasive wasp than to shoot, at

close range, a wild elephant. But the elephant is more troublesome if you miss.

My own experience, as I have said, was mainly on the English sector, and I still get more news from it than from any other. It may be said that what I am now going to say will not apply so fully to the sectors in which some of you may be operating. But you can make the necessary adjustments when you get there. Some application it will almost certainly have. If it has too little, you must labor to make the country you are dealing with more like what England already is.

In that promising land the spirit of *I'm as good as you* has already begun something more than a generally social influence. It begins to work itself into their educational system. How far its operations there have gone at the present moment, I should not like to say with certainty. Nor does it matter. Once you have grasped the tendency, you can easily predict its future developments; especially as we ourselves will play our part in the developing. The basic principle of the new education is to be that dunces and idlers must not be made to feel inferior to intelligent and industrious pupils. That would be "undemocratic." These differences between pupils – for they are obviously and nakedly *individual* differences – must be disguised. This can be done at various levels. At universities, examinations must be framed so that nearly all the students get good marks. Entrance examinations must be framed so that all, or nearly all, citizens can go to universities, whether they have any power (or wish) to profit by higher education or not. At schools, the children who are too stupid or lazy to learn languages and mathematics and elementary science can be set to doing things that children used to do in their spare time. Let, them, for example, make mud pies and call it modelling. But all the time there must be no faintest hint that they are inferior to the children who are at work. Whatever nonsense they are engaged in must have – I believe the English already use the phrase – "parity of esteem." An even more drastic scheme is not possible. Children who are fit to proceed to a higher class may be artificially kept back, because the others would get a *trauma* — Beelzebub, what a useful word! – by being left behind. The bright pupil thus remains democratically fettered to his own age group throughout his school career, and a boy who would be capable of tackling Aeschylus or Dante sits listening to his coeval's attempts to spell out A CAT SAT ON A MAT.

In a word, we may reasonably hope for the virtual abolition of education when *I'm as good as you* has fully had its way. All incentives to learn and all penalties for not learning will be prevented; who are they to overtop their fellows? And anyway the teachers – or should I say, nurses? – will be far too busy reassuring the dunces and patting them on the back to waste any time on real teaching. We shall no longer have to plan and toil to spread imperturbable conceit and incurable ignorance among men. The little vermin themselves will do it for us.

Of course, this would not follow unless all education became state education. But it will. That is part of the same movement. Penal taxes, designed for that purpose, are liquidating the Middle Class, the class who were prepared to save and spend and make sacrifices in order to have their children privately educated. The removal of this class, besides linking up with the abolition of education, is, fortunately, an inevitable effect of the spirit that says *I'm as good as you.* This was, after all, the social group which gave to the humans the overwhelming majority of their scientists, physicians, philosophers, theologians, poets, artists, composers, architects, jurists, and administrators. If ever there were a bunch of stalks that needed their tops knocked off, it was surely they. As an English politician remarked not long ago, "A democracy does not want great men."

It would be idle to ask of such a creature whether by *want* it meant "need" or "like." But you had better be clear. For here Aristotle's question comes up again.

We, in Hell, would welcome the disappearance of democracy in the strict sense of that word, the political arrangement so called. Like all forms of government, it often works to our advantage, but on the whole less often than other forms. And what we must realize is that "democracy" in the diabolical sense (*I'm as good as you,* Being Like Folks, Togetherness) is the fittest instrument we could possibly have for extirpating political democracies from the face of the earth.

For "democracy" or the "democratic spirit" (diabolical sense) leads to a nation without great men, a nation mainly of subliterates, full of the cocksureness which flattery breeds on ignorance, and quick to snarl or whimper at the first sign of criticism. And that is what Hell wishes every democratic people to be. For when such a nation meets in conflict a nation where children have been made to work at school, where talent is placed in

high posts, and where the ignorant mass are allowed no say at all in public affairs, only one result is possible.

The democracies were surprised lately when they found that Russia had got ahead of them in science. What a delicious specimen of human blindness! If the whole tendency of their society is opposed to every sort of excellence, why did they expect their scientists to excel?

It is our function to encourage the behaviour, the manners, the whole attitude of mind, which democracies naturally like and enjoy, because these are the very things which, if unchecked, will destroy democracy. You would almost wonder that even humans don't see it themselves. Even if they don't read Aristotle (that would be undemocratic) you would have thought the French Revolution would have taught them that the behaviour aristocrats naturally like is not the behaviour that preserves aristocracy. They might then have applied the same principle to all forms of government.

But I would not end on that note. I would not – Hell forbid! Encourage in your own minds that delusion which you must carefully foster in the minds of your human victims. I mean the delusion that the fate of nations is *in itself* more important than that of individual souls. The overthrow of free peoples and the multiplication of slave states are for us a means (besides, of course, being fun); but the real end is the destruction of individuals. For only individuals can be saved or damned, can become sons of the Enemy or food for us. The ultimate value, for us, of any revolution, war, or famine lies in the individual anguish, treachery, hatred, rage, and despair which it may produce. *I'm as good as you* is a useful means for the destruction of democratic societies. But it has a far deeper value as an end in itself, as a state of mind which, necessarily excluding humility, charity, contentment, and all the pleasures of gratitude or admiration, turns a human being away from almost every road which might finally lead him to Heaven.

But now for the pleasantest part of my duty. It falls to my lot to propose on behalf of the guests the health of Principal Slubgob and the Tempters' Training College. Fill your glasses. What is this I see? What is this delicious bouquet I inhale? Can it be? Mr. Principal, I unsay all my hard words about the dinner. I see, and smell, that even under wartime conditions the College cellar still has a few dozen of sound old vintage Well, well, well. This is like old times. Hold it beneath your noses for a moment, gentledevils. Hold it up to the light. Look at those fiery streaks that writhe and tangle in its dark heart, as if they were contending. And so they are. You know how this

wine is blended? Different types of Pharisee have been harvested, trodden, and fermented together to produce its subtle flavour. Types that were most antagonistic to one another on Earth. Some were all rules and relics and rosaries; others were all drab clothes, long faces, and petty traditional abstinences from wine or cards or the theatre. Both had in common their self-righteousness and an almost infinite distance between their actual outlook and anything the Enemy really is or commands. The wickedness of other religions was the really live doctrine in the religion of each; slander was its gospel and denigration its litany. How they hated each other up where the sun shone! How much more they hate each other now that they are forever conjoined but not reconciled. Their astonishment, their resentment, at the combination, the festering of their eternally impenitent spite, passing into our spiritual digestion, will work like fire. Dark fire. All said and done, my friends, it will be an ill day for us if what most humans mean by “Religion” ever vanishes from the Earth. It can still send us the truly delicious sins. Nowhere do we tempt so successfully as on the very steps of the altar.

Your Imminence, your Disgraces, my Thorns, Shadies, and Gentledevils: I give you the toast of – Principal Slubgob and the College!

THE SHODDY LANDS

Being, as I believe, of sound mind and in normal health, I am sitting down at 11 p in to record, while the memory of it is still fresh, the curious experience I had this morning.

It happened in my rooms in college, where I am now writing, and began in the most ordinary way with a call on the telephone. “This is Durward,” the voice said. “I’m speaking from the porter’s lodge. I’m in Oxford for a few hours. Can I come across and see you?” I said yes, of course. Durward is a former pupil and a decent enough fellow; I would be glad to see him again. When he turned up at my door a few moments later I was rather annoyed to find that he had a young woman in tow. I loathe either men or women who speak as if they were coming to see you alone and then spring a husband or a wife, a fiancé or a fiancée on you. One ought to be warned.

The girl was neither very pretty nor very plain, and of course she ruined my conversation. We couldn’t talk about any of the things Durward and I had in common because that would have meant leaving her out in the cold. And she and Durward couldn’t talk about the things they (presumably) had in common because that would have left me out. He introduced her as Peggy and said they were engaged. After that, the three of us just sat and did social patter about the weather and the news.

I tend to stare when I am bored, and I am afraid I must have stared at that girl, without the least interest, a good deal. At any rate I was certainly doing so at the moment when the strange experience began. Quite suddenly, without any faintness or nausea or anything of that sort, I found myself in a wholly different place. The familiar room vanished; Durward and Peggy vanished. I was alone. And I was standing up.

My first idea was that something had gone wrong with my eyes. I was not in darkness, nor even in twilight, but everything seemed curiously blurred. There was a sort of daylight, but when I looked up I didn’t see anything that I could very confidently call a sky. It might, just possibly, be the sky of a very featureless, dull, grey day, but it lacked any suggestion of distance. “Nondescript” was the word I would have used to describe it. Lower down and closer to me, there were upright shapes, vaguely green in colour, but of a very dingy green. I peered at them for quite a long time before it occurred to me that they might be trees. I went nearer and

examined them; and the impression they made on me is not easy to put into words. “Trees of a sort,” or, “Well, trees, if you call *that* a tree,” or, “An attempt at trees,” would come near it. They were the crudest, shabbiest apology for trees you could imagine. They had no real anatomy, even no real branches; they were more like lamp-posts with great, shapeless blobs of green stuck on top of them. Most children could draw better trees from memory.

It was while I was inspecting them that I first noticed the light: a steady, silvery gleam some distance away in the Shoddy Wood. I turned my steps toward it at once, and then first noticed what I was walking on. It was comfortable stuff, soft and cool and springy to the feet; but when you looked down it was horribly disappointing to the eye. It was, in a very rough way, the colour of grass; the colour grass has on a very dull day when you look at it while thinking pretty hard about something else. But there were no separate blades in it. I stooped down and tried to find them; the closer one looked, the vaguer it seemed to become. It had in fact just the same smudged, unfinished quality as the trees: shoddy.

The full astonishment of my adventure was now beginning to descend on me. With it came fear, but, even more, a sort of disgust I doubt if it can be fully conveyed to anyone who has not had a similar experience. I felt as if I had suddenly been banished from the real, bright, concrete, and prodigally complex world into some sort of second-rate universe that had all been put together on the cheap; by an imitator. But I kept on walking toward the silvery light.

Here and there in the shoddy grass there were patches of what looked, from a distance, like flowers. But each patch, when you came close to it, was as bad as the trees and the grass. You couldn’t make out what species they were supposed to be. And they had no real stems or petals; they were mere blobs. As for the colours, I could do better myself with a shilling paintbox.

I should have liked very much to believe that I was dreaming, but somehow I knew I wasn’t. My real conviction was that I had died. I wished — with a fervour that no other wish of mine has ever achieved — that I had lived a better life.

A disquieting hypothesis, as you see, was forming in my mind. But next moment it was gloriously blown to bits. Amidst all that shoddiness I came suddenly upon daffodils. Real daffodils, trim and cool and perfect. I bent

down and touched them; I straightened my back again and gorged my eyes on their beauty. And not only their beauty but — what mattered to me even more at that moment — their, so to speak, honesty; real, honest, finished daffodils, live things that would bear examination.

But where, then, could I be? “Let’s get on to that light. Perhaps everything will be made clear there. Perhaps it is at the centre of this queer place.”

I reached the light sooner than I expected, but when I reached it I had something else to think about. For now I met the Walking Things. I have to call them that, for “people” is just what they weren’t. They were of human size and they walked on two legs; but they were, for the most part, no more like true men than the Shoddy Trees had been like trees. They were indistinct. Though they were certainly not naked, you couldn’t make out what sort of clothes they were wearing, and though there was a pale blob at the top of each, you couldn’t say they had faces. At least that was my first impression. Then I began to notice curious exceptions. Every now and then one of them became partially distinct; a face, a hat, or a dress would stand out in full detail. The odd thing was that the distinct clothes were always women’s clothes, but the distinct faces were always those of men. Both facts made the crowd — at least, to a man of my type — about as uninteresting as it could possibly be. The male faces were not the sort I cared about; a flashy-looking crew — gigolos, fripoons. But they seemed pleased enough with themselves. Indeed they all wore the same look of fatuous admiration.

I now saw where the light was coming from. I was in a sort of street. At least, behind the crowd of Walking Things on each side, there appeared to be shopwindows, and from these the light came. I thrust my way through the crowd on my left — but my thrusting seemed to yield no physical contacts — and had a look at one of the shops.

Here I had a new surprise. It was a jeweller’s, and after the vagueness and general rottenness of most things in that queer place, the sight fairly took my breath away. Everything in that window was perfect; every facet on every diamond distinct, every brooch and tiara finished down to the last perfection of intricate detail. It was good stuff too, as even I could see; there must have been hundreds of thousands of pounds’ worth of it. “Thank Heaven!” I gasped. “But will it keep on?” Hastily I looked at the next shop. It *was* keeping on. This window contained women’s frocks. I’m no judge,

so I can’t say how good they were. The great thing was that they were real, clear, palpable. The shop beyond this one sold women’s shoes. And it was still keeping on. They were real shoes; the toe-pinching and very high-heeled sort which, to my mind, ruins even the prettiest foot, but at any rate real.

I was just thinking to myself that some people would not find this place half as dull as I did, when the queerness of the whole thing came over me afresh. “Where the Hell,” I began, but immediately changed it to “Where on earth” — for the other word seemed, in all the circumstances, singularly unfortunate— “Where on earth have I got to? Trees no good; grass no good; sky no good; flowers no good, except the daffodils; people no good; shops first class. What can that possibly mean?”

The shops, by the way, were all women’s shops, so I soon lost interest in them. I walked the whole length of that street, and then, a little way ahead, I saw sunlight.

Not that it was proper sunlight, of course. There was no break in the dull sky to account for it, no beam slanting down. All that, like so many other things in that world, had not been attended to. There was simply a patch of sunlight on the ground, unexplained, impossible (except that it was there), and therefore not at all cheering; hideous, rather, and disquieting. But I had little time to think about it; for something in the centre of that lighted patch — something I had taken for a small building — suddenly moved, and with a sickening shock I realized that I was looking at a gigantic human shape. It turned round. Its eyes looked straight into mine.

It was not only gigantic, but it was the only complete human shape I had seen since I entered that world. It was female. It was lying on sunlit sand, on a beach apparently, though there was no trace of any sea. It was very nearly naked, but it had a wisp of some brightly coloured stuff round its hips and another round its breasts; like what a modern girl wears on a real beach. The general effect was repulsive, but I saw in a moment or two that this was due to the appalling size. Considered abstractly, the giantess had a good figure; almost a perfect figure, if you like the modern type. The face — but as soon as I had really taken in the face, I shouted out.

“Oh, I say! There you are. Where’s Durward? And where’s this? What’s happened to us?”

But the eyes went on looking straight at me and through me. I was obviously invisible and inaudible to her. But there was no doubt who she

was. She was Peggy. That is, she was recognizable; but she was Peggy changed. I don't mean only the size. As regards the figure, it was Peggy improved. I don't think anyone could have denied that. As to the face, opinions might differ. I would hardly have called the change an improvement myself. There was no more — I doubt if there was as much — sense or kindness or honesty in this face than in the original Peggy's. But it was certainly more regular. The teeth in particular, which I had noticed as a weak point in the old Peggy, were perfect, as in a good denture. The lips were fuller. The complexion was so perfect that it suggested a very expensive doll. The expression I can best describe by saying that Peggy now looked exactly like the girl in all the advertisements.

If I had to marry either I should prefer the old, unimproved Peggy. But even in Hell I hoped it wouldn't come to that.

And, as I watched, the background — the absurd little bit of sea-beach — began to change. The giantess stood up. She was on a carpet. Walls and windows and furniture grew up around her. She was in a bedroom. Even I could tell it was a very expensive bedroom though not at all my idea of good taste. There were plenty of flowers, mostly orchids and roses, and these were even better finished than the daffodils had been. One great bouquet (with a card attached to it) was as good as any I have ever seen. A door which stood open behind her gave me a view into a bathroom which I should rather like to own, a bathroom with a sunk bath. In it there was a French maid fussing about with towels and bath salts and things. The maid was not nearly so finished as the roses, or even the towels, but what face she had looked more French than any real Frenchwoman's could.

The gigantic Peggy now removed her beach equipment and stood up naked in front of a full-length mirror. Apparently she enjoyed what she saw there; I can hardly express how much I didn't. Partly the size (it's only fair to remember that) but, still more, something that came as a terrible shock to me, though I suppose modern lovers and husbands must be hardened to it. Her body was (of course) brown, like the bodies in the sunbathing advertisements. But round her hips, and again round her breasts, where the coverings had been, there were two bands of dead white which looked, by contrast, like leprosy. It made me for the moment almost physically sick. What staggered me was that she could stand and admire it. Had she no idea how it would affect ordinary male eyes? A very disagreeable conviction grew in me that this was a subject of no interest to her; that all her clothes

and bath salts and two-piece swimsuits, and indeed the voluptuousness of her every look and gesture, had not, and never had had, the meaning which every man would read, and was intended to read, into them. They were a huge overture to an opera in which she had no interest at all; a coronation procession with no Queen at the centre of it; gestures, gestures about nothing.

And now I became aware that two noises had been going for a long time; the only noises I ever heard in that world. But they were coming from outside, from somewhere beyond that low, grey covering which served the Shoddy Lands instead of a sky. Both the noises were knockings; patient knockings, infinitely remote, as if two outsiders, two excluded people, were knocking on the walls of that world. The one was faint, but hard; and with it came a voice saying, “Peggy, Peggy, let me in.” Durward’s voice, I thought. But how shall I describe the other knocking? It was, in some curious way, soft; “soft as wool and sharp as death,” soft but unendurably heavy, as if at each blow some enormous hand fell on the outside of the Shoddy Sky and covered it completely. And with that knocking came a voice at whose sound my bones turned to water: “Child, child, child, let me in before the night comes.”

Before the night comes — instantly common daylight rushed back upon me. I was in my own rooms again and my two visitors were before me. They did not appear to notice that anything unusual had happened to me, though, for the rest of that conversation, they might well have supposed I was drunk. I was so happy. Indeed, in a way I was drunk; drunk with the sheer delight of being back in the real world, free, outside the horrible little prison of that land. There were birds singing close to a window; there was real sunlight falling on a panel. That panel needed repainting; but I could have gone down on my knees and kissed its very shabbiness — the precious real, solid thing it was. I noticed a tiny cut on Durward’s cheek where he must have cut himself shaving that morning; and I felt the same about it. Indeed anything was enough to make me happy; I mean, any Thing, as long as it really was a Thing.

Well, those are the facts; everyone may make what he pleases of them. My own hypothesis is the obvious one which will have occurred to most readers. It may be too obvious; I am quite ready to consider rival theories. My view is that by the operation of some unknown psychological — or pathological — law, I was, for a second or so, let into Peggy’s mind; at least

to the extent of seeing her world, the world as it exists for her. At the centre of that world is a swollen image of herself, remodelled to be as like the girls in the advertisements as possible. Round this are grouped clear and distinct images of the things she really cares about. Beyond that, the whole earth and sky are a vague blur. The daffodils and roses are especially instructive. Flowers only exist for her if they are the sort that can be cut and put in vases or sent as bouquets; flowers in themselves, flowers as you see them in the woods, are negligible.

As I say, this is probably not the only hypothesis which will fit the facts. But it has been a most disquieting experience. Not only because I am sorry for poor Durward. Suppose this sort of thing were to become common? And how if, some other time, I were not the explorer but the explored?

THE MAN BORN BLIND

“BLESS us!” said Mary. “There’s eleven o’clock. And you’re nearly asleep, Robin.”

She rose with a bustle of familiar noises, bundling her and her little cardboard boxes into the work-basket. “Come on, lazy-bones!” she said. “You want to be nice and rested for your first walk tomorrow.”

“That reminds me,” said Robin, and then stopped. His heart was beating so loudly that he was afraid it would make his voice sound odd. He had to wait before he went on. “I suppose,” he said, “there...there’ll be *light* out there — when I go for that walk?”

“What do you mean, dear?” said Mary. “You mean it will be lighter out of doors? Well, yes, I suppose it will. But I must say I always think this is a very light house. This room, now. We’ve had sun on it all day.”

“The sun makes it...hot?” said Robin tentatively.

“What are you talking about?” said Mary, suddenly turning round. She spoke sharply, in what Robin called her ‘governess’ voice.

“I mean,” said Robin, “well, look here, Mary. There’s a thing I’ve been meaning to ask you ever since I came back from the nursing home. I know it’ll sound silly to you. But then it’s different for me. As soon as I knew I had a chance of getting my sight, of course I looked forward. The last thing I thought before the operation was “light”. Then all those days afterwards, waiting till they took the bandages off -”

“Of course, darling. That was only natural.”

“Then, then, why don’t I...I mean, where is the light?”

She laid her hand on his arm. Three weeks of sight had not yet taught him to read the expression of a face, but he knew by her touch the great warm wave of stupid, frightened affection that had welled up in her.

“Why not come to bed, Robin dear?” she said. “If it’s anything important, can’t we talk about it in the morning? You know you’re tired now.”

“No. I’ve got to have this out. You’ve got to tell me about light. Great Scot - don’t you want me to know?”

She sat down suddenly with a formal calmness that alarmed him.

“Very well, Robin,” she said. “Just ask me anything you like. There’s nothing to be worried about - is there?”

“Well then, first of all, there’s light in this room at present?”

“Of course there is.”

“Then were is it?”

“Why, all around us.”

“Can you see it?”

“Yes.”

“Then why can’t I?”

“But, Robin, you can. Dear, do be sensible. You can see me, can’t you, and the mantelpiece, and the table and everything?”

“Are those light? Is that all it means? Are you light? Is the mantelpiece light? Is the table light?”

“Oh! I see. No. Of course not. That’s the light,” and she pointed to the bulb, roofed with its broad pink shade, that hung from the ceiling.

“If that’s light, why did you tell me the light was all round us?”

“I mean, that’s what gives the light. The light comes from there.”

“Then where is the light itself? You see, you won’t say. Nobody will say. You tell me the light is here and the light is there, and this is in the light and that is in the light, and yesterday you told me I was in your light, and now you say that light is a bit of yellow wire in a glass bulb hanging from the ceiling. Call that light? Is that what Milton was talking about? What are you crying about? If you don’t know what light is, why can’t you say so? If the operation has been a failure and I can’t see properly after all, tell me. If there’s no such thing - if it was all a fairy tale from the beginning - tell me. But for God’s sake -”

“Robin! Robin! Don’t. Don’t go on like that.”

“Go on like what?” The he gave up and apologized and comforted her, and they went to bed.

A blind man has few friends; a blind man who has received his sight has, in a sense, none. He belongs neither to the world of the blind nor to that of the seeing, and no one can share his experience. After that night’s conversation Robin never mentioned to anyone his problem about light. He knew he would only be suspected of madness. When Mary took him out the next day for his first walk he replied to everything she said, “It’s lovely - all lovely, just let me drink it in,” and she was satisfied. She interpreted his quick glances as glances of delight. In reality, of course, he was searching, searching with a hunger that had already something of desperation in it. Even had he dared, he knew it would be useless to ask her of any of the

objects he saw, “Is that light?” He could see himself that she would only answer, “No. That’s green” (or ‘blue’, or ‘yellow’, or ‘a field’, or ‘a tree’ or ‘a car’). Nothing could be done until he had learned to go for walks by himself.

About five weeks later Mary had a headache and took breakfast in bed. As Robin came downstairs he was for a moment shocked to notice the sweet feeling of escape that came with her absence. Then, with a long, shameless sigh of comfort, he deliberately closed his eyes and groped across the dining-room to his bookcase - for this one morning he would give up the tedious business of guiding himself by his eyes and judging distances and would enjoy the old, easy methods of the blind. Without effort his fingers ran down the row of faithful Braille books and picked out the worn volume he wanted. He slipped his hand between the leaves and shuffled across to the table, reading as he went. Still with his eyes shut, he cut up his food, laid down the knife, took the fork up in his left hand and began reading with his right. He realized at once that this was the first meal he had really enjoyed since the recovery of his sight. It was also the first book he had really enjoyed. He had been very quick, everyone told him, in learning to read by sight, but it would never be the real thing. ‘W-a-t-e-r’ could be spelled out; but never, never would those black marks be wedded to their meaning in Braille, where the very shape of the characters communicated an instantaneous sense of liquidity though his fingertips. He took a long time over breakfast. Then he went out.

There was a mist this morning, but he had encountered mists before and this did not trouble him. He walked through it, out of the little town and up the steep hill and then along the field path that ran round the lip of the quarry. Mary had taken him there a few days ago to show him what she called the ‘view’. And while they had sat looking at it she had said, “What a lovely light that is on the hills over there.” It was a wretched clue, for he was now convinced that she knew no more about light than he did, that she used the word but meant nothing by it. He was even beginning to suspect that most of the un-blind were in the same position. What one heard among them was merely the parrot-like repetition of a rumor - the rumor of something that perhaps (it was his last hope) great poets and prophets of old had really known and seen. It was on their testimony alone that he still hoped. It was still just possible that somewhere in the world, not everywhere as fools had tried to make him believe, guarded in deep woods

or divided by distant seas, the thing Light might actually exist, springing up like a fountain or growing like a flower.

The mist was thinning when he came to the lip of the quarry. To left and right more and more trees were visible, and their colours grew brighter and brighter every moment. His own shadow lay before him; he noticed that it became blacker and firmer-edged while he looked at it. The birds were singing too and he was quite hot. “But still no Light”, he muttered. The sun was visible behind him but the pit of the quarry was still full of mist - a shapeless whiteness, now almost blindingly white.

Suddenly he heard a man singing. Someone whom he had not noticed before was standing near the Cliff edge with his legs wide apart dabbing at an object which Robin could not recognize. If he had been more experienced he would have recognized it as a canvas on an easel. As it was, his eyes met the eyes of this wild-looking stranger so unexpectedly that he had blurted out “What are you doing?” before he realized it.

“Doing?” said the stranger with a certain savagery. “Doing? I’m trying to catch light, if you want to know, damn it.”

A smile came over Robin’s face. “So am I,” he said, and came a step nearer.

“Oh - you know too, do you?” said the other. Then, almost vindictively, ‘They’re all fools. How many of them come out to paint on a day like this, eh? How many of them will recognize it if you show ’em? And yet if they could open their eyes, it’s the only sort of day in the whole year when you can really see light, solid light, that you can drink in a cup or bathe in! Look at it!”

He caught Robin roughly by the arm and pointed into the depths at their feet. The fog was at death-grips with the sun, but not a stone on the quarry floor was yet visible. The bath of vapour shone like white metal and unfolded itself continually in ever-widening spirals towards them. “Do you see that?” shouted the violent stranger. “There’s light for you if you like it!”

A second later the expression on the painter’s face changed. “Here!” he cried. “Are you mad?” He made a grab at Robin. But he was too late. Already he was alone on the path. From beneath a new-made and rapidly vanishing rift in the fog there came up no cry but only a sound so sharp and definite that you would hardly expect it to have been made by the fall of anything so soft as a human body; that, and some rattling of loosened stones.

The Poetry Collections



The Battle of the Somme, July 1916 — on his nineteenth birthday Lewis arrived at the front line in the Somme Valley in France, where he experienced trench warfare. On 15 April 1918, he was wounded and two of his colleagues were killed by a British shell falling short of its target. He suffered from depression and homesickness during his convalescence and, upon his recovery in October, he was assigned to duty in Andover, England. He was demobilised in December 1918 and soon restarted his studies.

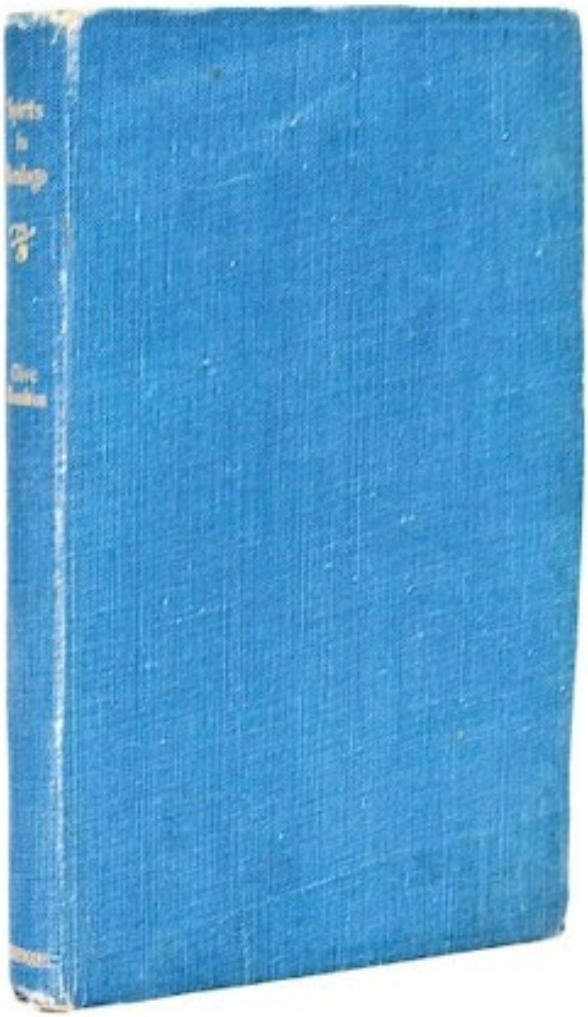
SPIRITS IN BONDAGE



A CYCLE OF LYRICS

Spirits in Bondage (1919) was Lewis' first published work, which originally appeared under the pseudonym Clive Hamilton (Lewis' first name followed by his mother's maiden name). He was twenty years old and had just returned from military service in World War I. His tutor, William T. Kirkpatrick, encouraged him in publishing the book, although it was unusual at Lewis's age, as writers were expected to wait longer before sharing their work. The book is composed of three different sections of poetry — *The Prison House*, *Hesitation* and *The Escape* — featuring verses that take on several styles and rhythms, sharing common themes. Also notable are the author's references to both mythology and the war atmosphere in which he had lived.

The collection stands out among Lewis' writings not only due to its focus on poetry rather than prose, but because the author had not made his conversion to Christianity before its publication. Therefore, its themes and worldviews differ greatly from those for which Lewis is most well known. The book received no reviews and its reception was a slight disappointment for Lewis.



The first edition

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Historical Background

Published under the pseudonym, Clive Hamilton, Spirits in Bondage was C. S. Lewis' first book. Released in 1919 by Heinemann, it was reprinted in 1984 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and included in Lewis' 1994 Collected Poems. It is the first of Lewis' major published works to enter the public domain in the United States. Readers should be aware that in other countries it may still be under copyright protection.

Most of the poems appear to have been written between 1915 and 1918, a period during which Lewis was a student under W. T. Kirkpatrick, a military trainee at Oxford, and a soldier serving in the trenches of World War I. Their outlook varies from Romantic expressions of love for the beauty and simplicity of nature to cynical statements about the presence of evil in this world. In a September 12, 1918 letter to his friend Arthur Greeves, Lewis said that his book was, "mainly strung around the idea that I mentioned to you before — that nature is wholly diabolical & malevolent and that God, if he exists, is outside of and in opposition to the cosmic arrangements." In his cynical poems, Lewis is dealing with the same questions about evil in nature that Alfred Lord Tennyson explored from a position of troubled faith in "In Memoriam A. H." (Stanzas 54f). In a letter written perhaps to reassure his father, Lewis claimed, "You know who the God I blaspheme is and that it is not the God that you or I worship, or any other Christian."

Whatever Lewis believed at that time, the attitude in many of these poems is quite different from the attitude he expressed in his many Christian books from the 1930s on. Attempts in movies and on stage plays to portray Lewis as a sheltered professor who knew little about pain until the death of his wife late in life, have to deal not only with the many tragedies he experienced from a boy on, but also with the disturbing issues he faced in many of these early poems.

Prologue

As of old Phoenician men, to the Tin Isles sailing
Straight against the sunset and the edges of the earth,
Chaunted loud above the storm and the strange sea’s wailing,
Legends of their people and the land that gave them birth —
Sang aloud to Baal-Peor, sang unto the horned maiden,
Sang how they should come again with the Brethon treasure laden,
Sang of all the pride and glory of their hardy enterprise,
How they found the outer islands, where the unknown stars arise;
And the rowers down below, rowing hard as they could row,
Toiling at the stroke and feather through the wet and weary weather,
Even they forgot their burden in the measure of a song,
And the merchants and the masters and the bondsmen all together,
Dreaming of the wondrous islands, brought the gallant ship along;
So in mighty deeps alone on the chainless breezes blown
In my coracle of verses I will sing of lands unknown,
Flying from the scarlet city where a Lord that knows no pity,
Mocks the broken people praying round his iron throne,
Sing about the Hidden Country fresh and full of quiet green.
Sailing over seas uncharted to a port that none has seen.

Part I The Prison House

I.

Satan Speaks

I am Nature, the Mighty Mother,
I am the law: ye have none other.

I am the flower and the dewdrop fresh,
I am the lust in your itching flesh.

I am the battle’s filth and strain,
I am the widow’s empty pain.

I am the sea to smother your breath,
I am the bomb, the falling death.

I am the fact and the crushing reason
To thwart your fantasy’s new-born treason.

I am the spider making her net,
I am the beast with jaws blood-wet.

I am a wolf that follows the sun
And I will catch him ere day be done.

II.

French Nocturne (Monchy-Le-Preux)

Long leagues on either hand the trenches spread
And all is still; now even this gross line
Drinks in the frosty silences divine
The pale, green moon is riding overhead.

The jaws of a sacked village, stark and grim;
Out on the ridge have swallowed up the sun,
And in one angry streak his blood has run
To left and right along the horizon dim.

There comes a buzzing plane: and now, it seems
Flies straight into the moon. Lo! where he steers
Across the pallid globe and surely nears
In that white land some harbour of dear dreams!

False mocking fancy! Once I too could dream,
Who now can only see with vulgar eye
That he’s no nearer to the moon than I
And she’s a stone that catches the sun’s beam.

What call have I to dream of anything?
I am a wolf. Back to the world again,
And speech of fellow-brutes that once were men
Our throats can bark for slaughter: cannot sing.

III.

The Satyr

When the flowery hands of spring
Forth their woodland riches fling,
  Through the meadows, through the valleys
Goes the satyr carolling.

From the mountain and the moor,
Forest green and ocean shore
  All the faerie kin he rallies
Making music evermore.

See! the shaggy pelt doth grow
On his twisted shanks below,
  And his dreadful feet are cloven
Though his brow be white as snow —

Though his brow be clear and white
And beneath it fancies bright,
  Wisdom and high thoughts are woven
And the musics of delight,

Though his temples too be fair
Yet two horns are growing there
  Bursting forth to part asunder
All the riches of his hair.

Faerie maidens he may meet
Fly the horns and cloven feet,
  But, his sad brown eyes with wonder
Seeing-stay from their retreat.

IV.

Victory

Roland is dead, Cuchulain’s crest is low,
The battered war-rear wastes and turns to rust,
And Helen’s eyes and Iseult’s lips are dust
And dust the shoulders and the breasts of snow.

The faerie people from our woods are gone,
No Dryads have I found in all our trees,
No Triton blows his horn about our seas
And Arthur sleeps far hence in Avalon.

The ancient songs they wither as the grass
And waste as doth a garment waxen old,
All poets have been fools who thought to mould
A monument more durable than brass.

For these decay: but not for that decays
The yearning, high, rebellious spirit of man
That never rested yet since life began
From striving with red Nature and her ways.

Now in the filth of war, the baresark shout
Of battle, it is vexed. And yet so oft
Out of the deeps, of old, it rose aloft
That they who watch the ages may not doubt.

Though often bruised, oft broken by the rod,
Yet, like the phoenix, from each fiery bed
Higher the stricken spirit lifts its head
And higher-till the beast become a god.

V.

Irish Nocturne

Now the grey mist comes creeping up
From the waste ocean’s weedy strand
And fills the valley, as a cup
If filled of evil drink in a wizard’s hand;
And the trees fade out of sight,
Like dreary ghosts unhealthily,
Into the damp, pale night,
Till you almost think that a clearer eye could see
Some shape come up of a demon seeking apart
His meat, as Grendel sought in Harte
The thanes that sat by the wintry log —
Grendel or the shadowy mass
Of Balor, or the man with the face of clay,
The grey, grey walker who used to pass
Over the rock-arch nightly to his prey.
But here at the dumb, slow stream where the willows hang,
With never a wind to blow the mists apart,
Bitter and bitter it is for thee. O my heart,
Looking upon this land, where poets sang,
Thus with the dreary shroud
Unwholesome, over it spread,
And knowing the fog and the cloud
In her people’s heart and head
Even as it lies for ever upon her coasts
Making them dim and dreamy lest her sons should ever arise
And remember all their boasts;
For I know that the colourless skies
And the blurred horizons breed
Lonely desire and many words and brooding and never a deed.

VI.

Spooks

Last night I dreamed that I was come again
Unto the house where my beloved dwells
After long years of wandering and pain.

And I stood out beneath the drenching rain
And all the street was bare, and black with night,
But in my true love’s house was warmth and light.

Yet I could not draw near nor enter in,
And long I wondered if some secret sin
Or old, unhappy anger held me fast;

Till suddenly it came into my head
That I was killed long since and lying dead —
Only a homeless wraith that way had passed.

So thus I found my true love’s house again
And stood unseen amid the winter night
And the lamp burned within, a rosy light,
And the wet street was shining in the rain.

VII.

Apology

If men should ask, Despoina, why I tell
Of nothing glad nor noble in my verse
To lighten hearts beneath this present curse
And build a heaven of dreams in real hell,

Go you to them and speak among them thus:
“There were no greater grief than to recall,
Down in the rotting grave where the lithe worms crawl,
Green fields above that smiled so sweet to us.”

Is it good to tell old tales of Troynovant
Or praises of dead heroes, tried and sage,
Or sing the queens of unforgotten age,
Brynhild and Maeve and virgin Bradamant?

How should I sing of them? Can it be good
To think of glory now, when all is done,
And all our labour underneath the sun
Has brought us this-and not the thing we would?

All these were rosy visions of the night,
The loveliness and wisdom feigned of old.
But now we wake. The East is pale and cold,
No hope is in the dawn, and no delight.

VIII.

Ode for New Year’s Day

Woe unto you, ye sons of pain that are this day in earth,
Now cry for all your torment: now curse your hour of birth
And the fathers who begat you to a portion nothing worth.
And Thou, my own beloved, for as brave as ere thou art,
Bow down thine head, Despoina, clasp thy pale arms over it,
Lie low with fast-closed eyelids, clenched teeth, enduring heart,
For sorrow on sorrow is coming wherein all flesh has part.
The sky above is sickening, the clouds of God’s hate cover it,
Body and soul shall suffer beyond all word or thought,
Till the pain and noisy terror that these first years have wrought
Seem but the soft arising and prelude of the storm
That fiercer still and heavier with sharper lightnings fraught
Shall pour red wrath upon us over a world deform.

Thrice happy, O Despoina, were the men who were alive
In the great age and the golden age when still the cycle ran
On upward curve and easily, for them both maid and man
And beast and tree and spirit in the green earth could thrive.
But now one age is ending, and God calls home the stars
And looses the wheel of the ages and sends it spinning back
Amid the death of nations, and points a downward track,
And madness is come over us and great and little wars.
He has not left one valley, one isle of fresh and green
Where old friends could forgather amid the howling wreck.
It’s vainly we are praying. We cannot, cannot check
The Power who slays and puts aside the beauty that has been.

It’s truth they tell, Despoina, none hears the heart’s complaining
For Nature will not pity, nor the red God lend an ear,
Yet I too have been mad in the hour of bitter paining
And lifted up my voice to God, thinking that he could hear
The curse wherewith I cursed Him because the Good was dead.
But lo! I am grown wiser, knowing that our own hearts

Have made a phantom called the Good, while a few years have sped
Over a little planet. And what should the great Lord know of it
Who tosses the dust of chaos and gives the suns their parts?
Hither and thither he moves them; for an hour we see the show of it:
Only a little hour, and the life of the race is done.
And here he builds a nebula, and there he slays a sun
And works his own fierce pleasure. All things he shall fulfill,
And O, my poor Despoina, do you think he ever hears
The wail of hearts he has broken, the sound of human ill?
He cares not for our virtues, our little hopes and fears,
And how could it all go on, love, if he knew of laughter and tears?

Ah, sweet, if a man could cheat him! If you could flee away
Into some other country beyond the rosy West,
To hide in the deep forests and be for ever at rest
From the rankling hate of God and the outworn world’s decay!

IX.

Night

After the fret and failure of this day,
And weariness of thought, O Mother Night,
Come with soft kiss to soothe our care away
And all our little tumults set to right;
Most pitiful of all death’s kindred fair,
Riding above us through the curtained air
On thy dusk car, thou scatterest to the earth
Sweet dreams and drowsy charms of tender might
And lovers’ dear delight before to-morrow’s birth.
Thus art thou wont thy quiet lands to leave
And pillared courts beyond the Milky Way,
Wherein thou tarriest all our solar day
While unsubstantial dreams before thee weave
A foamy dance, and fluttering fancies play
About thy palace in the silver ray
Of some far, moony globe. But when the hour,
The long-expected comes, the ivory gates
Open on noiseless hinge before thy bower
Unbidden, and the jewelled chariot waits
With magic steeds. Thou from the fronting rim
Bending to urge them, whilst thy sea-dark hair
Falls in ambrosial ripples o’er each limb,
With beautiful pale arms, untrammelled, bare
For horsemanship, to those twin chargers fleet
Dost give full rein across the fires that glow
In the wide floor of heaven, from off their feet
Scattering the powdery star-dust as they go.
Come swiftly down the sky, O Lady Night,
Fall through the shadow-country, O most kind,
Shake out thy strands of gentle dreams and light
For chains, wherewith thou still art used to bind
With tenderest love of careful leeches’ art

The bruised and weary heart
In slumber blind.

X.

To Sleep

I will find out a place for thee, O Sleep —
A hidden wood among the hill-tops green,
Full of soft streams and little winds that creep
  The murmuring boughs between.

A hollow cup above the ocean placed
Where nothing rough, nor loud, nor harsh shall be,
But woodland light and shadow interlaced
  And summer sky and sea.

There in the fragrant twilight I will raise
A secret altar of the rich sea sod,
Whereat to offer sacrifice and praise
  Unto my lonely god:

Due sacrifice of his own drowsy flowers,
The deadening poppies in an ocean shell
Round which through all forgotten days and hours
  The great seas wove their spell.

So may he send me dreams of dear delight
And draughts of cool oblivion, quenching pain,
And sweet, half-wakeful moments in the night
  To hear the falling rain.

And when he meets me at the dusk of day
To call me home for ever, this I ask —
That he may lead me friendly on that way
  And wear no frightful mask.

XI.

In Prison

I cried out for the pain of man,
I cried out for my bitter wrath
Against the hopeless life that ran
For ever in a circling path
From death to death since all began;
Till on a summer night
I lost my way in the pale starlight
And saw our planet, far and small,
Through endless depths of nothing fall
A lonely pin-prick spark of light,
Upon the wide, enfolding night,
With leagues on leagues of stars above it,
And powdered dust of stars below —
Dead things that neither hate nor love it
Not even their own loveliness can know,
Being but cosmic dust and dead.
And if some tears be shed,
Some evil God have power,
Some crown of sorrow sit
Upon a little world for a little hour —
Who shall remember? Who shall care for it?

XII.

De Profundis

Come let us curse our Master ere we die,
For all our hopes in endless ruin lie.
The good is dead. Let us curse God most High.

Four thousand years of toil and hope and thought
Wherein man laboured upward and still wrought
New worlds and better, Thou hast made as naught.

We built us joyful cities, strong and fair,
Knowledge we sought and gathered wisdom rare.
And all this time you laughed upon our care,

And suddenly the earth grew black with wrong,
Our hope was crushed and silenced was our song,
The heaven grew loud with weeping. Thou art strong.

Come then and curse the Lord. Over the earth
Gross darkness falls, and evil was our birth
And our few happy days of little worth.

Even if it be not all a dream in vain
The ancient hope that still will rise again —
Of a just God that cares for earthly pain,

Yet far away beyond our labouring night,
He wanders in the depths of endless light,
Singing alone his musics of delight;

Only the far, spent echo of his song
Our dungeons and deep cells can smite along,
And Thou art nearer. Thou art very strong.

O universal strength, I know it well,
It is but froth of folly to rebel;

For thou art Lord and hast the keys of Hell.

Yet I will not bow down to thee nor love thee,
For looking in my own heart I can prove thee,
And know this frail, bruised being is above thee.

Our love, our hope, our thirsting for the right,
Our mercy and long seeking of the light,
Shall we change these for thy relentless might?

Laugh then and slay. Shatter all things of worth,
Heap torment still on torment for thy mirth —
Thou art not Lord while there are Men on earth.

XIII.

Satan Speaks

I am the Lord your God: even he that made
Material things, and all these signs arrayed
Above you and have set beneath the race
Of mankind, who forget their Father’s face
And even while they drink my light of day
Dream of some other gods and disobey
My warnings, and despise my holy laws,
Even tho’ their sin shall slay them. For which cause,
Dreams dreamed in vain, a never-filled desire
And in close flesh a spiritual fire,
A thirst for good their kind shall not attain,
A backward cleaving to the beast again.
A loathing for the life that I have given,
A haunted, twisted soul for ever riven
Between their will and mine-such lot I give
White still in my despite the vermin live.
They hate my world! Then let that other God
Come from the outer spaces glory-shod,
And from this castle I have built on Night
Steal forth my own thought’s children into light,
If such an one there be. But far away
He walks the airy fields of endless day,
And my rebellious sons have called Him long
And vainly called. My order still is strong
And like to me nor second none I know.
Whither the mammoth went this creature too shall go.

XIV.

The Witch

Trapped amid the woods with guile
They’ve led her bound in fetters vile
To death, a deadlier sorceress
Than any born for earth’s distress
Since first the winner of the fleece
Bore home the Colchian witch to Greece —
Seven months with snare and gin
They’ve sought the maid o’erwise within
The forest’s labyrinthine shade.
The lonely woodman half afraid
Far off her ragged form has seen
Sauntering down the alleys green,
Or crouched in godless prayer alone
At eve before a Druid stone.
But now the bitter chase is won,
The quarry’s caught, her magic’s done,
The bishop’s brought her strongest spell
To naught with candle, book, and bell;
With holy water splashed upon her,
She goes to burning and dishonour
Too deeply damned to feel her shame,
For, though beneath her hair of flame
Her thoughtful head be lowly bowed
It droops for meditation proud
Impenitent, and pondering yet
Things no memory can forget,
Starry wonders she has seen
Brooding in the wildwood green
With holiness. For who can say
In what strange crew she loved to play,
What demons or what gods of old
Deep mysteries unto her have told
At dead of night in worship bent

At ruined shrines magnificent,
Or how the quivering will she sent
Alone into the great alone
Where all is loved and all is known,
Who now lifts up her maiden eyes
And looks around with soft surprise
Upon the noisy, crowded square,
The city oafs that nod and stare,
The bishop’s court that gathers there,
The faggots and the blackened stake
Where sinners die for justice’ sake?
Now she is set upon the pile,
The mob grows still a little while,
Till lo! before the eager folk
Up curls a thin, blue line of smoke.
“Alas!” the full-fed burghers cry,
“That evil loveliness must die!”

XV.

Dungeon Grates

So piteously the lonely soul of man
Shudders before this universal plan,
So grievous is the burden and the pain,
So heavy weighs the long, material chain
From cause to cause, too merciless for hate,
The nightmare march of unrelenting fate,
I think that he must die thereof unless
Ever and again across the dreariness
There came a sudden glimpse of spirit faces,
A fragrant breath to tell of flowery places
And wider oceans, breaking on the shore
From which the hearts of men are always sore.
It lies beyond endeavour; neither prayer
Nor fasting, nor much wisdom winneth there,
Seeing how many prophets and wise men
Have sought for it and still returned again
With hope undone. But only the strange power
Of unsought Beauty in some casual hour
Can build a bridge of light or sound or form
To lead you out of all this strife and storm;
When of some beauty we are grown a part
Till from its very glory’s midmost heart
Out leaps a sudden beam of larger light
Into our souls. All things are seen aright
Amid the blinding pillar of its gold,
Seven times more true than what for truth we hold
In vulgar hours. The miracle is done
And for one little moment we are one
With the eternal stream of loveliness
That flows so calm, aloft from all distress
Yet leaps and lives around us as a fire
Making us faint with overstrong desire
To sport and swim for ever in its deep —

Only a moment.
  O! but we shall keep
Our vision still. One moment was enough,
We know we are not made of mortal stuff.
And we can bear all trials that come after,
The hate of men and the fool’s loud bestial laughter
And Nature’s rule and cruelties unclean,
For we have seen the Glory-we have seen.

XVI.

The Philosopher

Who shall be our prophet then,
Chosen from all the sons of men
To lead his fellows on the way
Of hidden knowledge, delving deep
To nameless mysteries that keep
Their secret from the solar day!
Or who shall pierce with surer eye!
This shifting veil of bittersweet
And find the real things that lie
Beyond this turmoil, which we greet
With such a wasted wealth of tears?
Who shall cross over for us the bridge of fears
And pass in to the country where the ancient Mothers dwell?
Is it an elder, bent and hoar
Who, where the waste Atlantic swell
On lonely beaches makes its roar,
In his solitary tower
Through the long night hour by hour
Pores on old books with watery eye
When all his youth has passed him by,
And folly is schooled and love is dead
And frozen fancy laid abed,
While in his veins the gradual blood
Slackens to a marish flood?
For he rejoiceth not in the ocean’s might,
Neither the sun giveth delight,
Nor the moon by night
Shall call his feet to wander in the haunted forest lawn.
He shall no more rise suddenly in the dawn
When mists are white and the dew lies pearly
Cold and cold on every meadow,
To take his joy of the season early,
The opening flower and the westward shadow,

And scarcely can he dream of laughter and love,
They lie so many leaden years behind.
Such eyes are dim and blind,
And the sad, aching head that nods above
His monstrous books can never know
The secret we would find.
But let our seer be young and kind
And fresh and beautiful of show,
And taken ere the lustyhead
And rapture of his youth be dead;
Ere the gnawing, peasant reason
School him over-deep in treason
To the ancient high estate
Of his fancy’s principate,
That he may live a perfect whole,
A mask of the eternal soul,
And cross at last the shadowy bar
To where the ever-living are.

XVII.

The Ocean Strand

O leave the labouring roadways of the town,
The shifting faces and the changeful hue
Of markets, and broad echoing streets that drown
The heart’s own silent music. Though they too
Sing in their proper rhythm, and still delight
The friendly ear that loves warm human kind,
Yet it is good to leave them all behind,
Now when from lily dawn to purple night
Summer is queen,
Summer is queen in all the happy land.
Far, far away among the valleys green
Let us go forth and wander hand in hand
Beyond those solemn hills that we have seen
So often welcome home the falling sun
Into their cloudy peaks when day was done —
Beyond them till we find the ocean strand
And hear the great waves run,
With the waste song whose melodies I’d follow
And weary not for many a summer day,
Born of the vaulted breakers arching hollow
Before they flash and scatter into spray,
On, if we should be weary of their play
Then I would lead you further into land
Where, with their ragged walls, the stately rocks
Shunt in smooth courts and paved with quiet sand
To silence dedicate. The sea-god’s flocks
Have rested here, and mortal eyes have seen
By great adventure at the dead of noon
A lonely nereid drowsing half a-swoon
Buried beneath her dark and dripping locks.

XVIII.

Noon

Noon! and in the garden bower
The hot air quivers o’er the grass,
The little lake is smooth as glass
And still so heavily the hour
Drags, that scarce the proudest flower
Pressed upon its burning bed
Has strength to lift a languid head: —
Rose and fainting violet
By the water’s margin set
Swoon and sink as they were dead
Though their weary leaves be fed
With the foam-drops of the pool
Where it trembles dark and cool
Wrinkled by the fountain spraying
O’er it. And the honey-bee
Hums his drowsy melody
And wanders in his course a-straying
Through the sweet and tangled glade
With his golden mead o’erladen,
Where beneath the pleasant shade
Of the darkling boughs a maiden —
Milky limb and fiery tress,
All at sweetest random laid —
Slumbers, drunken with the excess
Of the noontide’s loveliness.

XIX.

Milton Read Again (In Surrey)

Three golden months while summer on us stole
I have read your joyful tale another time,
Breathing more freely in that larger clime
And learning wiselier to deserve the whole.

Your Spirit, Master, has been close at hand
And guided me, still pointing treasures rare,
Thick-sown where I before saw nothing fair
And finding waters in the barren land,

Barren once thought because my eyes were dim.
Like one I am grown to whom the common field
And often-wandered copse one morning yield
New pleasures suddenly; for over him

Falls the weird spirit of unexplained delight,
New mystery in every shady place,
In every whispering tree a nameless grace,
New rapture on the windy seaward height.

So may she come to me, teaching me well
To savour all these sweets that lie to hand
In wood and lane about this pleasant land
Though it be not the land where I would dwell.

.

XX.

Sonnet

The stars come out; the fragrant shadows fall
About a dreaming garden still and sweet,
I hear the unseen bats above me bleat
Among the ghostly moths their hunting call,
And twinkling glow-worms all about me crawl.
Now for a chamber dim, a pillow meet
For slumbers deep as death, a faultless sheet,
Cool, white and smooth. So may I reach the hall
With poppies strewn where sleep that is so dear
With magic sponge can wipe away an hour
Or twelve and make them naught. Why not a year,
Why could a man not loiter in that bower
Until a thousand painless cycles wore,
And then-what if it held him evermore?

XXI.

The Autumn Morning

See! the pale autumn dawn
Is faint, upon the lawn
  That lies in powdered white
  Of hoar-frost dight

And now from tree to tree
The ghostly mist we see
  Hung like a silver pall
  To hallow all.

It wreathes the burdened air
So strangely everywhere
  That I could almost fear
  This silence drear

Where no one song-bird sings
And dream that wizard things
  Mighty for hate or love
  Were close above.

White as the fog and fair
Drifting through the middle air
  In magic dances dread
  Over my head.

Yet these should know me too
Lover and bondman true,
  One that has honoured well
  The mystic spell

Of earth’s most solemn hours
Wherein the ancient powers
  Of dryad, elf, or faun
  Or leprechaun

Oft have their faces shown
To me that walked alone
  Seashore or haunted fen
  Or mountain glen

Wherefore I will not fear
To walk the woodlands sere
  Into this autumn day
  Far, far away.

Part II. Hesitation

XXII.

L’Apprenti Sorcier

Suddenly there came to me
The music of a mighty sea
That on a bare and iron shore
Thundered with a deeper roar
Than all the tides that leap and run
With us below the real sun:
Because the place was far away,
Above, beyond our homely day,
Neighbouring close the frozen clime
Where out of all the woods of time,
Amid the frightful seraphim
The fierce, cold eyes of Godhead gleam,
Revolving hate and misery
And wars and famines yet to be.
And in my dreams I stood alone
Upon a shelf of weedy stone,
And saw before my shrinking eyes
The dark, enormous breakers rise,
And hover and fall with deafening thunder
Of thwarted foam that echoed under
The ledge, through many a cavern drear,
With hollow sounds of wintry fear.
And through the waters waste and grey,
Thick-strown for many a league away,
Out of the toiling sea arose
Many a face and form of those
Thin, elemental people dear
Who live beyond our heavy sphere.
And all at once from far and near,
They all held out their arms to me,
Crying in their melody,
“Leap in! Leap in and take thy fill
Of all the cosmic good and ill,

Be as the Living ones that know
Enormous joy, enormous woe,
Pain beyond thought and fiery bliss:
For all thy study hunted this,
On wings of magic to arise,
And wash from off thy filmed eyes
The cloud of cold mortality,
To find the real life and be
As are the children of the deep!
Be bold and dare the glorious leap,
Or to thy shame, go, slink again
Back to the narrow ways of men.”
So all these mocked me as I stood
Striving to wake because I feared the flood.

XXIII.

Alexandrines

There is a house that most of all on earth I hate.
Though I have passed through many sorrows and have been
In bloody fields, sad seas, and countries desolate,
Yet most I fear that empty house where the grasses green
Grow in the silent court the gaping flags between,
And down the moss-grown paths and terrace no man treads
Where the old, old weeds rise deep on the waste garden beds.
Like eyes of one long dead the empty windows stare
And I fear to cross the garden, I fear to linger there,
For in that house I know a little, silent room
Where Someone’s always waiting, waiting in the gloom
To draw me with an evil eye, and hold me fast —
Yet thither doom will drive me and He will win at last.

XXIV.

In Praise of Solid People

Thank God that there are solid folk
Who water flowers and roll the lawn,
And sit an sew and talk and smoke,
And snore all through the summer dawn.

Who pass untroubled nights and days
Full-fed and sleepily content,
Rejoicing in each other’s praise,
Respectable and innocent.

Who feel the things that all men feel,
And think in well-worn grooves of thought,
Whose honest spirits never reel
Before man’s mystery, overwrought.

Yet not unfaithful nor unkind,
with work-day virtues surely staid,
Theirs is the sane and humble mind,
And dull affections undismayed.

O happy people! I have seen
No verse yet written in your praise,
And, truth to tell, the time has been
I would have scorned your easy ways.

But now thro’ weariness and strife
I learn your worthiness indeed,
The world is better for such life
As stout suburban people lead.

Too often have I sat alone
When the wet night falls heavily,
And fretting winds around me moan,
And homeless longing vexes me

For lore that I shall never know,
And visions none can hope to see,
Till brooding works upon me so
A childish fear steals over me.

I look around the empty room,
The clock still ticking in its place,
And all else silent as the tomb,
Till suddenly, I think, a face

Grows from the darkness just beside.
I turn, and lo! it fades away,
And soon another phantom tide
Of shifting dreams begins to play,

And dusky galleys past me sail,
Full freighted on a faerie sea;
I hear the silken merchants hail
Across the ringing waves to me

— Then suddenly, again, the room,
Familiar books about me piled,
And I alone amid the gloom,
By one more mocking dream beguiled.

And still no neared to the Light,
And still no further from myself,
Alone and lost in clinging night —
(The clock's still ticking on the shelf).

Then do I envy solid folk
Who sit of evenings by the fire,
After their work and doze and smoke,
And are not fretted by desire.

Part III. The Escape

XXV.

Song of the Pilgrims

O Dwellers at the back of the North Wind,
What have we done to you? How have we sinned
Wandering the Earth from Orkney unto Ind?

With many deaths our fellowship is thinned,
Our flesh is withered in the parching wind,
Wandering the earth from Orkney unto Ind.

We have no rest. We cannot turn again
Back to the world and all her fruitless pain,
Having once sought the land where ye remain.

Some say ye are not. But, ah God! we know
That somewhere, somewhere past the Northern snow
Waiting for us the red-rose gardens blow:

— The red-rose and the white-rose gardens blow
In the green Northern land to which we go,
Surely the ways are long and the years are slow.

We have forsaken all things sweet and fair,
We have found nothing worth a moment’s care
Because the real flowers are blowing there.

Land of the Lotus fallen from the sun,
Land of the Lake from whence all rivers run,
Land where the hope of all our dreams is won!

Shall we not somewhere see at close of day
The green walls of that country far away,
And hear the music of her fountains play?

So long we have been wandering all this while
By many a perilous sea and drifting isle,

We scarce shall dare to look thereon and smile.

Yea, when we are drawing very near to thee,
And when at last the ivory port we see
Our hearts will faint with mere felicity:

But we shall wake again in gardens bright
Of green and gold for infinite delight,
Sleeping beneath the solemn mountains white,
While from the flowery copses still unseen
Sing out the crooning birds that ne’er have been
Touched by the hand of winter frore and lean;

And ever living queens that grow not old
And poets wise in robes of faerie gold
Whisper a wild, sweet song that first was told

Ere God sat down to make the Milky Way.
And in those gardens we shall sleep and play
For ever and for ever and a day.

Ah, Dwellers at the back of the North Wind,
What have we done to you? How have we sinned,
That yes should hide beyond the Northern wind?

Land of the Lotus, fallen from the Sun,
When shall your hidden, flowery vales be won
And all the travail of our way be done?

Very far we have searched; we have even seen
The Scythian waste that bears no soft nor green,
And near the Hideous Pass our feet have been.

We have heard Syrens singing all night long
Beneath the unknown stars their lonely song
In friendless seas beyond the Pillars strong.

Nor by the dragon-daughter of Hypocras
Nor the vale of the Devil’s head we have feared to pass,
Yet is our labour lost and vain, alas!

Scouring the earth from Orkney unto Ind,
Tossed on the seas and withered in the wind,
We seek and seek your land. How have we sinned?

Or is it all a folly of the wise,
Bidding us walk these ways with blinded eyes
While all around us real flowers arise?

But, by the very God, we know, we know
That somewhere still, beyond the Northern snow
Waiting for us the red-rose gardens blow.

XXVI.

Song

Faeries must be in the woods
Or the satyrs’ laughing broods —
Tritons in the summer sea,
Else how could the dead things be
Half so lovely as they are?
How could wealth of star on star
Dusted o’er the frosty night
Fill thy spirit with delight
And lead thee from this care of thine
Up among the dreams divine,
Were it not that each and all
Of them that walk the heavenly hall
Is in truth a happy isle,
Where eternal meadows smile,
And golden globes of fruit are seen
Twinkling through the orchards green;
Were the Other People go
On the bright sward to and fro?
Atoms dead could never thus
Stir the human heart of us
Unless the beauty that we see
The veil of endless beauty be,
Filled full of spirits that have trod
Far hence along the heavenly sod
And see the bright footprints of God.

XXVII.

The Ass

I woke and rose and slipt away
To the heathery hills in the morning grey.

In a field where the dew lay cold and deep
I met an ass, new-roused from sleep.

I stroked his nose and I tickled his ears,
And spoke soft words to quiet his fears.

His eyes stared into the eyes of me
And he kissed my hands of his courtesy.

“O big, brown brother out of the waste,
How do thistles for breakfast taste?

“And do you rejoice in the dawn divine
With a heart that is glad no less than mine?

“For, brother, the depth of your gentle eyes
Is strange and mystic as the skies:

“What are the thoughts that grope behind,
Down in the mist of a donkey mind?

“Can it be true, as the wise men tell,
That you are a mask of God as well,

“And, as in us, so in you no less
Speaks the eternal Loveliness,

“And words of the lips that all things know
Among the thoughts of a donkey go?

“However it be, O four-foot brother,
Fair to-day is the earth, our mother.

“God send you peace and delight thereof,
And all green meat of the waste you love,

“And guard you well from violent men
Who’d put you back in the shafts again.”

But the ass had far too wise a head
To answer one of the things I said,

So he twitched his fair ears up and down
And turned to nuzzle his shoulder brown.

XXVIII.

Ballade Mystique

The big, red-house is bare and lone
The stony garden waste and sere
With blight of breezes ocean blown
To pinch the wakening of the year;
My kindly friends with busy cheer
My wretchedness could plainly show.
They tell me I am lonely here —
What do they know? What do they know?

They think that while the gables moan
And easements creak in winter drear
I should be piteously alone
Without the speech of comrades dear;
And friendly for my sake they fear,
It grieves them thinking of me so
While all their happy life is near —
What do they know? What do they know?

That I have seen the Dagda’s throne
In sunny lands without a tear
And found a forest all my own
To ward with magic shield and spear,
Where, through the stately towers I rear
For my desire, around me go
Immortal shapes of beauty clear:
They do not know, they do not know.

L’Envoi

The friends I have without a peer
Beyond the western ocean’s glow,
Whither the faerie galleys steer,
They do not know: how should they know?

XXIX.

Night

I know a little Druid wood
Where I would slumber if I could
And have the murmuring of the stream
To mingle with a midnight dream,
And have the holy hazel trees
To play above me in the breeze,
And smell the thorny eglantine;
For there the white owls all night long
In the scented gloom divine
Hear the wild, strange, tuneless song
Of faerie voices, thin and high
As the bat’s unearthly cry,
And the measure of their shoon
Dancing, dancing, under the moon,
Until, amid the pale of dawn
The wandering stars begin to swoon. . . .
Ah, leave the world and come away!

The windy folk are in the glade,
And men have seen their revels, laid
In secret on some flowery lawn
Underneath the beechen covers,
Kings of old, I’ve heard them say,
Here have found them faerie lovers
That charmed them out of life and kissed
Their lips with cold lips unafraid,
And such a spell around them made
That they have passed beyond the mist
And found the Country-under-wave. . . .

Kings of old, whom none could save!

XXX.

Oxford

It is well that there are palaces of peace
And discipline and dreaming and desire,
Lest we forget our heritage and cease
The Spirit’s work-to hunger and aspire:

Lest we forget that we were born divine,
Now tangled in red battle’s animal net,
Murder the work and lust the anodyne,
Pains of the beast ‘gainst bestial solace set.

But this shall never be: to us remains
One city that has nothing of the beast,
That was not built for gross, material gains,
Sharp, wolfish power or empire’s glutted feast.

We are not wholly brute. To us remains
A clean, sweet city lulled by ancient streams,
A place of visions and of loosening chains,
A refuge of the elect, a tower of dreams.

She was not builded out of common stone
But out of all men’s yearning and all prayer
That she might live, eternally our own,
The Spirit’s stronghold-barred against despair.

XXXI.

Hymn (For Boys’ Voices)

All the things magicians do
Could be done by me and you
Freely, if we only knew.

Human children every day
Could play at games the faeries play
If they were but shown the way.

Every man a God would be
Laughing through eternity
If as God’s his eyes could see.

All the wizardries of God —
Slaying matter with a nod,
Charming spirits with his rod,

With the singing of his voice
Making lonely lands rejoice,
Leaving us no will nor choice,

Drawing headlong me and you
As the piping Orpheus drew
Man and beast the mountains through,

By the sweetness of his horn
Calling us from lands forlorn
Nearer to the widening morn —

All that loveliness of power
Could be man’s peculiar dower,
Even mine, this very hour;

We should reach the Hidden Land
And grow immortal out of hand,

If we could but understand!

We could revel day and night
In all power and all delight
If we learn to think aright.

XXXII.

Our Daily Bread

We need no barbarous words nor solemn spell
To raise the unknown. It lies before our feet;
There have been men who sank down into Hell
  In some suburban street,

And some there are that in their daily walks
Have met archangels fresh from sight of God,
Or watched how in their beans and cabbage-stalks
  Long files of faerie trod.

Often me too the Living voices call
In many a vulgar and habitual place,
I catch a sight of lands beyond the wall,
  I see a strange god’s face.

And some day this work will work upon me so
I shall arise and leave both friends and home
And over many lands a pilgrim go
  Through alien woods and foam,

Seeking the last steep edges of the earth
Whence I may leap into that gulf of light
Wherein, before my narrowing Self had birth,
  Part of me lived aright.

XXXIII.

How He Saw Angus the God

I heard the swallow sing in the eaves and rose
All in a strange delight while others slept,
And down the creaking stair, alone, tip-toes,
  So carefully I crept.

The house was dark with silly blinds yet drawn,
But outside the clean air was filled with light,
And underneath my feet the cold, wet lawn
  With dew was twinkling bright.

The cobwebs hung from every branch and spray
Gleaming with pearly strands of laden thread,
And long and still the morning shadows lay
  Across the meadows spread.

At that pure hour when yet no sound of man,
Stirs in the whiteness of the wakening earth,
Alone through innocent solitudes I ran
  Singing aloud for mirth.

Till I had found the open mountain heath
Yellow with gorse, and rested there and stood
To gaze upon the misty sea beneath,
  Or on the neighbouring wood,

 — That little wood of hazel and tall pine
And youngling fir, where oft we have loved to see
The level beams of early morning shine
  Freshly from tree to tree.

Through the denser wood there’s many a pool
Of deep and night-born shadow lingers yet
Where the new-wakened flowers are damp and cool
  And the long grass is wet.

In the sweet heather long I rested there
Looking upon the dappled, early sky,
When suddenly, from out the shining air
  A god came flashing by.

Swift, naked, eager, pitilessly fair,
With a live crown of birds about his head,
Singing and fluttering, and his fiery hair,
  Far out behind him spread,

Streamed like a rippling torch upon the breeze
Of his own glorious swiftness: in the grass
He bruised no feathery stalk, and through the trees
  I saw his whiteness pass.

But when I followed him beyond the wood,
Lo! He was changed into a solemn bull
That there upon the open pasture stood
  And browsed his lazy full.

XXXIV.

The Roads

I stand on the windy uplands among the hills of Down
With all the world spread out beneath, meadow and sea and town,
And ploughlands on the far-off hills that glow with friendly brown.

And ever across the rolling land to the far horizon line,
Where the blue hills border the misty west, I see the white roads twine,
The rare roads and the fair roads that call this heart of mine.

I see them dip in the valleys and vanish and rise and bend
From shadowy dell to windswept fell, and still to the West they wend,
And over the cold blue ridge at last to the great world’s uttermost end.

And the call of the roads is upon me, a desire in my spirit has grown
To wander forth in the highways, ‘twixt earth and sky alone,
And seek for the lands no foot has trod and the seas no sail has known:

For the lands to the west of the evening and east of the morning’s birth,
Where the gods unseen in their valleys green are glad at the ends of the earth
And fear no morrow to bring them sorrow, nor night to quench their mirth.

XXXV.

Hesperus

Through the starry hollow
Of the summer night
I would follow, follow
Hesperus the bright,
To seek beyond the western wave
His garden of delight.

Hesperus the fairest
Of all gods that are,
Peace and dreams thou bearest
In thy shadowy car,
And often in my evening walks
I’ve blessed thee from afar.

Stars without number,
Dust the noon of night,
Thou the early slumber
And the still delight
Of the gentle twilit hours
Rulest in thy right.

When the pale skies shiver,
Seeing night is done,
Past the ocean-river,
Lightly thou dost run,
To look for pleasant, sleepy lands,
That never fear the sun.

Where, beyond the waters
Of the outer sea,
Thy triple crown of daughters
That guards the golden tree
Sing out across the lonely tide
A welcome home to thee.

And while the old, old dragon
For joy lifts up his head,
They bring thee forth a flagon
Of nectar foaming red,
And underneath the drowsy trees
Of poppies strew thy bed.

Ah! that I could follow
In thy footsteps bright,
Through the starry hollow
Of the summer night,
Sloping down the western ways
To find my heart’s delight!

XXXVI.

The Star Bath

A place uplifted towards the midnight sky
Far, far away among the mountains old,
A treeless waste of rocks and freezing cold,
Where the dead, cheerless moon rode neighbouring by —
And in the midst a silent tarn there lay,
A narrow pool, cold as the tide that flows
Where monstrous bergs beyond Varanger stray,
Rising from sunless depths that no man knows;
Thither as clustering fireflies have I seen
At fixed seasons all the stars come down
To wash in that cold wave their brightness clean
And win the special fire wherewith they crown
The wintry heavens in frost. Even as a flock
Of falling birds, down to the pool they came.
I saw them and I heard the icy shock
Of stars engulfed with hissing of faint flame —
Ages ago before the birth of men
Or earliest beast. Yet I was still the same
That now remember, knowing not where or when.

XXXVII.

Tu Ne Quaesieris

For all the lore of Lodge and Myers
I cannot heal my torn desires,
Nor hope for all that man can speer
To make the riddling earth grow clear.
Though it were sure and proven well
That I shall prosper, as they tell,
In fields beneath a different sun
By shores where other oceans run,
When this live body that was I
Lies hidden from the cheerful sky,
Yet what were endless lives to me
If still my narrow self I be
And hope and fail and struggle still,
And break my will against God’s will,
To play for stakes of pleasure and pain
And hope and fail and hope again,
Deluded, thwarted, striving elf
That through the window of my self
As through a dark glass scarce can see
A warped and masked reality?
But when this searching thought of mine
Is mingled in the large Divine,
And laughter that was in my mouth
Runs through the breezes of the South,
When glory I have built in dreams
Along some fiery sunset gleams,
And my dead sin and foolishness
Grow one with Nature’s whole distress,
To perfect being I shall win,
And where I end will Life begin.

XXXVIII.

Lullaby

Lullaby! Lullaby!
There’s a tower strong and high
Built of oak and brick and stone,
Stands before a wood alone.
The doors are of the oak so brown
As any ale in Oxford town,
The walls are builded warm and thick
Of the old red Roman brick,
The good grey stone is over all
In arch and floor of the tower tall.
And maidens three are living there
All in the upper chamber fair,
Hung with silver, hung with pall,
And stories painted on the wall.
And softly goes the whirring loom
In my ladies’ upper room,
For they shall spin both night and day
Until the stars do pass away.
But every night at evening.
The window open wide they fling,
And one of them says a word they know
And out as three white swans they go,
And the murmuring of the woods is drowned
In the soft wings’ whirring sound,
As they go flying round, around,
Singing in swans’ voices high
A lonely, lovely lullaby.

XXXIX.

World’s Desire

Love, there is a castle built in a country desolate,
On a rock above a forest where the trees are grim and great,
Blasted with the lightning sharp-giant boulders strewn between,
And the mountains rise above, and the cold ravine
Echoes to the crushing roar and thunder of a mighty river
Raging down a cataract. Very tower and forest quiver
And the grey wolves are afraid and the call of birds is drowned,
And the thought and speech of man in the boiling water’s sound.
But upon the further side of the barren, sharp ravine
With the sunlight on its turrets is the castle seen,
Calm and very wonderful, white above the green
Of the wet and waving forest, slanted all away,
Because the driving Northern wind will not rest by night or day.
Yet the towers are sure above, very mighty is the stead,
The gates are made of ivory, the roofs of copper red.

Round and round the warders grave walk upon the walls for ever
And the wakeful dragons couch in the ports of ivory,
Nothing is can trouble it, hate of the gods nor man’s endeavour,
And it shall be a resting-place, dear heart, for you and me.

Through the wet and waving forest with an age-old sorrow laden
Singing of the world’s regret wanders wild the faerie maiden,
Through the thistle and the brier, through the tangles of the thorn,
Till her eyes be dim with weeping and her homeless feet are torn.

Often to the castle gate up she looks with vain endeavour,
For her soulless loveliness to the castle winneth never.

But within the sacred court, hidden high upon the mountain,
Wandering in the castle gardens lovely folk enough there be,
Breathing in another air, drinking of a purer fountain
And among that folk, beloved, there’s a place for you and me.

XL.

Death in Battle

Open the gates for me,
Open the gates of the peaceful castle, rosy in the West,
In the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide sea’s breast,

Open the gates for me!

Sorely pressed have I been
And driven and hurt beyond bearing this summer day,
But the heat and the pain together suddenly fall away,
All’s cool and green.

But a moment agone,
Among men cursing in fight and toiling, blinded I fought,
But the labour passed on a sudden even as a passing thought,

And now-alone!

Ah, to be ever alone,
In flowery valleys among the mountains and silent wastes untrod,
In the dewy upland places, in the garden of God,
This would atone!

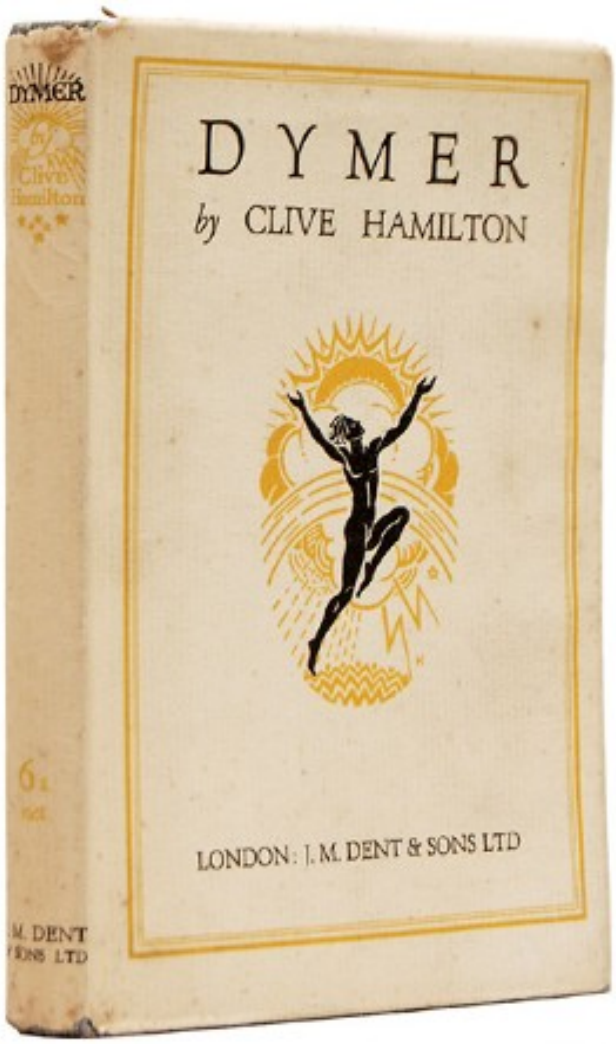
I shall not see
The brutal, crowded faces around me, that in their toil have grown
Into the faces of devils-yea, even as my own —
When I find thee,

O Country of Dreams!
Beyond the tide of the ocean, hidden and sunk away,
Out of the sound of battles, near to the end of day,
Full of dim woods and streams.

DYMER

First published by J. M. Dent in 1926, once again under the pseudonym Clive Hamilton, this long narrative poem was Lewis' second published work. He had worked on *Dymer* as early as 1916, when still only seventeen years old, and completed it by 1925. Lewis liked to think of himself writing in the tradition of Homer, Milton, Spenser, Wordsworth and others. The poem follows the adventures of the protagonist from his birth in a totalitarian state, mockingly referred to as 'The Perfect City', to the events leading to his death at the hands of a monster he had created.

From the opening, Dymer grows to the age of nineteen under the control of the state, until, under the influence of Spring and the sight of a songbird, he rises in his lecture-hall and murders the aged lecturer before his class, before leaving the stunned civilians behind as he wanders outside of The City. Dymer casts off his clothing along with civilisation, wandering in the forests until he comes upon an empty mansion with food prepared. After dressing himself again with finer clothing and feasting alone at a banquet table, Dymer sleeps with an unseen female figure, who comes to him in the darkness of the mansion. Upon awakening, Dymer steps outside of the palace, and wanders blissfully in the woods. Returning to the palace in search of his lover, he finds every entry barred by a hideous old she-monster. After pleading with her to 'yield but one inch; once only from your law', Dymer approaches the woman with intent to fight his way past her. What happens at this point is uncertain, only that Dymer emerges wounded from the palace and limps into the woodlands…



The first edition

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DYMER. CANTO IX

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR TO THE 1950 EDITION

As its original appearance in 1926, *Dymer*, like many better books, found some good reviews and almost no readers. The idea of disturbing its repose in the grave now comes from its publishers, not from me, but I have a reason for wishing to be present at the exhumation. Nearly a quarter of a century has gone since I wrote it, and in that time things have changed both within me and round me; my old poem might be misunderstood by those who now read it for the first time.

I am told that the Persian poets draw a distinction between poetry which they have ‘found’ and poetry which they have ‘brought’: if you like, between the given and the invented, though they wisely refuse to identify this with the distinction between good and bad. Their terminology applies with unusual clarity to my poem. What I ‘found’, what simply ‘came to me’, was the story of a man who, on some mysterious bride, begets a monster: which monster, as soon as it has killed its father, becomes a god. This story arrived, complete, in my mind somewhere about my seventeenth year. To the best of my knowledge I did not consciously or voluntarily invent it, nor was it, in the plain sense of that word, a dream. All I know it is that there was a time when it was not there, and then presently a time when it was. Every one may allegorise it or psychoanalyse it as he pleases: and if I did so myself my interpretations would have no more authority than anyone else’s.

The Platonic and totalitarian state from which Dymer escapes in Canto I was a natural invention for one who detested the state in Plato’s *Republic* as much as he liked everything else in Plato, and who was, by temperament, an extreme anarchist. I put into it my hatred of my public school and my recent hatred of the army. But I was already critical of my own anarchism. There had been a time when the sense of defiant and almost drunken liberation which fills the first two acts of *Siegfried* had completely satisfied me. Now, I thought, I knew better. My hero therefore must go through his Siegfried moment in Cantos I and II and find in Canto IV what really comes of that mood in the end. For it seemed to me that two opposite forces in man tended equally to revolt.

The one criticises and at need defies civilisation because it is not good enough, the other stabs it from below and behind because it is already too

good for total baseness to endure. The hero who dethrones a tyrant will therefore be first feted and afterwards murdered by the rabble who feel a disinterested hatred of order and reason as such. Hence, in Canto IV, Bran's revolt which at once parodies and punishes Dymer's. It will be remembered that, when I wrote, the first horrors of the Russian Revolution were still fresh in every one's mind; and in my own country, Ulster, we had had opportunities of observing the daemonic character of popular political 'causes'.

In those days the new psychology was just beginning to make itself felt in the circles I most frequented at Oxford. This joined forces with the fact that we felt ourselves (as young men always do) to be escaping from the illusions of adolescence, and as a result we were much exercised about the problem of fantasy or wishful thinking. The 'Christiana Dream', as we called it (after Christina Pontifex in Butler's novel), was the hidden enemy whom we were all determined to unmask and defeat. My hero, therefore, had to be a man who had succumbed to its allurements and finally got the better of them. But the particular form in which this was worked out depended on two peculiarities of my own history.

(i) From at least the age of six, romantic longing - *Sehnsucht* - had played an unusually central part in my experience. Such longing is in itself the very reverse of wishful thinking: it is more like thoughtful wishing. But it throws off what may be called systems of imagery. One among many such which it had thrown off for me was the Hesperian or Western Garden system, mainly derived from Euripides, Milton, Morris, and the early Yeats. By the time I wrote *Dymer* I had come, under the influence of our common obsession about Christiana Dreams, into a state of angry revolt against that spell. I regarded it as the very type of the illusions I was trying to escape from. It must therefore be savagely attacked. Dymer's temptation to relapse into the world of fantasy therefore comes to him (Canto VII) in that form. All through that canto I am cutting down my own former 'groves and high places' and biting the hand that had fed me. I even tried to get the sneer into the metre; the archaic spelling and accentuation of *countrie* in vii. 23 is meant as parody. In all this, as I now believe, I was mistaken. Instead of repenting my idolatry I spat upon the images which only my own understanding greed had ever made into idols. But 'the heresies that men leave are hated most' and lovers' quarrels can be the bitterest of all.

(2) Several years before I wrote the poem, back in my teens, when my mind, except for a vigilant rejection of Christianity, had no fixed principles, and everything from strict materialism to theosophy could find by turns an entry, I had been, as boys are, temporarily attracted to what was then called ‘the Occult’. I blundered into it innocently enough. In those days every one was reading Maeterlinck, and I wanted to improve my French. Moreover, from Yeat’s early poetry it was natural to turn to his prose; and there I found to my astonishment that Yeats, unlike other romantic poets, really and literally believed in the sort of beings he put into his poems. There was no question here of ‘symbolism’: he believed in magic. And so for a time *Rosa Alchemica* took its turn (along with Voltaire, Lucretius, and Joseph McCabe) among my serious books. You will understand that this period had ended a long time (years are long at that age) before I set about writing *Dymer.* By then, so far as I was anything, I was an idealist, and for an idealist all supernaturalisms were equally illusions, all ‘spirits’ merely symbols of ‘Spirit’ in the metaphysical sense, futile and dangerous if mistaken for facts. I put this into vii. 8. I was now quite sure that magic or spiritism of any kind was a fantasy and of all fantasies the worst. But this wholesome conviction had recently been inflamed into a violent antipathy. It had happened to me to see a man, and a man whom I loved, sink into screaming mania and finally into death under the influence, as I believed, of spiritualism. And I had also been twice admitted to the upper room in Yeat’s own house in Broad Street. His conversation turned much on magic. I was overawed by his personality, and by his doctrine half fascinated and half repelled because of the fascination.

The angel in the last canto does not of course mean that I had any Christian beliefs when I wrote the poem, any more *(si parva licet componere magnis)* than the conclusions of Faust, Part II, means that Goethe was a believer.

This, I think, explains all that the reader might want explained in my narrative. My hero was to be a man escaping from illusion. He begins by egregiously supposing the universe to be his friend and seems for a time to find confirmation of his belief. Then he tries, as we all try, to repeat his moment of youthful rapture. It cannot be done; the old Matriarch sees to that. On top of his rebuff comes the discovery of the consequences which his rebellion against the City had produced. He sinks into despair and gives utterance to the pessimism which had, on the whole, been my own view

about six years earlier. Hunger and a shock of real danger bring him to his senses and he at least accepts reality. But just as he is setting out on the new and soberer life, the shabbiest of all brides is offered him; the false promise that by magic or invited illusion there may be a short cut back to the one happiness he remembers. He relapses and swallows the bait, but he has grown too mature to be really deceived. He finds that the wish-fulfilment dream leads to the fear-fulfilment dream, recovers himself, defies the Magician who tempted him, and faces his destiny.

The physical appearance of the Magician in vi. 6-9 owes something to Yeats as I saw him. If he were now alive I would ask his pardon with shame for having repaid his hospitality by such freedom. It was not done in malice, and the likeness is not, I think, in itself, uncomplimentary.

Since his great name here comes before us, let me take the opportunity of saluting his genius: a genius so potent that, having first revivified and transmuted that romantic tradition which he found almost on its deathbed (and invented a new kind of blank verse in the process), he could then go on to weather one of the bitterest literary revolutions we have known, embark on a second career, and, as it were with one hand, play most of the moderns off the field at their own game. If there is, as may be thought, a pride verging on insolence in his later work, such pride has never come so near to being excusable. It must have been difficult for him to respect either the mere Romantics who could only bewail a lost leader or the mere moderns who could see no difference between *On Baile's Strand* and the work of Richard le Gallienne.

Some may be surprised at the strength of the anti-totalitarian feeling in a poem written so long ago. I had not read *Brave New World* or *Land Under England* or *The Aerodrome*: nor had we yet tasted the fruits of a planned economy in our own lives. This should be a warning for critics who attempt to date ancient texts too exactly on that kind of internal evidence.

C.S.L

1950

DYMER. CANTO I

1

You stranger, long before your glance can light
Upon these words, time will have washed away
The moment when I first took pen to write,
With all my road before me - yet to-day,
Here, if at all, we meet; the unfashioned clay
Ready to both our hands; both hushed to see
That which is nowhere yet come forth and be.

2

This moment, if you join me, we begin
A partnership where both must toil to hold
The clue that I caught first. We lose or win
Together; if you read, you are enrolled.
And first, a marvel - Who could have foretold
That in the city which men called in scorn
The Perfect City, Dymer could be born?

3

There you'd have thought the gods were smothered down
Forever, and the keys were turned on fate.
No hour was left unchartered in that town,
And love was in a schedule and the State
Chose for eugenic reasons who should mate
With whom, and when. Each idle song and dance
Was fixed by law and nothing left to chance.

4

For some of the last Platonists had founded
That city of old. And masterly they made
An island of what ought to be, surrounded
By this gross world of easier light and shade.
All answering to the master's dream they laid

The strong foundations, torturing into stone
Each bubble that the Academy had blown.

5

This people were so pure, so law-abiding,
So logical, they made the heavens afraid:
They sent the very swallows into hiding
by their appalling chastity dismayed:
More soberly the lambs in spring-time played
Because of them: and ghosts dissolved in shame
Before their common-sense - till Dymer came.

6

At Dymer’s birth no comets scared the nation,
The public crèche engulfed him with the rest,
And twenty separate Boards of Education
Closed round him. He was passed through every test,
Was vaccinated, numbered, washed and dressed,
Proctored, inspected, whipt, examined weekly,
And for some nineteen years he bore it meekly.

7

For nineteen years they worked upon his soul,
Refining, chipping, moulding and adorning.
Then came the moment that undid the whole
The ripple of rude life without a warning.
It came in lecture-time one April morning
- Alas for laws and locks, reproach and praise,
Who ever learned to censor the spring days?

8

A little breeze came stirring to his cheek.
He looked up to the window. A brown bird
Perched on the sill, bent down to whet his beak
With darting head - Poor Dymer watched and stirred

Uneasily. The lecturer’s voice he heard
Still droning from the dais. The narrow room
Was drowsy, over-solemn, filled with gloom.

9

He yawned, and a voluptuous laziness
Tingled down all his spine and loosed his knees,
Slow-drawn, like an invisible caress.
He laughed - The lecturer stopped like one that sees
A Ghost, then frowned and murmured, ‘Silence, please.’
That moment saw the soul of Dymer hang
In the balance - Louder then his laughter rang.

10

The whole room watched with unbelieving awe.
He rose and staggered rising. From his lips
Broke yet again the idiot-like guffaw.
He felt the spirit in his finger-tips,
Then swinging his right arm - a wide ellipse
Yet lazily - he struck the lecturer’s head.
The old man tittered, lurched and dropt down dead.

11

OUT of the silent room, out of the dark
Into the sun-stream Dymer passed, and there
The sudden breezes, the high-hanging lark,
The milk-white clouds sailing in polished air,
Suddenly flashed about him like a blare
Of trumpets. And no cry was raised behind him,
His class sat dazed. They dared not go to find him.

12

Yet wonderfully some rumour spread abroad
An inarticulate sense of life renewing
In each young heart - He whistled down the road:

Men said: ‘There’s Dymer’ - ‘Why, what’s Dymer doing?
‘I don’t know’ - ‘Look, there’s Dymer,’ - far pursuing
With troubled eyes - A long mysterious ‘Oh’
Sighed from a hundred throats to see him go.

13

Down the white street and past the gate and forth
Beyond the wall he came to grassy places.
There was a shifting wind to West and North,
With clouds in heeling squadron running races.
The shadows following on the sunlight’s traces
Crossed the whole field and each wild flower within it
With change of wavering glories every minute.

14

There was a river, flushed with rains, between
The flat fields and a forest’s willowy edge.
A sauntering pace he shuffled on the green,
He kicked his boots against the crackly sedge
And tore his hands in many a furzy hedge.
He saw his feet and ankles gilded round
With buttercups that carpeted the ground.

15

He looked back then. The line of a low hill
Had hid the city’s towers and domes from sight;
He stopt: he felt a break of sunlight spill
Around him sudden waves of searching light.
Upon the earth was green, and gold, and white,
Smothering his feet. He felt his city dress
An insult to that April cheerfulness.

16

He said: I’ve worn this dustheap long enough;

Here goes!’ And forthwith in the open field
He stripped away that prison of sad stuff:
Socks, jacket, shirt and breeches off he peeled
And rose up mother-naked with no shield
Against the sun: then stood awhile to play
With bare toes dabbling in cold river clay.

17

Forward again, and sometimes leaping high
With arms outspread as though he would embrace
In one act all the circle of the sky:
Sometimes he rested in a leafier place,
And crushed the wet, cool flowers against his face:
And once he cried aloud, ‘O world, O day,
Let, let me,’ - and then found no prayer to say.

18

Up furrows still unpierced with earliest crop
He marched. Through woods he strolled from flower to flower,
And over hills. As ointment drop by drop
Preciously meted out, so hour by hour
The day slipped through his hands: and now the power
Failed in his feet from walking. He was done,
Hungry and cold. That moment sank the sun.

19

He lingered - Looking up, he saw ahead
The black and bristling frontage of a wood,
And over it the large sky swimming red,
Freckled with homeward crows. Surprised he stood
To feel that wideness quenching his hot mood,
Then shouted, ‘Trembling darkness, trembling green,
What do you mean, wild wood, what do you mean?’

20

He shouted. But the solitude received
His noise into her noiselessness, his fire
Into her calm. Perhaps he half believed
Some answer yet would come to his desire.
The hushed air quivered softly like a wire
Upon his voice. It echoed, it was gone:
The quiet and the quiet dark went on.

21

He rushed into the woods. He struck and stumbled
On hidden roots. He groped and scratched his face.
The little birds woke chattering where he fumbled.
The stray cat stood, paw lifted, in mid-chase.
There is a windless calm in such a place:
A sense of being indoors - so crowded stand
The living trees, watching on every hand:

22

A sense of trespass - such as in the hall
Of the wrong house, one time, to me befell.
Groping between the hat-stand and the wall
A clear voice from above me like a bell,
The sweet voice of a woman asking ‘Well?’
No more than this. And as I fled I wondered
Into whose alien story I had blundered.

23

A like thing fell to Dymer. Bending low,
Feeling his way he went. The curtained air
Sighed into sound above his head, as though
Stringed instruments and horns were riding there.
It passed and at its passing stirred his hair.
He stood intent to hear. He heard again
And checked his breath half-drawn, as if with pain.

24

That music could have crumbled proud belief
With doubt, or in the bosom of the sage
Madden the heart that had outmastered grief,
And flood with tears the eyes of frozen age
And turn the young man’s feet to pilgrimage
So sharp it was, so sure a path it found,
Soulward with stabbing wounds of bitter sound.

25

It died out on the middle of a note,
As though it failed at the urge of its own meaning.
It left him with life quivering at the throat,
Limbs shaken and wet cheeks and body leaning,
With strain towards the wound and sense gleaning
The last, least, ebbing ripple of the air,
Searching the emptied darkness, muttering ‘Where?’

26

Then followed such a time as is forgotten
With morning light, but in the passing seems
Unending. Where he grasped the branch was rotten,
Where he trod forth in haste the forest streams
Laid wait for him. Like men in fever dreams
Climbing an endless rope, he laboured much
And gained no ground. He reached and could not touch.

27

And often out of darkness like a swell
That grows up from no wind upon blue sea,
He heard the music, unendurable
In stealing sweetness wind from tree to tree.
Battered and bruised in body and soul was he
When first he saw a little lightness growing
Ahead: and from that light the sound was flowing.

28

The trees were fewer now: and gladly nearing
That light, he saw the stars. For sky was there,
And smoother grass, white-flowered - a forest clearing
Set in seven miles of forest, secreter
Than valleys in the tops of clouds, more fair
Than greenery under snow or desert water,
Or the white peace descending after slaughter.

29

As some who have been wounded beyond healing
Wake, or half wake, once only and so bless,
Far off the lamplight travelling on the ceiling,
A disk of pale light filled with peacefulness,
And wonder if this is the C.C.S.,
Or home, or heaven, or dreams - then sighing win
Wise, ignorant death before the pains begin:

30

So Dymer in the wood-lawn blessed the light,
A still light, rosy, clear, and filled with sound.
Here was some pile of building which the night
Made larger. Spiry shadows rose all round,
But through the open door appeared profound
Recesses of pure light - fire with no flame
And out of that deep light the music came.

31

Tip-toes he slunk towards it where the grass
Was twinkling in a lane of light before
The archway. There was neither fence to pass
Nor word of challenge given, nor bolted door;
But where it’s open, open evermore,
No knocker and no porter and no guard,

For very strangeness entering in grows hard.

32

Breathe not! Speak not! Walk gently. Someone’s here.
Why have they left their house with the door so wide?
There must be someone — Dymer hung in fear
Upon the threshold, longing and big-eyed.
At last he squared his shoulders, smote his side
And called, ‘I’m here. Now let the feast begin.
I’m coming now. I’m Dymer,’ and went in.

DYMER. CANTO II

1

More light. Another step, and still more light
Opening ahead. It swilled with soft excess
His eyes yet quivering from the dregs of night,
And it was nowhere more and nowhere less:
In it no shadows were. He could not guess
Its fountain. Wondering round around he turned:
Still on each side the level glory burned.

2

Far in the dome to where his gaze was lost
The deepening roof shone clear as stones that lie
In-shore beneath pure seas. The aisles, that crossed
Like forests of white stone their arms on high,
Past pillar after pillar dragged his eye
In unobscured perspective, till the sight
Was weary. And there also was the light.

3

Look with my eyes. Conceive yourself above
And hanging in the dome: and thence through space
Look down. See Dymer, dwarfed and naked, move,
A white blot on the floor, at such a pace
As boats that hardly seem to have changed place
Once in an hour when from the cliffs we spy
The same ship always smoking towards the sky.

4

The shouting mood had withered from his heart;
The oppression of huge places wrapped him round.
A great misgiving sent its fluttering dart

Deep into him - some fear of being found,
Some hope to find he knew not what. The sound
Of music, never ceasing, took the rôle
Of silence and like silence numbed his soul.

5

Till, as he turned a corner, his deep awe
Broke with a sudden start. For straight ahead,
Far off, a wild-eyed, naked man he saw
That came to meet him: and beyond was spread
Yet further depth of light. With quickening tread
He leaped towards the shape. Then stopped and smiled
Before a mirror, wondering like a child.

6

Beside the glass, unguarded, for the claiming,
Like a great patch of flowers upon the wall
Hung every kind of clothes: silk, feathers flaming,
Leopard skin, furry mantles like the fall
Of deep mid-winter snows. Upon them all
Hung the faint smell of cedar, and the dyes
Were bright as blood and clear as morning skies.

7

He turned from the white spectre in the glass
And looked at these. Remember, he had worn
Thro' winter slush, thro' summer flowers and grass
One kind of solemn stuff since he was born,
With badge of year and rank. He laughed in scorn
And cried, 'Here is no law, nor eye to see,
Nor leave of entry given. Why should there be?

8

'Have done with that - you threw it all behind.

Henceforth I ask no licence where I need.
It’s on, on, on, though I go mad and blind,
Though knees ache and lungs labour and feet bleed,
Or else - it’s home again: to sleep and feed,
And work, and hate them always and obey
And loathe the punctual rise of each new day.’

9

He made mad work among them as he dressed,
With motley choice and litter on the floor,
And each thing as he found it seemed the best.
He wondered that he had not known before
How fair a man he was. ‘I’ll creep no more
In secret,’ Dymer said. ‘But I’ll go back
And drive them all to freedom on this track.’

10

He turned towards the glass. The space looked smaller
Behind him now. Himself in royal guise
Filled the whole frame - a nobler shape and taller,
Till suddenly he started with surprise,
Catching, by chance, his own familiar eyes,
Fevered, yet still the same, without their share
Of bravery, undeceived and watching there.

11

Yet, as he turned, he cried, ‘The rest remain....
If they rebelled... if they should find me here,
We’d pluck the whole taut fabric from the strain,
Hew down the city, let live earth appear!
- Old men and barren women whom through fear
We have suffered to be masters in our home,
Hide! hide! for we are angry and we come.’

12

Thus feeding on vain fancy, covering round
His hunger, his great loneliness arraying
In facile dreams until the qualm was drowned,
The boy went on. Through endless arches straying
With casual tread he sauntered, manly playing
At manhood lest more loss of faith betide him,
Till lo! he saw a table set beside him.

13

When Dymer saw this sight, he leaped for mirth,
He clapped his hands, his eye lit like a lover’s.
He had a hunger in him that was worth
Ten cities. Here was silver, glass and covers.
Cold peacock, prawns in aspic, eggs of plovers,
Raised pies that stood like castles, gleaming fishes
And bright fruit with broad leaves around the dishes

14

If ever you have passed a café door
And lingered in the dusk of a June day,
Fresh from the road, sweat-sodden and foot-sore,
And heard the plates clink and the music play,
With laughter, with white tables far away,
With many lights - conceive how Dymer ran
To table, looked once round him, and began.

15

That table seemed unending. Here and there
Were broken meats, bread crumbled, flowers defaced
— A napkin, with white petals, on a chair,
— A glass already tasted, still to taste.
It seemed that a great host had fed in haste
And gone: yet left a thousand places more
Untouched, wherein no guest had sat before.

16

There in the lonely splendour Dymer ate,
As thieves eat, ever watching, half in fear.
He blamed his evil fortune. ‘I come late.
Whose board was this? What company sat here?
What women with wise mouths, what comrades dear
Who would have made me welcome as the one
Free-born of all my race and cried, Well, done!’

17

Remember, yet again, he had grown up
On rations and on scientific food,
At common boards, with water in his cup,
One mess alike for every day and mood:
But here, at his right hand, a flagon stood.
He raised it, paused before he drank, and laughed.
‘I’ll drown their Perfect City in this draught.’

18

He fingered the cold neck. He saw within,
Like a strange sky, some liquor that foamed blue
And murmured. Standing now with pointed chin
And head thrown back, he tasted. Rapture flew
Through every vein. That moment louder grew
The music and swelled forth a trumpet note.
He ceased and put one hand up to his throat.

19

Then heedlessly he let the flagon sink
In his right hand. His staring eyes were caught
In distance, as of one who tries to think
A thought that is still waiting to be thought.
There was a riot in his heart that brought
The loud blood to the temples. A great voice

Sprang to his lips unsummoned, with no choice.

20

‘Ah! but the eyes are open, the dream is broken!
To sack the Perfect City?... a fool’s deed
For Dymer! Folly of follies I have spoken!
I am the wanderer, new born, newly freed...
A thousand times they have warned me of men’s greed
For joy, for the good that all desire, but never
Till now I knew the wild heat of the endeavour.

21

‘Some day I will come back to break the City,
— Not now. Perhaps when age is white and bleak
— Not now. I am in haste. O God, the pity
Of all my life till this, groping and weak,
The shadow of itself! But now to seek
That true most ancient glory whose white glance
Was lost through the whole world by evil chance!

22

‘I was a dull, cowed thing from the beginning.
Dymer the drudge, the blackleg who obeyed.
Desire shall teach me now. If this be sinning,
Good luck to it! O splendour long delayed,
Beautiful world of mine, O world arrayed
For bridal, flower and forest, wave and field,
I come to be your lover. Loveliest, yield!

23

‘World, I will prove you. Lest it should be said
There was man who loved the earth: his heart
Was nothing but that love. With doting tread
He worshipt the loved grass: and every start

Of every bird from cover, the least part
Of every flower he held in awe. Yet earth
Gave him no joy between his death and birth.

24

‘I know my good is hidden at your breast.
There is a sound of great good in my ear,
Like wings. And, oh! this moment is the best;
I shall not fail -I taste it - it comes near.
As men from a dark dungeon see the clear
Stars shining and the filled streams far away,
I hear you promise booming and obey.

25

‘This forest lies a thousand miles, perhaps,
Beyond where I come. And farther still
The rivers wander seaward with smooth lapse,
And there is cliff and cottage, tower and hill.
Somewhere, before the world’s end, I shall fill
My spirit at earth’s pap. For earth must hold
One rich thing sealed as Dymer’s from of old.

26

‘One rich thing - or, it may be, more than this...
Might I not reach the borders of a land
That ought to have been mine? And there, the bliss
Of free speech, there the eyes that understand,
The men free grown, not modelled by the hand
Of masters - men that know, or men that seek,
— They will not gape and murmur when I speak.’

27

Then, as he ceased, amid the farther wall
He saw a curtained and low lintelled door;

— Dark curtains, sweepy fold, night-purple pall,
He thought he had not noticed it before.
Sudden desire for darkness overbore
His will, and drew him towards it. All was blind
Within. He passed. The curtains closed behind.

28

He entered in a void. Night-scented flowers
Breathed there, but this was darker than the night
That is most black with beating thunder-showers,
— A disembodied world where depth and height
And distance were unmade. No seam of light
Showed through. It was a world not made for seeing,
One pure, one undivided sense of being.

29

Through darkness smooth as amber, warily, slowly
He moved. The floor was soft beneath his feet.
A cool smell that was holy and unholy,
Sharp like the very spring and roughly sweet,
Blew towards him: and he felt his fingers meet
Broad leaves and wiry stems that at his will
Unclosed before and closed behind him still

30

With body intent he felt the foliage quiver
On breast and thighs. With groping arms he made
Wide passes in the air. A sacred shiver
Of joy from the heart’s centre oddly strayed
To every nerve. Deep sighing, much afraid,
Much wondering, he went on: then, stooping, found
A knee-depth of warm pillows on the ground.

31

And there it was sweet rapture to lie still,
Eyes open on the dark. A flowing health
Bathed him from head to foot and great goodwill
Rose springing in his heart and poured its wealth
Outwards. Then came a hand as if by stealth
Out of the dark and touched his hand: and after
The beating silence budded into laughter:

32

- A low grave laugh and rounded like a pearl,
Mysterious, filled with home. He opened wide
His arms. The breathing body of a girl
Slid into them. From the world's end, with the stride
Of seven-leagued boots came passion to his side.
Then, meeting mouths, soft-falling hair, a cry,
Heart-shaken flank, sudden cool-folded thigh:

33

The same night swelled the mushroom in earth's lap
And silvered the wet fields: it drew the bud
From hiding and led on the rhythmic sap
And sent the young wolves thirsting after blood
And, wheeling the big seas, made ebb and flood
Along the shores of earth: and held these two
In dead sleep till the time of morning dew.

DYMER. CANTO III

1

He woke, and all at once before his eyes
The pale spires of the chestnut-trees in bloom
Rose waving and, beyond, dove-coloured skies;
But where he lay was dark and, out of gloom,
He saw them, through the doorway of a room
Full of strange scents and softness, padded deep
With growing leaves, heavy with last night’s sleep.

2

He rubbed his eyes. He felt that chamber wreathing
New sleepiness around him. At his side
He was aware of warmth and quiet breathing.
Twice he sank back, loose-limbed and drowsy-eyed;
But the wind came even there. A sparrow cried
And the wood shone without. Then Dymer rose,
- ‘Just for one glance,’ he said, and went, tip-toes,

3

Out into crisp grey air and drenching grass.
The whitened cobweb sparkling in its place
Clung to his feet. He saw the wagtail pass
Beside him and the thrush: and from his face
Felt the thin-scented winds divinely chase
The flush of sleep. Far off he saw, between
The trees, long morning shadows of dark green.

4

He stretched his lazy arms to their full height,
Yawning, and sighed and laughed, and sighed anew;
Then wandered farther, watching with delight

How his broad naked footprints stained the dew,
— Pressing his foot to feel the cold come through
Between the spreading toes - then wheeled round
Each moment to some new, shrill forest sound.

5

The wood with its cold flowers had nothing there
More beautiful than he, new waked from sleep,
New born from joy. His soul lay very bare
That moment to life's touch, and pondering deep
Now first he knew that no desire could keep
These hours for always, and that men do die
— But oh, the present glory of lungs and eye!

6

He thought: 'At home they are waking now. The stair
Is filled with feet. The bells clang - far from me.
Where am I now? I could not point to where
The City lies from here,'... then, suddenly,
'If I were here alone, these woods could be
A frightful place! But now I have met my friend
Who loves me, we can talk to the road's end.'

7

Thus, quickening with the sweetness of the tale
Of his new love, he turned. He saw, between
The young leaves, where the palace walls showed pale
With chilly stone: but far above the green,
Springing like cliffs in air, the towers were seen,
Making more quiet yet the quiet dawn.
Thither he came. He reached the open lawn.

8

No bird was moving here. Against the wall

Out of the unscythed grass the nettle grew.
The doors stood open wide, but no footfall
Rang in the colonnades. Whispering through
Arches and hollow halls the light wind blew...
His awe returned. He whistled - then, no more,
It’s better to plunge in by the first door.

9

But then the vastness threw him into doubt.
Was this the door that he had found last night?
Or that, beneath the tower? Had he come out
This side at all? As the first snow falls light
With following rain before the year grows white,
So the first, dim foreboding touched his mind,
Gently as yet, and easily thrust behind.

10

And with it came the thought, ‘I do not know
Her name - no, nor her face.’ But still his mood
Ran blithely as he felt the morning blow
About him, and the earth-smell in the wood
Seemed waking for long hours that must be good
Here, in the unfettered lands, that knew no cause
For grudging - out of reach of the old laws.

11

He hastened to one entry. Up the stair,
Beneath the pillared porch, without delay,
He ran - then halted suddenly: for there
Across the quiet threshold something lay,
A bundle, a dark mass that barred the way.
He looked again, and lo, the formless pile
Under his eyes was moving all the while.

12

And it had hands, pale hands of wrinkled flesh,
Puckered and gnarled with vast antiquity,
That moved. He eyed the sprawling thing afresh,
And bit by bit (so faces come to be
In the red coal) yet surely, he could see
That the swathed hugeness was uncleanly human,
A living thing, the likeness of a woman.

13

In the centre a draped hummock marked the head;
Thence flowed the broader lines with curve and fold
Spreading as oak roots do. You would have said
A man could hide among them and grow old
In finding a way out. Breast manifold
As of the Ephesian Artemis might be
Under that robe. The face he did not see.

14

And all his being answered, ‘Not that way!’
Never a word he spoke. Stealthily creeping
Back from the door he drew. Quick! No delay!
Quick, quick, but very quiet! - backward peeping
Till fairly out of sight. Then shouting, leaping,
Shaking himself, he ran - as puppies do
From bathing - till that door was out of view.

15

Another gate - and empty. In he went
And found a courtyard open to the sky,
Amidst it dripped a fountain. Heavy scent
Of flowers was here; the foxglove standing high
Sheltered the whining wasp. With hasty eye
He travelled round the walls. One doorway led
Within: one showed a further court ahead.

16

He ran up to the first - a hungry lover,
And not yet taught to endure, not blunted yet,
But weary of long waiting to discover
That loved one’s face. Before his foot was set
On the first stair, he felt the sudden sweat
Cold on his sides. That sprawling mass in view,
That shape - the horror of heaviness - here too.

17

He fell back from the porch. Not yet - not yet
There must be other ways where he would meet
No watcher in the door. He would not let
The fear rise, nor hope falter, nor defeat
Be entered in his thoughts. A sultry heat
Seemed to have filled the day. His breath came short,
And he passed on into that inner court.

18

And (like a dream) the sight he feared to find
Was waiting here. Then cloister, path and square
He hastened through: down paths that ended blind,
Traced and retraced his steps. The thing sat there
In every door, still watching, everywhere,
Behind, ahead, all round - So! Steady now,
Lest panic comes. He stopped. He wiped his brow.

19

But, as he strove to rally, came the thought
That he had dreamed of such a place before
- Knew how it all would end. He must be caught
Early or late. No good! But all the more
He raged with passionate will that overbore
That knowledge: and cried out, and beat his head,

Raving, upon the senseless walls, and said:

20

‘Where? Where? Dear, look once out. Give but one sign.
It’s I, I, Dymer. Are you chained and hidden?
What have they done to her? Loose her! She is mine.
Through stone and iron, haunted and hag-ridden,
I’ll come to you - no stranger, nor unbidden,
It’s I. Don’t fear them. Shout above them all.
Can you not hear? I’ll follow at your call.’

21

From every arch the echo of his cry
Returned. Then all was silent, and he knew
There was no other way. He must pass by
That horror: tread her down, force his way through,
Or die upon the threshold. And this too
Had all been in a dream. He felt his heart
Beating as if his throat would burst apart.

22

There was no other way. He stood a space
And pondered it. Then, gathering up his will,
He went to the next door. The pillared place
Beneath the porch was dark. The air was still,
Moss on the steps. He felt her presence fill
The threshold with dull life. Here too was she.
This time he raised his eyes and dared to see.

23

Pah! Only an old woman!... but the size,
The old, old matriarchal dreadfulness,
Immovable, intolerable... the eyes
Hidden, the hidden head, the winding dress,

Corpselike... The weight of the brute that seemed to press
Upon his heart and breathing. Then he heard
His own voice, strange and humbled, take the word.

24

‘Good Mother, let me pass. I have a friend
To look for in this house. I slept the night
And feasted here - it was my journey’s end,
-I found it by the music and the light,
And no one kept the doors, and I did right
To enter - did I not? Now, Mother, pray,
Let me pass in... good Mother, give me way.’

25

The woman answered nothing: but he saw
The hands, like crabs, still wandering on her knee.
‘Mother, if I have broken any law,
I’ll ask a pardon once: then let it be,
- Once is enough - and leave the passage free.
I am in haste. And though it were a sin
By all the laws you have, I must go in.’

26

Courage was rising in him now. He said,
‘Out of my path, old woman. For this cause
I am new born, new freed, and here new wed,
That I might be the breaker of bad laws.
The frost of old forbiddings breaks and thaws
Wherever my feet fall. I bring to birth
Under its crust the green, ungrudging earth.’

27

He had started, bowing low: but now he stood
Stretched to his height. His own voice in his breast

Made misery pompous, firing all his blood.
‘Enough,’ he cried. ‘Give place. You shall not wrest
My love from me. I journey on a quest
You cannot understand, whose strength shall bear me
Through fire and earth. A bogy will not scare me.

28

‘I am the sword of spring; I am the truth.
Old night, put out your stars, the dawn is here,
The sleeper’s wakening, and the wings of youth.
With crumbling veneration with cowed fear
I make no truce. My loved one, live and dear,
Waits for me. Let me in! I fled the City,
Shall I fear you or... Mother, ah, for pity.’

29

For his high mood fell shattered. Like a man
Unnerved, in bayonet-fighting, in the thick,
- Full of red rum and cheers when he began,
Now, in a dream, muttering: ‘I’ve not the trick.
It’s no good. I’m no good. They’re all too quick.
There! Look there! Look at that!’ - so Dymer stood,
Suddenly drained of hope. It was no good.

30

He pleaded then. Shame beneath shame. ‘Forgive.
It may be there are powers I cannot break.
If you are of them, speak. Speak. Let me live.
I ask so small a thing. I beg. I make
My body a living prayer whose force would shake
The mountains. I’ll recant - confess my sin
But this once let me pass. I must go in.’

31

‘Yield but one inch, once only from your law;
Set any price -I will give all, obey
All else but this, hold your least word in awe,
Give you no cause for anger from this day.
Answer! The least things living when they pray
As I pray now bear witness. They speak true
Against God. Answer! Mother, let me through.’

32

Then when he heard no answer, mad with fear
And with desire, too strained with both to know
What he desired or feared, yet staggering near,
He forced himself towards her and bent low
For grappling. Then came darkness. Then a blow
Fell on his heart, he thought. There came a blank
Of all things. As the dead sink, down he sank.

33

The first big drops are rattling on the trees,
The sky is copper dark, low thunder pealing.
See Dymer with drooped head and knocking knees
Comes from the porch. Then slowly, drunkly reeling,
Blind, beaten, broken, past desire of healing,
Past knowledge of his misery, he goes on
Under the first dark trees and now is gone.

DYMER. CANTO IV

1

First came the peal that split the heavens apart
Straight overhead. Then silence. Then the rain;
Twelve miles of downward water like one dart,
And in one leap were launched along the plain,
To break the budding flower and flood the grain,
And keep with dripping sound an undersong
Amid the wheeling thunder all night long.

2

He put his hands before his face. He stooped,
Blind with his hair. The loud drops' grim tattoo
Beat him to earth. Like summer grass he drooped,
Amazed, while sheeted lightning large and blue
Blinked wide and pricked the quivering eyeball through.
Then, scrambling to his feet, with downward head
He fought into the tempest as chance led.

3

The wood was mad. Soughing of branch and straining
Was there: drumming of water. Light was none,
Nor knowledge of himself. The trees' complaining
And his own throbbing heart seemed mixed in one,
One sense of bitter loss and beauty undone;
All else was blur and chaos and rain-stream
And noise and the confusion of a dream.

4

Aha!... Earth hates a miserable man:
Against him even the clouds and winds conspire.
Heaven's voice smote Dymer's ear-drum as he ran,

Its red throat plagued the dark with corded fire
- Barbed flame, coiled flame that ran like living wire
Charged with disastrous current, left and right
About his path, hell-blue or staring white.

5

Stab! Stab! Blast all at once, What's he to fear?
Look there - that cedar shrivelling in swift blight
Even where he stood! And there — ah, that came near!
Oh, if some shaft would break his soul outright,
What ease so to unload and scatter quite
On the darkness this wild beating in his skull
Too burning to endure, too tense and full.

6

All lost: and driven away: even her name
Unknown. O fool, to have wasted for a kiss
Time when they could have talked! An angry shame
Was in him. He had worshipt earth, and this
-The venomed clouds fire spitting from the abyss,
This was the truth indeed, the world's intent
Unmasked and naked now, the thing it meant.

7

The storm lay on the forest a great time
— Wheeled in its thundery circuit, turned, returned.
Still through the dead-leaved darkness, through the slime
Of standing pools and slots of clay storm-churned
Went Dymer. Still the knotty lightning burned
Among black air. He heard the unbroken sound
Of water rising in the hollower ground.

8

He cursed it in his madness, flung it back,

Sorrow as wild as young men’s sorrows are,
Till, after midnight, when the tempest’s track
Drew off, between two clouds appeared one star.
Then his mood changed. And this was heavier far,
When bit by bit, rarer and still more rare,
The weakening thunder ceased from the cleansed air;

9

When the leaves began to drip with dying rain
And trees showed black against the glimmering sky,
When the night-birds flapped out and called again
Above him: when the silence cool and shy
Came stealing to its own, and streams ran by
Now audible amid the rustling wood
— Oh, then came the worst hour for flesh and blood.

10

It was no nightmare now with fiery stream
Too horrible to last, able to blend
Itself and all things in one hurrying dream;
It was the waking world that will not end
Because hearts break, that is not foe nor friend,
Where sane and settled knowledge first appears
Of work-day desolation, with no tears.

11

He halted then, footsore, weary to death,
And heard his heart beating in solitude,
When suddenly the sound of sharpest breath
Indrawn with pain and the raw smell of blood
Surprised his sense. Near by to where he stood
Came a long whimpering moan - a broken word,
A rustle of leaves where some live body stirred.

12

He groped towards the sound. ‘What, brother, brother,
Who groaned?’ - ‘I’m hit. I’m finished. Let me be.’
— ‘Put out your hand, then. Reach me. No, the other.’
— ‘Don’t touch. Fool! Damn you! Leave me.’ - ‘I can’t see.
Where are you?’ Then more groans. ‘They’ve done for me.
I’ve no hands. Don’t come near me. No, but stay,
Don’t leave me... O my God! Is it near day?’

13

— ‘Soon now, a little longer. Can you sleep?
I’ll watch for you.’ - ‘Sleep, is it? That’s ahead,
But none till then. Listen: I’ve bled too deep
To last out till the morning. I’ll be dead
Within the hour - sleep then. I’ve heard it said
They don’t mind at the last, but this is Hell.
If I’d the strength -I have such things to tell.’

14

All trembling in the dark and sweated over
Like a man reared in peace, unused to pain,
Sat Dymer near him in the lightless cover,
Afraid to touch and shamefaced to refrain.
Then bit by bit and often checked again
With agony the voice told on. (The place
Was dark, that neither saw the other’s face.)

15

‘There is a City which men call in scorn
The Perfect City - eastward of this wood
You’ve heard about the place. There I was born.
I’m one of them, their work. Their sober mood,
The ordered life, the laws, are in my blood
— A life... well, less than happy, something more
Than the red greed and lusts that went before.

16

‘All in one day, one man and at one blow
Brought ruin on us all. There was a boy
— Blue eyes, large limbs, were all he had to show,
You need no greater prophets to destroy.
He seemed a man asleep. Sorrow and joy
Had passed him by - the dreamiest, safest man,
The most obscure, until this curse began.

17

‘Then - how or why it was, I cannot say
This Dymer, this fool baby pink-and-white,
Went mad beneath his quiet face. One day,
With nothing said, he rose and laughed outright
Before his master: then, in all our sight,
Even where we sat to watch, he struck him dead
And screamed with laughter once again and fled

18

‘Lord! how it all comes back. How still the place is,
And he there lying dead... only the sound
Of a bluebottle buzzing... sharpened faces
Strained, gaping from the benches all around...
The dead man hunched and quiet with no wound,

19

And minute after minute terror creeping
With dreadful hopes to set the wild heart leaping.
‘Then one by one at random (no word spoken)
We slipt out to the sunlight and away.
We felt the empty sense of something broken
And comfortless adventure all that day.
Men loitered at their work and could not say
What trembled at their lips or what new light

Was in girls' eyes. Yet we endured till night.

20

'Then... I was lying awake in bed,
Shot through with tremulous thought, lame hopes, and sweet
Desire of reckless days - with burning head.
And then there came a clamour from the street,
Came nearer, nearer, nearer - stamping feet
And screaming song and curses and a shout
Of "Who's for Dymer, Dymer? - Up and out!"

21

'We looked out from our window. Thronging there
A thousand of our people, girls and men,
Raved and reviled and shouted by the glare
Of torches and of bonfire blaze. And then
Came tumult from the street beyond: again
"Dymer!" they cried. And farther off there came
The sound of gun-fire and the gleam of flame.

22

T rushed down with the rest. Oh, we were mad!
After this, it's all nightmare. The black sky
Between the housetops framed was all we had
To tell us that the old world could not die
And that we were no gods. The flood ran high
When first I came, but after was the worse,
Oh, to recall...! On Dymer rest the curse!

23

'Our leader was a hunchback with red hair
- Bran was his name. He had that kind of force
About him that will hold your eyes fast there
As in ten miles of green one patch of gorse

Will hold them - do you know? His lips were coarse,
But his eyes like a prophet’s - seemed to fill
The whole face. And his tongue was never still.

24

‘He cried: “As Dymer broke, we’ll break the chain.
The world is free. They taught you to be chaste
And labour and bear orders and refrain.
Refrain? From what? All’s good enough. We’ll taste
Whatever is. Life murmurs from the waste
Beneath the mind... who made the reasoning part
The jailer of the wild gods in the heart?”

25

‘We were a ragtail crew - wild-haired, half-dressed,
All shouting, “Up, for Dymer! Up away!”
Yet each one always watching all the rest
And looking to his back. And some were gay
Like drunk men, some were cringing, pinched and grey
With terror dry on the lip. (The older ones
Had had the sense enough to bring their guns.)

26

‘The wave where I was swallowed swelled and broke,
After long surge, into the open square.
And here there was more light: new clamour woke.
Here first I heard the bullets sting the air
And went hot round the heart. Our lords were there
In barricade with all their loyal men.
For every one man loyal Bran led ten.

27

‘Then charge and cheer and bubbling sobs of death,
We hovered on their front. Like swarming bees

Their spraying bullets came - no time for breath.
I saw men’s stomachs fall out on their knees;
And shouting faces, while they shouted, freeze
Into black, bony masks. Before we knew
We’re into them... “Swine!” - “Die, then!” - “That’s for you!”

28

‘The next that I remember was a lull
And sated pause. I saw an old, old man
Lying before my feet with shattered skull,
And both my arms dripped red. And then came Bran
And at his heels a hundred murderers ran,
With prisoners now, clamouring to take and try them
And burn them, wedge their nails up, crucify them.

29

‘God!... Once the lying spirit of a cause
With maddening words dethrones the mind of men,
They’re past the reach of prayer. The eternal laws
Hate them. Their eyes will not come clean again,
But doom and strong delusion drive them then
Without truth, without rest... the iron laughter
Of the immortal mouths goes hooting after.

30

‘And we had firebrands too. Tower after tower
Fell sheathed in thundering flame. The street was like
A furnace mouth. We had them in our power!
Then was the time to mock them and to strike,
To flay men and spit women on the pike,
Bidding them dance. Wherever the most shame
Was done the doer called on Dymer’s name.

31

‘Faces of men in torture... from my mind
They will not go away. The East lay still
In darkness when we left the town behind
Flaming to light the fields. We’d had our will:
We sang, “Oh, we will make the frost distil
From Time’s grey forehead into living dew
And break whatever has been and build new.”

32

‘Day found us on the border of this wood,
Blear-eyed and pale. Then the most part began
To murmur and to lag, crying for food
And shelter. But we dared not answer Bran.
Wherever in the ranks the murmur ran
He’d find it - “You, there, whispering. Up, you sneak,
Reactionary, eh? Come out and speak.”

33

‘Then there’d be shrieks, a pistol shot, a cry,
And someone down. I was the third he caught.
The others pushed me out beneath his eye,
Saying, “He’s here; here, Captain.”
Who’d have thought My old friends?
But I know now. I’ve been taught...
They cut away my two hands and my feet
And laughed and left me for the birds to eat.

34

‘Oh, God’s name! If I had my hands again
And Dymer here... it would not be my blood.
I am stronger now than he is, old with pain,
One grip would make him mine. But it’s no good,
I’m dying fast. Look stranger, where the wood
Grows lighter. It’s the morning. Stranger dear,
Don’t leave me. Talk a little while. Come near.’

But Dymer, sitting hunched with knee to chin,
Close to the dying man, answered no word.
His face was stone. There was no meaning in
His wakeful eyes. Sometimes the other stirred
And fretted, near his death; and Dymer heard,
Yet sat like one that neither hears nor sees.
And the cold East whitened beyond the trees.

DYMER. CANTO V

1

Through bearded cliffs a valley has driven thus deep
Its wedge into the mountain and no more.
The faint track of the farthest-wandering sheep
Ends here, and the grey hollows at their core
Of silence feel the dulled continuous roar
Of higher streams. At every step the skies
Grow less and in their place black ridges rise.

2

Hither, long after noon, with plodding tread
And eyes on earth, grown dogged, Dymer came,
Who all the long day in the woods had fled
From the horror of those lips that screamed his name
And cursed him. Busy wonder and keen shame
Were driving him, and little thoughts like bees
Followed and pricked him on and left no ease.

3

Now, when he looked and saw this emptiness
Seven times enfolded in the idle hills,
There came a chilly pause to his distress,
A cloud of the deep world-despair that fills
A man’s heart like the incoming tide and kills
All pains except it own. In that broad sea
No hope, no change, and no regret can be.

4

He felt the eternal strength of the silly earth,
The unhastening circuit of the stars and sea,
The business of perpetual death and birth,

The meaningless precision. All must be
The same and still the same in each degree
Who cared now? And he smiled and could forgive
Believing that for sure he would not live.

5

Then, where he saw a little water run
Beneath a bush, he slept. The chills of May
Came dropping and the stars peered one by one
Out of the deepening blue, while far away
The western brightness dulled to bars of grey.
Half-way to midnight, suddenly, from dreaming
He woke wide into present horror, screaming.

6

For he had dreamt of being in the arms
Of his beloved and in quiet places;
But all at once it filled with night alarms
And rapping guns: and men with splintered faces,
- No eyes, no nose, all red - were running races
With worms along the floor. And he ran out
To find the girl and shouted: and that shout

7

Had carried him into the waking world.
There stood the concave, vast, unfriendly night,
And over him the scroll of stars unfurled.
Then wailing like a child he rose upright,
Heart-sick with desolation. The new blight
Of loss had nipt him sore, and sad self-pity.
Thinking of her - then thinking of the City.

8

For, in each moment’s thought, the deeds of Bran,

The burning and the blood and his own shame,
Would tease him into madness till he ran
For refuge to the thought of her; whence came
Utter and endless loss - no, not a name,
Not a word, nothing left - himself alone
Crying amid that valley of old stone:

9

‘How soon it all ran out! And I suppose
They, they up there, the old contriving powers,
They knew it all the time - for someone knows
And waits and watches till we pluck the flowers,
Then leaps. So soon - my store of happy hours
All gone before I knew. I have expended
My whole wealth in a day. It’s finished, ended.

10

‘And nothing left. Can it be possible
That joy flows through and, when the course is run,
It leaves no change, no mark on us to tell
Its passing? And as poor as we’ve begun
We end the richest day? What we have won,
Can it all die like this?... Joy flickers on
The razor-edge of the present and is gone.

11

‘What have I done to bear upon my name
The curse of Bran? I was not of his crew.
Nor any man’s. And Dymer has the blame
What have I done? Wronged whom? I never knew.
What’s Bran to me? I had my deed to do
And ran out by myself, alone and free.
- Why should earth sing with joy and not for me?

12

‘Ah, but the earth never did sing for joy...
There is a glamour on the leaf and flower
And April comes and whistles to a boy
Over white fields: and, beauty has such power
Upon us, he believes her in that hour,
For who could not believe? Can it be false,
All that the blackbird says and the wind calls?

13

‘What have I done? No living thing I made
Nor wished to suffer harm. I sought my good
Because the spring was gloriously arrayed
And the blue eyebright misted all the wood.
Yet to obey that springtime and my blood,
This was to be unarmed and off my guard
And gave God time to hit once and hit hard.

14

‘The men built right who made that City of ours,
They knew their world. A man must crouch to face
Infinite malice, watching at all hours,
Shut Nature out - give her no moment’s space
For entry. The first needs of all our race
Are walls, a den, a cover. Traitor I
Who first ran out beneath the open sky.

15

‘Our fortress and fenced place I made to fall,
I slipt the sentries and let in the foe.
I have lost my brothers and my love and all.
Nothing is left but me. Now let me go.
I have seen the world stripped naked and I know.
Great God, take back your world. I will have none
Of all your glittering gauds but death alone.’

16

Meanwhile the earth swung round in hollow night.
Souls without number in all nations slept
Snug on her back, safe speeding towards the light;
Hours tolled, and in damp woods the night beast crept,
And over the long seas the watch was kept
In black ships, twinkling onward, green and red:
Always the ordered stars moved overhead.

17

And no one knew that Dymer in his scales
Had weighed all these and found them nothing worth.
Indifferently the dawn that never fails
Troubled the east of night with gradual birth,
Whispering a change of colours on cold earth,
And a bird woke, then two. The sunlight ran
Along the hills and yellow day began.

18

But stagnant gloom clung in the valley yet;
Hills crowded out a third part of the sky,
Black-looking, and the boulders dripped with wet:
No bird sang. Dymer, shivering, heaved a sigh
And yawned and said: ‘It’s cruel work to die

19

He crouched and clasped his hands about his knees
And hugged his own limbs for the pitiful sense
Of homeliness they had - familiars these,
This body, at least, his own, his last defence.
But soon his morning misery drove him thence,
Eating his heart, to wander as chance led
On, upward, to the narrowing gully’s head.

20

The cloud lay on the nearest mountain-top
As from a giant’s chimney smoking there,
But Dymer took no heed. Sometimes he’d stop,
Sometimes he hurried faster, as despair
Pricked deeper, and cried out: ‘Even now, somewhere,
Bran with his crew’s at work. They rack, they burn,
And there’s no help in me. I’ve served their turn.’

21

Meanwhile the furrowed fog rolled down ahead,
Long tatters of its vanguard smearing round
The bases of the crags. Like cobweb shed
Down the deep combes it dulled the tinkling sound
Of water on the hills. The spongy ground
Faded three yards ahead: then nearer yet
Fell the cold wreaths, the white depth gleaming wet.

22

Then after a long time the path he trod
Led downward. Then all suddenly it dipped
Far steeper, and yet steeper, with smooth sod.
He was half running now. A stone that slipped
Beneath him, rattled headlong down: he tripped,
Stumbled and clutched - then panic, and no hope
To stop himself, once lost upon that slope.

23

And faster, ever faster, and his eye
Caught tree-tops far below. The nightmare feeling
Had gripped him. He was screaming: and the sky
Seemed hanging upside down. Then struggling, reeling,
With effort beyond thought he hung half kneeling
Halted one saving moment. With wild will
He clawed into the hillside and lay still,

24

Half hanging on both arms. His idle feet
Dangled and found no hold. The moor lay wet
Against him and he sweated with the heat
Of terror, all alive. His teeth were set.
‘By God, I will not die,’ said he; ‘not yet.’
Then slowly, slowly, with enormous strain,
He heaved himself an inch: then heaved again,

25

Till saved and spent he lay. He felt indeed
It was the big, round world beneath his breast,
The mother planet proven at his need.
The shame of glad surrender stood confessed,
He cared not for his boasts. This, this was best,
This giving up of all. He need not strive;
He panted, he lay still, he was alive.

26

And now his eyes were closed. Perhaps he slept,
Lapt in unearthly quiet - never knew
How bit by bit the fog’s white rearguard crept
Over the crest and faded, and the blue
First brightening at the zenith trembled through,
And deepening shadows took a sharper form
Each moment, and the sandy earth grew warm.

27

Yet, dreaming of blue skies, in dream he heard
The pure voice of a lark that seemed to send
Its song from heights beyond all height. That bird
Sang out of heaven, ‘The world will never end,’
Sang from the gates of heaven, ‘Will never end.’
Sang till it seemed there was no other thing
But bright space and one voice set there to sing.

28

It seemed to be the murmur and the voice
Of beings beyond number, each and all
Singing! AM. Each of itself made choice
And was: whence flows the justice that men call
Divine. She keeps the great worlds lest they fall
From hour to hour, and makes the hills renew
Their ancient youth and sweetens all things through.

29

It seemed to be the low voice of the world
Brooding alone beneath the strength of things,
Murmuring of days and nights and years unfurled
Forever, and the unwearied joy that brings
Out of old fields the flowers of unborn springs,
Out of old wars and cities burned with wrong,
A splendour in the dark, a tale, a song.

30

The dream ran thin towards waking, and he knew
It was but a bird’s piping with no sense.
He rolled round on his back. The sudden blue,
Quivering with light, hard, cloudless and intense,
Shone over him. The lark still sounded thence
And stirred him at the heart. Some spacious thought
Was passing by too gently to be caught.

31

With that he thrust the damp hair from his face
And sat upright. The perilous cliff dropped sheer
Before him, close at hand, and from his place
Listening in mountain silence he could hear
Birds crying far below. It was not fear
That took him, but strange glory, when his eye
Looked past the edge into surrounding sky.

He rose and stood. Then lo! the world beneath
- Wide pools that in the sun-splashed foothills lay,
Sheep-dotted downs, soft-piled, and rolling heath,
River and shining weir and steeples grey
And the green waves of forest. Far away
Distance rose heaped on distance: nearer hand,
The white roads leading down to a new land.

DYMER. CANTO VI

1

The sun was high in heaven and Dymer stood
A bright speck on the endless mountain-side,
Till, blossom after blossom, that rich mood
Faded and truth rolled homeward, like a tide
Before whose edge the weak soul fled to hide
In vain, with ostrich head, through many a shape
Of coward fancy, whimpering for escape.

2

But only for a moment; then his soul
Took the full swell and heaved a dripping prow
Clear of the shattering wave-crest. He was whole.
No veils should hide the truth, no truth should cow
The dear self-pitying heart. ‘I’ll babble now
No longer,’ Dymer said. ‘I’m broken in.
Pack up the dreams and let the life begin.’

3

With this he turned. ‘I must have food to-day,’
He muttered. Then among the cloudless hills
By winding tracks he sought the downward way
And followed the steep course of tumbling rills
- Came to the glens the wakening fills
In springtime with the echoing splash and shock
Of waters leaping cold from rock to rock.

4

And still, it seemed, that lark with its refrain
Sang in the sky, and wind was in his hair
And hope at heart. Then once, and once again,

He heard a gun fired off. It broke the air
As a stone breaks a pond, and everywhere
The dry crags echoed clear: and at the sound
Once a big bird rose whirring from the ground.

5

In half an hour he reached the level land
And followed the field-paths and crossed the stiles,
Then looked and saw, near by, on his left hand
An old house, folded round with billowy piles
Of dark yew hedge. The moss was on the tiles,
The pigeons in the yard, and in the tower
A clock that had no hands and told no hour.

6

He hastened. In warm waves the garden scent
Came stronger at each stride. The mountain breeze
Was gone. He reached the gates; then in he went
And seemed to lose the sky - such weight of trees
Hung overhead. He heard the noise of bees
And saw, far off, in the blue shade between
The windless elms, one walking on the green.

7

It was a mighty man whose beardless face
Beneath grey hair shone out so large and mild
It made a sort of moonlight in the place.
A dreamy desperation, wistful-wild,
showed in his glance and gait: yet like a child,

8

And over him there hung the witching air,
The wilful courtesy, of the days of old,
The graces wherein idleness grows fair;

And somewhat in his sauntering walk he rolled
And toyed about his waist with seals of gold,
Or stood to ponder often in mid-stride,
Tilting his heavy head upon one side.

9

When Dymer had called twice, he turned his eye:
Then, coming out of silence (as a star
All in one moment slips into the sky
Of evening, yet we feel it comes from far),
He said, ‘Sir, you are welcome. Few there are
That come my way’: and in huge hands he pressed
Dymer’s cold hand and bade him in to rest.

10

‘How did you find this place out? Have you heard
My gun? It was but now I killed a lark.’
‘What, Sir!’ said Dymer; ‘shoot the singing bird?’
‘Sir,’ said the man, ‘they sing from dawn till dark,
And interrupt my dreams too long. But hark...
Another? Did you hear no singing? No?
It was my fancy, then... pray, let it go.

11

‘From here you see my garden’s only flaw.
Stand here, Sir, at the dial.’ Dymer stood.
The Master pointed; then he looked and saw
How hedges and the funeral quietude
Of black trees fringed the garden like a wood,
And only, in one place, one gap that showed
The blue side of the hills, the white hill-road.

12

T have planted fir and larch to fill the gap,’
He said, ‘because this too makes war upon

The art of dream. But by some great mishap
Nothing I plant will grow there. We pass on...
The sunshine of the afternoon is gone.
Let us go in. It draws near time to sup
I hate the garden till the moon is up.’

13

They passed from the hot lawn into the gloom
And coolness of the porch: then, past a door
That opened with no noise, into a room
Where green leaves choked the window and the floor
Sank lower than the ground. A tattered store
Of brown books met the eye: a crystal ball:
And masks with empty eyes along the wall.

14

Then Dymer sat, but knew not how nor where,
And supper was set out before these two,
- He saw not how - with silver old and rare
But tarnished. And he ate and never knew
What meats they were. At every bite he grew
More drowsy and let slide his crumbling will.
The Master at his side was talking still.

15

And all his talk was tales of magic words
And of the nations in the clouds above,
Astral and aerish tribes who fish for birds
With angles. And by history he could prove
How chosen spirits from earth had won their love,
As Arthur, Or Usheen: and to their isle
Went Helen for the sake of a Greek smile.

16

And ever in his talk he mustered well

His texts and strewed old authors round the way,
‘Thus Wierus writes,’ and ‘Thus the Hermetics tell,’
‘This was Agrippa’s view,’ and ‘Others say
With Cardan,’ till he had stolen quite away
Dymer’s dull wits and softly drawn apart
The ivory gates of hope that change the heart.

17

Dymer was talking now. Now Dymer told
Of his own love and losing, drowsily.
The Master leaned towards him, ‘Was it cold,
This spirit, to the touch?’ - ‘No, Sir, not she,’
Said Dymer. And his host: ‘Why this must be
Aethereal, not aerial! O my soul,
Be still... but wait. Tell on, Sir, tell the whole.’

18

Then Dymer told him of the beldam too,
The old, old, matriarchal dreadfulness.
Over the Master’s face a shadow drew,
He shifted in his chair and ‘Yes’ and ‘Yes,’
He murmured twice. ‘I never looked for less!
Always the same... that frightful woman shape
Besets the dream-way and the soul’s escape.’

19

But now when Dymer made to talk of Bran,
A huge indifference fell upon his host,
Patient and wandering-eyed. Then he began,
‘Forgive me. You are young. What helps us most
Is to find out again that heavenly ghost
Who loves you. For she was a ghost, and you
In the place where you met were ghostly too.

20

‘Listen! for I can launch you on the stream
Will roll you to the shores of her own land...
I could be sworn you never learned to dream,
But every night you take with careless hand
What chance may bring? I’ll teach you to command
The comings and the goings of your spirit
Through all that borderland which dreams inherit.

21

‘You shall have hauntings suddenly. And often,
When you forget, when least you think of her
(For so you shall forget), a light will soften
Over the evening woods. And in the stir
Of morning dreams (oh, I will teach you, Sir)
There’ll come a sound of wings. Or you shall be
Waked in the midnight murmuring, “It was she.”’

22

‘No, no,’ said Dymer, ‘not that way. I seem
To have slept for twenty years. Now - while I shake
Out of my eyes that dust of burdening dream,
Now when the long clouds tremble ripe to break
And the far hills appear, when first I wake,
Still blinking, struggling towards the world of men,
And longing - would you turn me back again?

23

‘Dreams? I have had my dream too long. I thought
The sun rose for my sake. I ran down blind
And dancing to the abyss. Oh, Sir, I brought
Boy-laughter for a gift to gods who find
The martyr’s soul too soft. But that’s behind.
I’m waking now. They broke me. All ends thus
Always - and we’re for them, not they for us.

24

‘And she - she was no dream. It would be waste
To seek her there, the living in that den
Of lies.’ The Master smiled. ‘You are in haste!
For broken dreams the cure is, Dream again
And deeper. If the waking world, and men,
And nature marred your dream - so much the worse
For a crude world beneath its primal curse.’

25

— ‘Ah, but you do not know! Can dreams do this,
Pluck out blood-guiltiness upon the shore
Of memory - and undo what’s done amiss,
And bid the thing that has been be no more?’
— ‘Sir, it is only dreams unlock that door,’
He answered with a shrug. ‘What would you have?
In dreams the thrice-proved coward can feel brave.

26

‘In dreams the fool is free from scorning voices.
Grey-headed whores are virgin there again.
Out of the past dream brings long-buried choices,
All in a moment snaps the tenfold chain
That life took years in forging. There the stain
Of oldest sins - how do the good words go?
Though they were scarlet, shall be white as snow.’

27

Then, drawing near, when Dymer did not speak,
‘My little son,’ said he, ‘your wrong and right
Are also dreams: fetters to bind the weak
Faster to phantom earth and blear the sight.
Wake into dreams, into the larger light
That quenches these frail stars. They will not know
Earth’s bye-laws in the land to which you go.’

28

- ‘I must undo my sins.’ - ‘An earthly law,
And, even in earth, the child of yesterday.
Throw down your human pity; cast your awe
Behind you; put repentance all away.
Home to the elder depths! for never they
Supped with the stars who dared not slough behind
The last shred of earth’s holies from their mind.’

29

‘Sir,’ answered Dymer, ‘I would be content
To drudge in earth, easing my heart’s disgrace,
Counting a year’s long service lightly spent
If once at the year’s end I saw her face
Somewhere, being then most weary, in some place
I looked not for that joy - or hear her near
Whispering, “Yet courage, friend,” for one more year.’

30

‘Pish,’ said the Master. ‘Will you have the truth?
You think that virtue saves? Her people care
For the high heart and idle hours of youth;
For these they will descend our lower air,
Not virtue. You would nerve your arm and bear
Your burden among men? Look to it, child:
By virtue’s self vision can be defiled.

31

‘You will grow full of pity and the love of men,
And toil until the morning moisture dries
Out of your heart. Then once, or once again,
It may be you will find her: but your eyes
Soon will be grown too dim. The task that lies
Next to your hand will hide her. You shall be
The child of earth and gods you shall not see.’

32

Here suddenly he ceased. Tip-toes he went.
A bolt clicked - then the window creaked ajar,
And out of the wet world the hedgerow scent
Came floating; and the dark without one star
Nor shape of trees nor sense of near and far,
The undimensional night and formless skies
Were there, and were the Master’s great allies.

33

‘I am very old,’ he said. ‘But if the time
We suffer in our dreams were counted age,
I have outlived the ocean and my prime
Is with me to this day. Years cannot gauge
The dream-life. In the turning of a page,
Dozing above my book, I have lived through
More ages than the lost Lemuria knew.

34

T am not mortal. Were I doomed to die
This hour, in this half-hour I interpose
A thousand years of dream: and, those gone by,
As many more, and in the last of those,
Ten thousand - ever journeying towards a close
That I shall never reach: for time shall flow,
Wheel within wheel, interminably slow.

35

‘And you will drink my cup and go your way
Into the valley of dreams. You have heard the call.
Come hither and escape. Why should you stay?
Earth is a sinking ship, a house whose wall
Is tottering while you sweep; the roof will fall
Before the work is done. You cannot mend it.
Patch as you will, at last the rot must end it.’

36

Then Dymer lifted up his heavy head
Like Atlas on broad shoulders bearing up
The insufferable globe. ‘I had not said,’
He mumbled, ‘never said I’d taste the cup.
What, is it this you give me? Must I sup?
Oh, lies, all lies... Why did you kill the lark?
Guide me the cup to lip... it is so dark.’

DYMER. CANTO VII

1

The host had trimmed his lamp. The downy moth
Came from the garden. Where the lamplight shed
Its circle of smooth white upon the cloth,
Down mid the rinds of fruit and broken bread,
Upon his sprawling arms lay Dymer’s head;
And often, as he dreamed, he shifted place,
Muttering and showing half his drunken face.

2

The beating stillness of the dead of night
Flooded the room. The dark and sleepy powers
Settled upon the house and filled it quite;
Far from the roads it lay, from belfry towers
And hen-roosts, in a world of folded flowers,
Buried in loneliest fields where beasts that love
The silence through the unrustled hedgerows move.

3

Now from the Master’s lips there breathed a sigh
As of a man released from some control
That wronged him. Without aim his wandering eye,
Unsteadied and unfixed, began to roll.
His lower lip dropped loose. The informing soul
Seemed fading from his face. He laughed out loud
Once only: then looked round him, hushed and cowed.

4

Then, summoning all himself, with tightened lip,
With desperate coolness and attentive air,
He touched between his thumb and finger-tip,

Each in its turn, the four legs of his chair,
Then back again in haste - there! - that one there
Had been forgotten... once more!... safer now;
That’s better! and he smiled and cleared his brow.

5

Yet this was but a moment’s ease. Once more
He glanced about him like a startled hare,
His big eyes bulged with horror. As before,
Quick! - to the touch that saves him. But despair
Is nearer by one step; and in his chair
Huddling he waits. He knows that they’ll come strong
Again and yet again and all night long;

6

And after this night comes another night
- Night after night until the worst of all.
And now too even the noonday and the light
Let through the horrors. Oh, could he recall
The deep sleep and the dreams that used to fall
Around him for the asking! But, somehow,
Something’s amiss... sleep comes so rarely now.

7

Then, like the dog returning to its vomit,
He staggered to the bookcase to renew
Yet once again the taint he had taken from it,
And shuddered as he went. But horror drew
His feet, as joy draws others. There in view
Was his strange heaven and his far stranger hell,
His secret lust, his soul’s dark citadel:

8

Old Theomagia, Demonology,
Cabbala, Chemic Magic, Book of the Dead,

Damning Hermetic rolls that none may see
Save the already damned - such grubs are bred
From minds that lose the Spirit and seek instead
For spirits in the dust of dead men’s error,
Buying the joys of dream with dreamland terror.

9

This lost soul looked them over one and all,
Now sickening at the heart’s root; for he knew
This night was one of those when he would fall
And scream alone (such things they made him do)
And roll upon the floor. The madness grew
Wild at his breast, but still his brain was clear
That he could watch the moment coming near.

10

But, ere it came, he heard a sound, half groan,
Half muttering, from the table. Like a child
Caught unawares that thought it was alone,
He started as in guilt. His gaze was wild,
Yet pitiably with all his will he smiled,
- So strong is shame, even then. And Dymer stirred,
Now waking, and looked up and spoke one word:

11

Water!’ he said. He was too dazed to see
What hell-wrung face looked down, what shaking hand
Poured out the draught. He drank it thirstily
And held the glass for more. ‘Your land... your land
Of dreams,’ he said. ‘All lies!... I understand
More than I did. Yes, water. I’ve the thirst
Of hell itself. Your magic’s all accursed.’

12

When he had drunk again he rose and stood,
Pallid and cold with sleep. ‘By God,’ he said,
‘You did me wrong to send me to that wood.
I sought a living spirit and found instead
Bogies and wraiths.’ The Master raised his head,
Calm as a sage, and answered, ‘Are you mad?
Come, sit you down. Tell me what dream you had.’

13

- ‘I dreamed about a wood... an autumn red
Of beech-trees big as mountains. Down between
The first thing that I saw - a clearing spread,
Deep down, oh, very deep. Like some ravine
Or like a well it sank, that forest green
Under its weight of forest - more remote
Than one ship in a landlocked sea afloat.

14

‘Then through the narrowed sky some heavy bird
Would flap its way, a stillness more profound
Following its languid wings. Sometimes I heard
Far off in the long woods with quiet sound
The sudden chestnut thumping to the ground,
Or the dry leaf that drifted past upon
its endless loiter earthward and was gone.

15

‘Then next... I heard twigs splintering on my right
And rustling in the thickets. Turning there
I watched. Out of the foliage came in sight
The head and blundering shoulders of a bear,
Glistening in sable black, with beady stare
Of eyes towards me, and no room to fly
- But padding soft and slow the beast came by.

16

‘And - mark their flattery - stood and rubbed his flank
Against me. On my shaken legs I felt
His heart beat. And my hand that stroked him sank
Wrist-deep upon his shoulder in soft pelt.
Yes... and across my spirit as I smelt
The wild thing’s scent, a new, sweet wildness ran
Whispering of Eden-fields long lost by man.

17

‘So far was well, But then came emerald birds
Singing about my head. I took my way
Sauntering the cloistered woods. Then came the herds,
The roebuck and the fallow deer at play,
Trooping to nose my hand. All this, you say,
Was sweet? Oh, sweet!... Do you think I could not see
That beasts and wood were nothing else but me?

18

‘... That I was making everything I saw,
Too sweet, far too well fitted to desire
To be a living thing? Those forests draw
No sap from the kind earth: the solar fire
And soft rain feed them not: that fairy brier
Pricks not: the birds sing sweetly in that brake
Not for their own delight but for my sake!

19

‘It is a world of sad, cold, heartless stuff,
Like a bought smile, no joy in it.’ - ‘But stay;
Did you not find your lady?’ - ‘Sure enough!
I still had hopes till then. The autumn day
Was westering, the long shadows crossed my way,
When over daisies folded for the night

Beneath rook-gathering elms she came in sight.’

20

- ‘Was she not fair?’ - ‘So beautiful, she seemed
Almost a living soul. But every part
Was what I made it - all that I had dreamed
No more, no less: the mirror of my heart,
Such things as boyhood feigns beneath the smart
Of solitude and spring. I was deceived
Almost. In that first moment I believed.

21

‘For a big, brooding rapture, tense as fire
And calm as a first sleep, had soaked me through
Without thought, without word, without desire...
Meanwhile above our heads the deepening blue
Burnished the gathering stars. Her sweetness drew
A veil before my eyes. The minutes passed
Heavy like loaded vines. She spoke at last.

22

‘She said, for this land only did men love
The shadow-lands of earth. All our disease
Of longing, all the hopes we fabled of,
Fortunate islands or Hesperian seas
Or woods beyond the West, were but the breeze
That blew from off those shores: one far, spent breath
That reached even to the world of change and death.

23

‘She told me I had journeyed home at last
Into the golden age and the good countrie
That had been always there. She bade me cast
My cares behind forever: - on her knee

Worshipped me, lord and love - oh, I can see
Her red lips even now! Is it not wrong
That men’s delusions should be made so strong?

24

‘For listen, I was so besotted now
She made me think that I was somehow seeing
The very core of truth... I felt somehow,
Beyond all veils, the inward pulse of being.
Thought was enslaved, but oh, it felt like freeing
And draughts of larger air. It is too much!
Who can come through untainted from that touch?

25

‘There I was nearly wrecked. But mark the rest:
She went too fast. Soft to my arms she came.
The robe slipped from her shoulder. The smooth breast
Was bare against my own. She shone like flame
Before me in the dusk, all love, all shame -
Faugh! - and it was myself. But all was well,
For, at the least, that moment snapped the spell.

26

‘As when you light a candle, the great gloom
Which was the unbounded night, sinks down, compressed
To four white walls in one familiar room,
So the vague joy shrank wilted in my breast
And narrowed to one point, unmarked, confessed;
Fool’s paradise was gone: instead was there
King Lust with his black, sudden, serious stare.

27

‘That moment in a cloud among the trees
Wild music and the glare of torches came.

On sweated faces, on the prancing knees
Of shaggy satyrs fell the smoky flame,
On ape and goat and crawlers without name,
On rolling breast, black eyes and tossing hair,
On old bald-headed witches, lean and bare.

28

‘They beat the devilish torn-torn rub-a-dub;
Lunging, leaping, in unwieldy romp,
Singing Cotytto and Beelzebub,
With devil-dancers’ mask and phallic pomp,
Torn raw with briers and caked from many a swamp,
They came, among the wild flowers dripping blood
And churning the green mosses into mud.

29

‘They sang, “Return! Return! We are the lust
That was before the world and still shall be
When your last law is trampled into dust,
We are the mother swamp, the primal sea
Whence the dry land appeared. Old, old are we.
It is but a return... it’s nothing new,
Easy as slipping on a well-worn shoe.”

30

‘And then there came warm mouths and finger-tips
Preying upon me, whence I could not see,
Then... a huge face, low-browed, with swollen lips
Crooning, “I am not beautiful as she,
But I’m the older love; you shall love me
Far more than Beauty’s self. You have been ours
Always. We are the world’s most ancient powers.”

31

‘First flatterer and then bogy - like a dream!
Sir, are you listening? Do you also know
How close to the soft laughter comes the scream
Down yonder?’ But his host cried sharply, ‘No.
Leave me alone. Why will you plague me? Go!
Out of my house! Begone!’ - ‘With all my heart,’
Said Dymer. ‘But one word before we part.’

32

He paused, and in his cheek the anger burned:
Then turning to the table, he poured out
More water. But before he drank he turned
Then leaped back to the window with a shout
For there - it was no dream - beyond all doubt
He saw the Master crouch with levelled gun,
Cackling in maniac voice, ‘Run, Dymer, run!’

33

He ducked and sprang far out. The starless night
On the wet lawn closed round him every way.
Then came the gun-crack and the splash of light
Vanished as soon as seen. Cool garden clay
Slid from his feet. He had fallen and he lay
Face downward among leaves - then up and on
Through branch and leaf till sense and breath were gone.

DYMER. CANTO VIII

1

When next he found himself no house was there,
No garden and great trees. Beside a lane
In grass he lay. Now first he was aware
That, all one side, his body glowed with pain:
And the next moment and the next again
Was neither less nor more. Without a pause
It clung like a great beast with fastened claws;

2

That for a time he could not frame a thought
Nor know himself for self, nor pain for pain,
Till moment added on to moment taught
The new, strange art of living on that plane,
Taught how the grappled soul must still remain,
Still choose and think and understand beneath
The very grinding of the ogre’s teeth.

3

He heard the wind along the hedges sweep,
The quarter striking from a neighbouring tower.
About him was the weight of the world’s sleep;
Within, the thundering pain. That quiet hour
Heeded it not. It throbbed, it raged with power
Fit to convulse the heavens: and at his side
The soft peace drenched the meadows far and wide.

4

The air was cold, the earth was cold with dew,
The hedge behind him dark as ink. But now
The clouds broke and a paler heaven showed through

Spacious with sudden stars, breathing somehow
The sense of change to slumbering lands. A cow
Coughed in the fields behind. The puddles showed
Like pools of sky amid the darker road.

5

And he could see his own limbs faintly white
And the blood black upon them. Then by chance
He turned... and it was strange: there at his right
He saw a woman standing, and her glance
Met his: and at the meeting his deep trance
Changed not, and while he looked the knowledge grew
She was not of the old life but the new.

6

‘Who is it?’ he said. ‘The loved one, the long lost.’
He stared upon her. ‘Truly?’ - ‘Truly indeed.’
— ‘Oh, lady, you come late. I am tempest-tossed,
Broken and wrecked. I am dying. Look, I bleed.
Why have you left me thus and given no heed
To all my prayers? - left me to be the game
Of all deceits?’ - ‘You should have asked my name.’

7

— ‘What are you, then?’ But to his sudden cry
She did not answer. When he had thought awhile
He said: ‘How can I tell it is no lie?
It may be one more phantom to beguile
The brain-sick dreamer with its harlot smile.’
‘I have not smiled,’ she said. The neighbouring bell
Tolled out another quarter. Silence fell.

8

And after a long pause he spoke again:

‘Leave me,’ he said. ‘Why do you watch with me?
You do not love me. Human tears and pain
And hoping for the things that cannot be,
And blundering in the night where none can see,
And courage with cold back against the wall,
You do not understand.’ - ‘I know them all.

9

‘The gods themselves know pain, the eternal forms.
In realms beyond the reach of cloud, and skies
Nearest the ends of air, where come no storms
Nor sound of earth, I have looked into their eyes
Peaceful and filled with pain beyond surmise,
Filled with an ancient woe man cannot reach
One moment though in fire; yet calm their speech.’

10

‘Then these,’ said Dymer, ‘were the world I wooed...
These were the holiness of flowers and grass
And desolate dews... these, the eternal mood
Blowing the eternal theme through men that pass.
I called myself their lover -I that was
Less fit for that long service than the least
Dull, workday drudge of men or faithful beast.

11

‘Why do they lure to them such spirits as mine,
The weak, the passionate, and the fool of dreams?
When better men go safe and never pine
With whispering at the heart, soul-sickening gleams
Of infinite desire, and joy that seems
The promise of full power? For it was they,
The gods themselves, that led me on this way.

12

‘Give me the truth! I ask not now for pity.
When gods call, can the following them be sin?
Was it false light that lured me from the City?
Where was the path - without it or within?
Must it be one blind throw to lose or win?
Has heaven no voice to help? Must things of dust
Guess their own way in the dark?’ She said, ‘They must.’

13

Another silence: then he cried in wrath,
‘You came in human shape, in sweet disguise
Wooing me, lurking for me in my path,
Hid your eternal cold with woman’s eyes,
Snared me with shows of love - and all was lies.’
She answered, ‘For our kind must come to all
If bidden, but in the shape for which they call.’

14

‘What!’ answered Dymer. ‘Do you change and sway
To serve us, as the obedient planets spin
About the sun? Are you but potter’s clay
For us to mould - unholy to our sin
And holy to the holiness within?’
She said, ‘Waves fall on many an unclean shore,
Yet the salt seas are holy as before.

15

‘Our nature is no purer for the saint
That worships, nor from him that uses ill
Our beauty can we suffer any taint.
As from the first we were, so are we still:
With incorruptibles the mortal will
Corrupts itself, and clouded eyes will make
Darkness within from beams they cannot take.’

16

‘Well... it is well,’ said Dymer. ‘If I have used
The embreathing spirit amiss... what would have been
The strength of all my days I have refused
And plucked the stalk, too hasty, in the green,
Trusted the good for best, and having seen
Half-beauty, or beauty’s fringe, the lowest stair,
The common incantation, worshipped there.’

17

But presently he cried in his great pain,
‘If I had loved a beast it would repay,
But I have loved the Spirit and loved in vain.
Now let me die... ah, but before the way
Is ended quite, in the last hour of day,
Is there no word of comfort, no one kiss
Of human love? Does it all end in this?’

18

She answered, ‘Never ask of life and death.
Uttering these names you dream of wormy clay
Or of surviving ghosts. This withering breath
Of words is the beginning of decay
In truth, when truth grows cold and pines away
Among the ancestral images. Your eyes
First see her dead: and more, the more she dies.

19

‘You are still dreaming, dreams you shall forget
When you have cast your fetters, far from here.
Go forth; the journey is not ended yet.
You have seen Dymer dead and on the bier
More often than you dream and dropped no tear,
You have slain him every hour. Think not at all

Of death lest into death by thought you fall.’

20

He turned to question her, then looked again,
And lo! the shape was gone. The darkness lay
Heavy as yet and a cold, shifting rain
Fell with the breeze that springs before the day.
It was an hour death loves. Across the way
The clock struck once again. He saw near by
The black shape of the tower against the sky.

21

Meanwhile above the torture and the riot
Of leaping pulse and nerve that shot with pain,
Somewhere aloof and poised in spectral quiet
His soul was thinking on. The dizzied brain
Scarce seemed her organ: link by link the chain
That bound him to the flesh was loosening fast
And the new life breathed in unmoved and vast.

22

‘It was like this,’ he thought - ‘like this, or worse,
For him that I found bleeding in the wood...
Blessings upon him... there I learned the curse
That rests on Dymer’s name, and truth was good.
He has forgotten now the fire and blood,
He has forgotten that there was a man
Called Dymer. He knows not himself nor Bran.

23

‘How long have I been moved at heart in vain
About this Dymer, thinking this was I...
Why did I follow close his joy and pain
More than another man’s? For he will die,

The little cloud will vanish and the sky
Reign as before. The stars remain and earth
And Man, as in the years before my birth.

24

‘There was a Dymer once who worked and played
About the City; I sloughed him off and ran.
There was a Dymer in the forest glade
Ranting alone, skulking the fates of man.
I cast him also, and a third began
And he too died. But I am none of those.
Is there another still to die... Who knows?’

25

Then in his pain, half wondering what he did,
He made to struggle towards that belfried place.
And groaning down the sodden bank he slid,
And groaning in the lane he left his trace
Of bloodied mire: then halted with his face
Upwards, towards the gateway, breathing hard
- An old lych-gate before a burial-yard.

26

He looked within. Between the huddling crosses,
Over the slanted tombs and sunken slate
Spread the deep quiet grass and humble mosses,
A green and growing darkness, drenched of late,
Smelling of earth and damp. He reached the gate
With failing hand. ‘I will rest here,’ he said,
‘And the long grass will cool my burning head.’

DYMER. CANTO IX

1

Even as he heard the wicket clash behind
Came a great wind beneath that seemed to tear
The solid graves apart; and deaf and blind
Whirled him upright, like smoke, through towering air
Whose levels were as steps of a sky stair.
The parching cold roughened his throat with thirst
And pricked him at the heart. This was the first.

2

And as he soared into the next degree,
Suddenly all round him he could hear
Sad strings that fretted inconsolably
And ominous horns that blew both far and near.
There broke his human heart, and his last tear
Froze scalding on his chin. But while he heard
He shot like a sped dart into the third.

3

And its first stroke of silence could destroy
The springs of tears forever and compress
From off his lips the curved bow of the boy
Forever. The sidereal loneliness
Received him, where no journeying leaves the less
Still to be journeyed through: but everywhere,
Fast though you fly, the centre still is there.

4

And here the well-worn fabric of our life
Fell from him. Hope and purpose were cut short,
- Even the blind trust that reaches in mid-strife

Towards some heart of things. Here blew the mort
For the world spirit herself. The last support
Was fallen away - Himself, one spark of soul,
Swam in unbroken void. He was the whole,

5

And wailing: ‘Why hast Thou forsaken me?
Was there no world at all, but only I
Dreaming of gods and men?’ Then suddenly
He felt the wind no more: he seemed to fly
Faster than light but free, and scaled the sky
In his own strength - as if a falling stone
Should wake to find the world’s will was its own.

6

And on the instant, straight before his eyes
He looked and saw a sentry shape that stood
Leaning upon its spear, with hurrying skies
Behind it and a moonset red as blood.
Upon its head were helmet and mailed hood,
And shield upon its arm and sword at thigh,
All black and pointed sharp against the sky.

7

Then came the clink of metal, the dry sound
Of steel on rock and challenge: ‘Who comes here?’
And as he heard it, Dymer at one bound
Stood in the stranger’s shadow, with the spear
Between them. And his human face came near
That larger face. ‘What watch is this you keep,’
Said Dymer, ‘on edge of such a deep?’

8

And answer came, ‘I watch both night and day

This frontier... there are beasts of the upper air
As beasts of the deep sea... one walks this way
Night after night, far scouring from his lair,
Chewing the cud of lusts which are despair
And fill not, while his mouth gapes dry for bliss
That never was.’— ‘What kind of beast is this?

9

‘A kind of things escaped that have no home,
Hunters of men. They love the spring uncurled,
The will worn down, the wearied hour. They come
At night-time when the mask is off the world
And the soul’s gate ill-locked and the flag furled
-Then, softly, a pale swarm, and in disguise,
Flit past the drowsy watchman, small as flies.

10

— ‘I’ll see this aerish beast whereof you speak.
I’ll share the watch with you.’ - ‘Nay, little One,
Begone. You are of earth. The flesh is weak...
— ‘What is the flesh to me? My course is run,
All but some deed still waiting to be done,
Some moment I may rise on, as the boat
Lifts with the lifting tide and steals afloat.

11

‘You are a spirit, and it is well with you,
But I am come out of great folly and shame,
The sack of cities, wrongs I must undo...
But tell me of the beast, and whence it came;
Who were its sire and dam? What is its name?’
— ‘It is my kin. All monsters are the brood
Of heaven and earth, and mixed with holy blood.’

12

— ‘How can this be?’ - ‘My son, sit here awhile.
There is a lady in that primal place
Where I was born, who with her ancient smile
Made glad the sons of heaven. She loved to chase
The springtime round the world. To all your race
She was a sudden quivering in the wood
Or a new thought springing in solitude.

13

‘Till, in prodigious hour, one swollen with youth,
Blind from new-broken prison, knowing not
Himself nor her, nor how to mate with truth,
Lay with her in a strange and secret spot,
Mortal with her immortal, and begot
This walker-in-the-night’ - ‘But did you know
This mortal’s name?’ - ‘Why... it was long ago.

14

‘And yet, I think, I bear the name in mind;
It was some famished boy whom tampering men
Had crippled in their chains and made him blind
Till their weak hour discovered them: and then
He broke that prison. Softly! - it comes again,
I have it. It was Dymer, little One,
Dymer’s the name. This spectre is his son.’

15

Then, after silence, came an answering shout
From Dymer, glad and full: ‘Break off! Dismiss!
Your watch is ended and your lamp is out.
Unarm, unarm. Return into your bliss.
You are relieved, Sir. I must deal with this
As in my right. For either I must slay
This beast or else be slain before the day.’

16

‘So mortal and so brave?’ that other said,
Smiling, and turned and looked in Dymer’s eyes,
Scanning him over twice from heel to head
- Like an old sergeant’s glance, grown battle-wise
To know the points of men. At last, ‘Arise,’
He said, ‘and wear my arms. I can withhold
Nothing; for such an hour has been foretold.’

17

Thereat, with lips as cold as the sea-surge,
He kissed the youth, and bending on one knee
Put all his armour off and let emerge
Angelic shoulders marbled gloriously
And feet like frozen speed and, plain to see,
On his wide breast dark wounds and ancient scars,
The battle honours of celestial wars.

18

Then like a squire or brother born he dressed
The young man in those plates, that dripped with cold
Upon the inside, trickling over breast
And shoulder: but without, the figured gold
Gave to the tinkling ice its jagged hold,
And the icy spear froze fast to Dymer’s hand.
But where the other had stood he took his stand

19

And searched the cloudy landscape. He could see
Dim shapes like hills appearing, but the moon
Had sunk behind their backs. ‘When will it be?’
Said Dymer: and the other, ‘Soon now, soon.
For either he comes past us at night’s noon
Or else between the night and the full day,

And down there, on your left, will be his way.’

20

— ‘Swear that you will not come between us two
Nor help me by a hair’s weight if I bow.’
— ‘If you are he, if prophecies speak true,
Not heaven and all the gods can help you now.
This much I have been told, but know not how
The fight will end. Who knows? I cannot tell.’
‘Sir, be content,’ said Dymer. ‘I know well.’

21

Thus Dymer stood to arms, with eyes that ranged
Through aching darkness: stared upon it, so
That all things, as he looked upon them, changed
And were not as at first. But grave and slow
The larger shade went sauntering to and fro,
Humming at first the snatches of some tune
That soldiers sing, but falling silent soon.

22

Then came steps of dawn. And though they heard
No milking cry in the fields, and no cock crew,

And out of empty air no twittering bird
Sounded from neighbouring hedges, yet they knew.
Eastward the hollow blackness paled to blue,
Then blue to white: and in the West the rare,
Surviving stars blinked feebler in cold air.

23

For beneath Dymer’s feet the sad half-light
Discovering the new landscape oddly came,
And forms grown half familiar in the night

Looked strange again: no distance seemed the same.
And now he could see clear and call by name
Valleys and hills and woods. The phantoms all
Took shape, and made a world, at morning’s call.

24

It was a ruinous land. The ragged stumps
Of broken trees rose out of endless clay
Naked of flower and grass: the slobbered humps
Dividing the dead pools. Against the grey
A shattered village gaped. But now the day
Was very near them and the night was past,
And Dymer understood and spoke at last.

25

‘Now I have wooed and won you, bridal earth,
Beautiful world that lives, desire of men.
All that the spirit intended at my birth
This day shall be born into deed... and then
The hard day’s labour comes no more again
Forever. The pain dies. The longings cease.
The ship glides under the green arch of peace.

26

‘Now drink me as the sun drinks up the mist.
This is the hour to cease in, at full flood,
That asks no gift from following years - but, hist!
Look yonder! At the corner of that wood Look!
Look there where he comes! It shocks the blood,
The first sight, eh? Now, sentinel, stand clear
And save yourself. For God’s sake come not near.’

27

His full-grown spirit had moved without command

Or spur of the will. Before he knew, he found
That he was leaping forward spear in hand
To where that ashen brute wheeled slowly round
Nosing, and set its ears towards the sound,
The pale and heavy brute, rough-ridged behind,
And full of eyes, clinking in scaly rind.

28

And now ten paces parted them: and here
He halted. He thrust forward his left foot,
Poising his straightened arms, and launched the spear,
And gloriously it sang. But now the brute
Lurched forward: and he saw the weapon shoot
Beyond it and fall quivering on the field.
Dymer drew out his sword and raised the shield.

29

What now my friends? You get no more from me
Of Dymer. He goes from us. What he felt
Or saw from henceforth no man knows but he
Who has himself gone through the jungle belt
Of dying, into peace. That angel knelt

Far off and watched them close but could not see
Their battle. All was ended suddenly.

30

A leap - a cry - flurry of steel and claw,
Then silence. As before, the morning light
And the same brute crouched yonder; and he saw
Under its feet, broken and bent and white,
The ruined limbs of Dymer, killed outright
All in a moment, all his story done.
.. But that same moment came the rising sun;

31

And thirty miles to westward, the grey cloud
Flushed into answering pink. Long shadows streamed
From every hill, and the low-hanging shroud
Of mist along the valleys broke and steamed
Gold-flecked to heaven. Far off the armour gleamed
Like glass upon the dead man’s back. But now
The sentinel ran forward, hand to brow,

32

And staring. For between him and the sun
He saw that country clothed with dancing flowers
Where flower had never grown; and one by one
The splintered woods, as if from April showers,
Were softening into green. In the leafy towers
Rose the cool, sudden chattering on the tongues
Of happy birds with morning in their lungs.

33

The wave of flowers came breaking round his feet,
Crocus and bluebell, primrose, daffodil
Shivering with moisture: and the air grew sweet
Within his nostrils, changing heart and will,
Making him laugh. He looked, and Dymer still
Lay dead among the flowers and pinned beneath
The brute: but as he looked he held his breath;

34

For when he had gazed hard with steady eyes
Upon the brute, behold, no brute was there,
But someone towering large against the skies,
A wing’d and sworded shape, whose foam-like hair
Lay white about its shoulders, and the air
That came from it was burning hot. The whole

Pure body brimmed with life, as a full bowl.

35

And from the distant corner of day's birth
He heard clear trumpets blowing and bells ring,
A noise of great good coming into earth
And such a music as the dumb would sing
If Balder had led back the blameless spring
With victory, with the voice of charging spears,
And in white lands long-lost Saturnian years.

POEMS, 1964

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PART I. THE HIDDEN COUNTRY

A CONFESSION

I am so coarse, the things the poets see
Are obstinately invisible to me.
For twenty years I've stared my level best
To see if evening - any evening - would suggest
A patient etherized upon a table;
In vain. I simply wasn't able.
To me each evening looked far more
Like the departure from a silent, yet a crowded, shore
Of a ship whose freight was everything, leaving behind
Gracefully, finally, without farewells, marooned mankind.

Red dawn behind a hedgerow in the east
Never, for me, resembled in the least
A chilblain on a cocktail-shaker's nose;
Waterfalls don't remind me of torn underclothes,
Nor glaciers of tin-cans. I've never known
The moon look like a hump-backed crone
Rather, a prodigy even now
Nor naturalized, a riddle glaring from the Cyclops' brow
Of the cold world, reminding me on what a place
I crawl and cling, a planet with no bulwarks, out in space.

Never the white sun of the wintriest day
Struck me as *un crachat d'estaminet.*
I'm like that odd man Wordsworth knew, to whom
A primrose was a yellow primrose, one whose doom
Keeps him forever in the list of dunces,
Compelled to live on stock responses,
Making the poor best that I can
Of dull things... peacocks, honey, the Great Wall, Aldebaran,
Silver weirs, new-cut grass, wave on the beach, hard gem,
The shapes of horse and woman, Athens, Troy, Jerusalem.

IMPENITENCE

All the world’s wiseacres in arms against them
Shan’t detach my heart for a single moment
From the man-like beasts of the earthy stories
Badger or Moly.

Rat the oarsman, neat Mrs Tiggy Winkle,
Benjamin, pert Nutkin, or (ages older)
Henryson’s shrill Mouse, or the Mice the Frogs once
Fought with in Homer.

Not that I’m so craz’d as to think the creatures
Do behave that way, nor at all deluded
By some half-false sweetness of early childhood
Sharply remembered.

Look again. Look well at the beasts, the true ones.
Can’t you see?... cool primness of cats, or coney’s
Half indignant stare of amazement, mouse’s
Twinkling adroitness.

Tipsy bear’s rotundity, toad’s complacence...
Why! they all cry out to be used as symbols,
Masks for Man, cartoons, parodies by Nature
Formed to reveal us

Each in each, not fiercely but in her gentlest
Vein of household laughter. And if the love so
Raised - it will, no doubt - splashes over on the
Actual archtypes,

Who’s the worse for that? Marry, gup! Begone, you
Fusty kill-joys, new Manichaens! Here’s a
Health to Toad Hall, here’s to the Beaver doing
Sums with the Butcher!

A CLICHÉ CAME OUT OF ITS CAGE

1

You said ‘The world is going back to Paganism’. Oh bright
Vision! I saw our dynasty in the bar of the House
Spill from their tumblers a libation to the Erinyes,
And Leavis with Lord Russell wreathed in flowers, heralded with flutes,
Leading white bulls to the cathedral of the solemn Muses
To pay where due the glory of their latest theorem.
Hestia’s fire in every flat, rekindled, burned before
The Lardergods. Unmarried daughters with obedient hands
Tended it. By the hearth the white-arm’d venerable mother
Domum servabat, lanam faciebat. Duly at the hour
Of sacrifice their brothers came, silent, corrected, grave
Before their elders; on their downy cheeks easily the blush
Arose (it is the mark of freemen’s children) as they trooped,
Gleaming with oil, demurely home from the palaestra or the dance.
Walk carefully, do not wake the envy of the happy gods,
Shun Hubris. The middle of the road, the middle sort of men,
Are best. Aidos surpasses gold. Reverence for the aged
Is wholesome as seasonable rain, and for a man to die
Defending the city in battle is a harmonious thing.
Thus with magistral hand the Puritan Sophrosune
Cooled and schooled and tempered our uneasy motions;
Heathendom came again, the circumspection and the holy fears...
You said it. Did you mean it? Oh inordinate liar, stop.

2

Or did you mean another kind of heathenry?
Think, then, that under heaven-roof the little disc of the earth,
Fortified Midgard, lie encircled by the ravening Worm.
Over its icy bastions of giant and troll
Look in, ready to invade it. The Wolf, admittedly, is bound;
But the bond will break, the Beast run free. The weary gods,
Scarred with old wounds, the one-eyed Odin, Tyr who has lost a hand,

Will limp to their stations for the last defence. Make it your hope
To be counted worthy on that day to stand beside them;
For the end of man is to partake of their defeat and die
His second, final death in good company. The stupid, strong
Unteachable monsters are certain to be victorious at last,
And every man of decent blood is on the losing side.
Take as your model the tall women with yellow hair in plaits
Who walked back into burning houses to die with men,
Or him who as the death spear entered into his vitals
Made critical comments on its workmanship and aim.
Are these the Pagans you spoke of? Know your betters and crouch, dogs;
You that have Vichy-water in your veins and worship the event,
Your goddess History (whom your fathers called the strumpet Fortune).

PAN'S PURGE

I dreamt that all the planning of peremptory humanity
Had crushed Nature finally beneath the foot of Man;
Birth-control and merriment, Earth completely sterilized,
Bungalow and fun-fair, had fulfilled our Plan;
But the lion and the unicorn were sighing at the funeral,
Crying at the funeral,
Sobbing at the funeral of the god Pan.

And the elephant was crying. The pelican in his piety
Struck his feathered bosom till he blood ran,
And howling at humanity the owl and iguanodon,
The bittern and the buffalo, their dirge began,
But dangerously, suddenly, a strange ecstatic shuddering,
A change that set me shuddering
Through all the wailful noises of the beasts ran.

No longer were they sorrowful, but stronger and more horrible
It had only been a rumour of the death of Pan.
The scorpions and the mantichores and corpulent tarantulas
Were closing in around me, hissing *Long live Pan!*
And forth with rage unlimited the Northwind drew his scimitar
In wrath with ringing scimitar
He came, with sleet and shipwreck, for the doom of Man.

And now, descending, ravening, loud and large, the avalanche,
And after it the earthquake, was loosed upon Man.
Towering and cloven-hoofed, the power of Pan came over us,
Stamped, bit, tore, broke. It was the end of Man;
Except where saints and savages were kept from his ravaging,
And crept out when the ravaging
Was ended, on an empty earth. The new world began.

A small race - a smiling heaven - all round the silences
Returned; there was comfort for corrected Man.
Flowered turf had swallowed up the towered cities; following
His flocks and herds where nameless, untainted rivers ran,

Leisurely he pondered, at his pleasure wandering,
Measurelessly wandering...
Clear, on the huge pastures, the young voice of Man.

NARNIAN SUITE

1

March for Strings, Kettledrums, and Sixty-three Dwarfs
With plucking pizzicato and the prattle of the kettledrum
We're trotting into battle mind a clatter of accoutrement;
Our beards are big as periwigs and trickle with opopanax,
And trinketry and treasure twinkle out on every part of us
(Scrape! Tap! The fiddle and the kettledrum).

The chuckle-headed humans think we're only petty poppetry
And all our battle-tackle nothing more than pretty bric-a-brac;
But a little shrub has prickles, and they'll soon be in a pickle if
A scud of dwarfish archery has crippled all their cavalry
(Whizz! Twang! The quarrel and the javelin).

And when the tussle thickens we can writhe and wriggle under it;
The dagger-point'll tickle 'em, and grab and grip'll grapple 'em,
And trap and trick'll trouble 'em and tackle 'em and topple 'em
Till they're huddled, all be-diddled, in the middle of our caperings
(Dodge! Jump! The wriggle and the summersault).

When we've scattered 'em and peppered 'em with pebbles from our catapults
We'll turn again in triumph and by crannies and by crevices
Go back to where the capitol and cradle of our people is,
Our forges and our furnaces, the caverns of the earth —
(Gold! Fire! The anvil and the smithying).

2

March for Drum, Trumpet, and Twenty-one Giants
With stumping stride in pomp and pride
We come to thump and floor ye;
We'll bump your lumpish heads today
And tramp your ramparts into clay,
And as we stamp and romp and play

Our trump’ll below before us (*crescendo*) —
Oh tramp it, tramp it, tramp it, trumpet, trumpet blow before us!

We’ll grind and break and bind and take
And plunder ye and pound ye!
With trundled rocks and bludgeon blow,
You dunderheads, we’ll dint ye so
You’ll blunder and run blind, as though
By thunder stunned, around us
By thunder, thunder, thunder, thunder stunned around us!

Ho! tremble town and tumble down
And crumble shield and sabre!
Your kings will mumble and look pale,
Your horses stumble or turn tail,
Your skimble-scamble counsels fail,
So rumble drum belaboured *(Diminuendo)*
Oh rumble, rumble, rumble, rumble, rumble drum belaboured!

THE MAGICIAN AND THE DRYAD

MAGICIAN
Out of your dim felicity of leaves, oh Nymph appear,
Answer me in soft-showery voice, attempt the unrooted dance
- My art shall sponsor the enormity. Now concentrate,
Arouse, where in your vegetative heart it drowses deep
In seminal sleep, your feminine response. *Conjuro te*
Per Hecates essentiam et noctis silentia,
Breaking by Trivia's name your prison of bark. Beautiful, awake.

DRYAD
Risen from the deep lake of my liberty, into your prison
She has come, cruel commander.

MAGICIAN
I have given speech to the dumb.
Will you not thank me, silver lady?

DRYAD
Oh till now she drank
With thirst of myriad mouths the bursting cataracts of the sun,
The drizzle of gentler stars, an indivisible small rain.
Wading the dark earth, made of earth and light, cradled in air,
All that she was, she was all over. Now the mask you call
A Face has blotted out the ambient hemisphere's embrace;
Her light is screwed into twin nodules of tormenting sight
Searing divisions tear her into five. She cannot hear
But only see, the moon; the earth has no taste; she cannot breathe
At every branch vibrations of the sky. For a dome of severance,
A helmet, a dark, rigid box of bone, has overwhelmed
Her hair... that was her lungs... that was her nerves... that kissed the air.
Crushed in a brain, her thought that circled coolly in every vein
Turns into poison, thickens like a man's ferments and burns.
She was at peace when she was in her unity. Oh now release
And let her out into the seamless world, make her forget.

MAGICIAN
Be free. Relapse. And so she vanishes. And now the tree
Grows barer every moment. The leaves fall. A killing air,
Sighing from the country of Man, has withered it. The tree will die.

THE TRUE NATURE OF GNOMES

Paracelsus somewhere in his writings tell us
A gnome moves through earth like an arrow in the air,
At home like a fish within the seamless, foamless
Liberty of the water that yields to it everywhere.

Beguiled with pictures, I fancied in my childhood
Subterranean rivers beside glimmering wharfs,
Hammers upon anvils, pattering and yammering,
Torches and tunnels, the cities of the dwarfs;

But in perfect blackness underneath the surface,
In a silence unbroken till the planet cracks,
Their sinewy bodies through the dense continuum
Move without resistance and leave no tracks.

Gravel, marl, blue clay - all's one to travel in;
Only one obstacle can impede a gnome
A cave or a mine-shaft. Not their very bravest
Would venture across it for a short cut home.

There is the unbridgeable. To a gnome the air is
Utter vacuity. If he thrust out his face
Into a cavern, his face would break in splinters,
Bursting as a man would burst in interstellar space.

With toiling lungs a gnome can breathe the soil in,
Rocks are like a headwind, stiff against his chest,
Chief 'midst his pleasures is the quiet leaf mould,
Like air in meadowy valleys when the wind's at rest.

Like silvan freshness are the lodes of silver,
Cold, clammy, fog-like, are the leaden veins
Those of gold are prodigally sweet like roses,
Gems stab coolly like the small spring rains.

THE BIRTH OF LANGUAGE

How near his sire’s careering fires
Must Mercury the planet run;
What wave of heat must lave and beat
That shining suburb of the Sun

Whose burning flings supernal things
Like spindrift from his stormy crown;
He throws and shakes in rosy flakes
Intelligible virtues down,

And landing there, the candent air
A transformation on them brings,
Makes each a god of speech with rod
Enwreathed and sandals fledged with wings.

Due west (the Sun’s behest so runs)
They seek the wood where flames are trees;
In crimson shade their limbs are laid
Besides the pure quicksilver seas,

Where thick with notes of liquid throats
The forest melody leaps and runs
Till night lets robe the lightless globe
With darkness and with distant suns.

Awake they spring and shake the wing;
And on the trees whose trunks are flames
They find like fruit (with rind and root
And fronds of fire) their proper names.

They taste. They burn with haste. They churn.
With upright plumes the sky’s abyss;
Far, far below, the arbours glow
Where once they felt Mercurial bliss.

They ache and freeze through vacant seas
Of night. Their nimbleness and youth
Turns lean and frore; their meaning more,
Their being less. Fact shrinks to truth.

They reach this Earth. There each has birth
Miraculous, a word made breath,
Lucid and small for use in all
Man’s daily needs; but dry like death.

So dim below these symbols show,
Bony and abstract every one.
Yet if true verse but left the curse,
They feel in dreams their native Sun.

THE PLANETS

Lady LUNA, in light canoe,
By friths and shallows of fretted cloudland
Cruises monthly; with chrism of dews
And drench of dream, a drizzling glamour,
Enchants us - the cheat! changing sometime
A mind to madness, melancholy pale,
Bleached with gazing on her blank count'nance
Orb'd and ageless. In earth's bosom
The shower of her rays, sharp-feathered light
Reaching downward, ripens silver,
Forming and fashioning female brightness,
- Metal maidenlike. Her moist circle
Is nearest earth. Next beyond her
MERCURY marches; - madcap rover,
Patron of pilf'rers. Pert quicksilver
His gaze begets, goblin mineral,
Merry multitude of meeting selves,
Same but sundered. From the soul's darkness,
With wreathèd wand, words he marshals,
Guides and gathers them - gay bellwether
Of flocking fancies. His flint has struck
The spark of speech from spirit's tinder,
Lord of language! He leads forever
The spangle and splendour, sport that mingles
Sound with senses, in subtle pattern,
Words in wedlock, and wedding also
Of thing with thought. In the third region
VENUS voyages... but my voice falters;
Rude rime-making wrongs her beauty,
Whose breasts and brow, and her breath's sweetness
Bewitch the worlds. Wide-spread the reign
Of her secret sceptre, in the sea's caverns,
In grass growing, and grain bursting,
Flower unfolding, and flesh longing,
And shower falling sharp in April.

The metal copper in the mine reddens
With muffled brightness, like muted gold,
By her fingers form’d. Far beyond her
The heaven’s highway hums and trembles,
Drums and dindles, to the driv’n thunder
Of SOL’S chariot, whose sword of light
Hurts and humbles; beheld only
Of eagle’s eye. When his arrow glances
Through mortal mind, mists are parted
And mild as morning the mellow wisdom
Breathes o’er the breast, broadening eastward
Clear and cloudless. In a clos’d garden
(Unbound her burden) his beams foster
Soul in secret, where the spoil puts forth
Paradisal palm, and pure fountains
Turn and re-temper, touching coolly
The uncomely common to cordial gold;
Whose ore also, in earth’s matrix,
Is print and pressure of his proud signet
On the wax of the world. He is the worshipp’d male,
The earth’s husband, all-beholding,
Arch-chemic eye. But other country
Dark with discord dins beyond him,
With noise of nakers, neighing of horses,
Hammering of harness. A haughty god
MARS mercenary, makes there his camp
And flies his flag; flaunts laughingly
The graceless beauty; grey-eyed and keen,
- Blond insolence - of his blithe visage
Which is hard and happy. He hews the act,
The indifferent deed with dint of his mallet
And his chisel of choice; achievement comes not
Unhelped by him; - hired gladiator
Of evil and good. All’s one to Mars,
The wrong righted, rescued meekness,
Or trouble in trenches, with trees splintered
And birds banished, banks fill’d with gold

And the liar made lord. Like handiwork
He offers to all - earns his wages
And whistles the while. White-feathered dread
Mars has mastered. His metal’s iron
That was hammered through hands into holy cross,
Cruel carpentry. He is cold and strong,
Necessity’s son. Soft breathes the air
Mild, and meadowy, as we mount further
Where rippled radiance rolls about us
Moved with music - measureless the waves’
Joy and jubilee. It is JOVE’S orbit,
Filled and festal, faster turning
With arc ampler. From the Isles of Tin
Tyrian traders, in trouble steering
Came with his cargoes; the Cornish treasure
That his ray ripens. Of wrath ended
And woes mended, of winter passed
And guilt forgiven, and good fortune
Jove is master; and of jocund revel,
Laughter of ladies. The lion-hearted,
The myriad-minded, men like the gods,
Helps and heroes, helms of nations
Just and gentle, are Jove’s children,
Work his wonders. On his wide forehead
Calm and kingly, no care darkens
Nor wrath wrinkles: but righteous power
And leisure and largess their loose splendours
Have wrapped around him - a rich mantle
Of ease and empire. Up far beyond
Goes SATURN silent in the seventh region,
The skirts of the sky. Scant grows the light,
Sickly, uncertain (the Sun’s finger
Daunted with darkness). Distance hurts us,
And the vault severe of vast silence;
Where fancy fails us, and fair language,
And love leaves us, and light fails us
And Mars fails us, and the mirth of Jove

Is as tin tinkling. In tattered garment,
Weak with winters, he walks forever
A weary way, wide round the heaven,
Stoop’d and stumbling, with staff groping,
The lord of lead. He is the last planet
Old and ugly. His eye fathers
Pale pestilence, pain of envy,
Remorse and murder. Melancholy drink
(For bane or blessing) of bitter wisdom
He pours for his people, a perilous draught
That the lip loves not. We leave all things
To reach the rim of the round welkin,
Heaven’s hermitage, high and lonely.

PINDAR SANG

Pindar stood with his chorus on the dancing floor. The stern poet
Uttered his dark glory. Light as a flight of tumbling birds
Was the dipping and soaring of his syllables and the wheeling maze.
Demure as virgins, young men of noble houses, trained and severe,
Strongly as if it were a battle and resolutely danced his ode;
Their faces rigid, but their limbs and garments flowed like water.

‘Unless a god in secret helps the work, trouble and skill
Are unavailing; the laborious plodder’s wages are oblivion,
For a soul’s weight is born with her. My wisdom is the birth of heaven;
In heaven itself the everlasting gods dare not begin
A feast or dance without the favour and assent of the grave Charites.
‘For gods and men are of one stock and came of the same womb
Though an utter separation is between them, and we are nothing
While their unshakable, eternal floor is the firmament of bronze.
They look down; they behold the isle of Delos far below,
Set like a star amid the deep-blue world’s level expanse.

‘But we are tethered to Hope that will promise anything without blushing,
And the flowing water of foreknowledge is far away beyond our reach.
Therefore neither ashore nor in the hollow ships will any praise
Be given to an act on which the doer does not stake his life.
(At Pindus the glory of the Dorian spear burst into flower.)
And we live for a day. What are we? What are we not? A man
Is a dream about a shadow. Only when a brightness falls from heaven
Can human splendour expand and glow and mortal days grow soft.
‘Not even to Kadmos though a peer for Gods, not to the Aiakid
Peleus, was there allowed a perfect, whole, unslippery life;
Though these were fortunate, men say, beyond all human bounds
And heard the gold-drown’d Moses singing on their marriage day.
Over the mountain and to seven-gated Thebes the song
Drew near when deep-dark-eyed Harmonia became Kadmos’ bride,
And Peleus took the Nereid Thetis, and had gods for guests.
He also had sorrow afterwards for Achilles’ sake, his son,

And Kadmos, weeping for his daughter; even though the Father of the skies
Had lain in Semele's desired bed and white embrace.

'Take the god's favour when it comes. Now from one quarter, now
From another, the wing'd weathers ride above us. Not for long,
If it grows heavy with goodness, will fortune remain good.

'Once over Lerna a shower of snow turned into flakes of gold;
Once, following the doe of the Pleiades whose horns were charactered with gold,
Herakles hunted far beyond the Ister till he found
A land that lies at the other side of the North Wind. And he stood
Gazing upon the trees of that country; he was struck with sweet desire.
But do not therefore imagine that ever you, by land or sea,
Will find the miraculous road into the Hyperborean place.
Of unattainable longings sour is the fruit; griding madness.

'Bless'd is the man who does not enter into the grave, the hollow earth,
Before he has seen at Eleusis the acts unspeakable which show
The end and new beginning of our life, the divine gift.
Some find the road that leads beyond the tower of Kronos, and the isles

Where no one labours, no one bruises the flower of his white hand
Wounding with spade or oar the parsimonious earth or bitter sea.
Golden are the flowers they pick for garlands in the righteous wood.
'But the voice of the Pierides is hateful to all the enemies of Zeus,
And the melody that makes drowsy with delight the eagle on his sceptre

Is torture to those who lie in Tartaros. Hundred-headed Typhon
Struggles in anguish as he hears it, vomiting lava and smoke.'

The heaven-descended nobles of the pure Dorian blood,
Not thinking they understood him, but silent in reverence for the god
And for the stern poet, heard him and understood it all.
Tears stood in their eyes because of the beauty of the young men who danced.

HERMIONE IN THE HOUSE OF PAULINA

How soft it rains, how nourishingly soft and green
Has grown the dark humility of this low house
Where sunrise never enters, where I have not seen
The moon by night nor heard the footfall of a mouse,
Nor looked on any face but yours
Nor changed my posture in my place of rest
For fifteen years - oh how this quiet cures
My pain and sucks the burning from my breast.

It sucked out all the poison of my will and drew
All hot rebellion from me, all desire to break
The silence you commanded me... Nothing to do,
Nothing to fear or wish for, not a choice to make,
Only to be; to hear no more
Cock-crowing duty calling me to rise,
But slowly thus to ripen laid in store
In this dim nursery near your watching eyes.

Pardon, great spirit, whose tall shape like a golden tower
Stands over me or seems upon slow wings to move,
Colouring with life my paleness, with returning power,
By sober ministrations of severest love;
Pardon, that when you brought me here,
Still drowned in bitter passion, drugged with life,
I did not know... pardon, I though you were
Paulina, old Antigonus' young wife.

YOUNG KING COLE

By enemies surrounded,
All venomously minded
Against him, to hound him
    To death, there lived a king
Who was great and merry-hearted,
He ate and drank and sported,
When his wounds smarted
    He would dance and sing.

With gossiping and stories,
With possets of Canary,
With goliards and glory,
    He made the time pass;
His merriment heightened
As his territory straitened,
And his grip tightened
    On the stem of his glass

When his foes assaulted
He rose and exulted
Like a lover as he vaulted
    On his gaunt horse,
Sublime and elated,
But each time he was defeated,
For the lower gods hated him
    Without remorse.

So his realm diminished;
Overwhelmed, it varnished,
He held at the finish
    But a small river-isle;
With his queen, amid the saplings
And the green rippling,
With his Fool and his Chaplain,
    Held it for a while;

Till, breathing anger,
The heathen in their hunger
Came with clangour
    To the river banks
With their commissars and harlots,
With their bombers and their hurlers
Of flame, with their snarling
    And the rattle of their tanks.

Fast came their orders
For the last king’s murder;
From the reedy borders
    The grey batteries spoke.
The long endeavour
Of those strong four lovers
Relaxed forever
    Amid stench and smoke.

From their fresh, unpolluted
Flesh there sprouted
A tree fair-fruited,
    And its smell and taste
Were big with Eden;
Every twig was laden
With gold unheeded
    In the flowery waste.

Past the gossamer and midges
Past the blossomy region
Of the bees, past the pigeons’
    Green world, towards the blue,
Past the eagles’ landings
Many a league ascending,
Above Alps and Andes
    Infallibly it grew;

And it cast warm joys on
The vast horizons,

But its shadow was poison
    To the evil-eyed.
Yes: they ought to have felled it.
They were caught unshielded.
Paralysed, they beheld it;
    They despaired and died.

THE PRODIGALITY OF FIRDAUSI

Firdausi the strong Lion among poets, lean of purse
And lean with age, had finished his august mountain of verse,
The great *Shah Nameh* gleaming-glaciered with demon wars,
Bastioned with Rustem's bitter labours and Isfendiyar's,
Shadowed with Jamshid's grief and glory as with eagles' wings,
Its foot-hills dewy-forested with the amours of kings,
Clashing with rhymes that rush like snow-fed cataracts blue and cold;
And the king commanded to be given him an elephant's burden of gold.

Firdausi the carved Pillar among poets was not dear
To government. They smiled at the king's word. The Grand Vizier
Twisted his pale face, making parsimonious mouths, and said
'Send the old rhymer thirty thousand silver pounds instead The price of ten good vineyards and a fine Circassian girl.'
This pleased them and they called a secretarial shape, a churl,
A pick-thank without understanding and of base descent,
And bade it deliver their bounty, and with mincing paces it went.
It found the Cedar among poets in the baths that day,
At ease, discoursing with his friends. Exalted men were they,
Taking their wine and sugared roseleaves in an airy hall,
Poets or theologians or saints or warriors all
Or lovers or astronomers. Like honey-drops the speech
Distilled in apophthegms or verse from the lips of each,
On rose and predestination and heroic wars
And rhetoric, and the brevity of the life of man, and the stars.

With courtesy the Lily among poets asked it will.
The bearers laid the silver at his feet. The hall was still,
The churl grew pale. Firdausi beckoned to the Nubian slave
Who had dried their feet; to him the first ten thousand coins he gave.

Ten thousand more immediately he gave the fair-haired boy
Who waved the fan, saying 'My son, may Allah send you joy;
And in your grandson's house in unbelieving Frangistan
Make it your boast that once you spoke with the splendour of Iran.'

Lastly the Heaven of poets to the churl himself returned
The remnant. ‘You look pale, my friend,’ he said. ‘Well have you earned
This trifle for your courtesy and for the heat of the day.’
Clutching his silver, silently, the creature slunk away,
And dogs growled as he passed and beggars spat. Laughter and shame

Wait upon all his progeny; on him, Gehenna’s flame.
Immediately the discourse in the baths once more began
On the beauty of women and horses and the brevity of the life of man.

LE ROI S’AMUSE

Jove gazed
On woven mazes
Of patterned movement as the atoms whirled.
His glance turned
Into dancing, burning
Colour-gods who rushed upon that sullen world,
Waking, re-making, exalting it anew
Silver and purple, shrill-voiced yellow, turgid crimson, and virgin blue.

Jove stared
On overbearing
And arching splendour of the naked rocks.
Where his gaze smote,
Hazily floated
To mount like thistledown in countless flocks,
Fruit-loving, root-loving gods, cool and green
Of feathery grasses, heather and orchard, pollen’d lily, the olive and the bean.

Jove laughed.
Like cloven-shafted
Lightning, his laughter into brightness broke.
From every dint
Where the severed splinters
Had scattered a Sylvan or a Satyr woke;
Ounces came pouncing, dragon-people flew,
There was spirited stallion, squirrel unrespectful, clanging raven and kangaroo.

Jove sighed.
The hoving tide of
Ocean trembled at the motion of his breath.
The sigh turned
Into white, eternal,
Radiant Aphrodite unafraid of death;

A fragrance, a vagrant unrest on earth she flung,
There was favouring and fondling and bravery and building and chuckling music an suckling of the young.

Jove thought.
He strove and wrought at
A thousand clarities; from his brows sprang
With earnest mien
Stern Athene;
The cold armour on her shoulders rang.
Our sires at the fires of her lucid eyes began
To speak in symbols, to seek out causes, to name the creatures; they became Man.

World and Man
Unfurled their banner It was gay Behemoth on a sable field.
Fresh-robed
In flesh, the ennobled
Spirits carousing in their myriads reeled;
There was frolic and holiday. Jove laughed to see
The abyss empeopled, his bliss imparted, the throng that was his and no longer he.

VITRE A CIRCE

The name of Circe
Is wrongly branded
(Though Homer’s verses
Portrayed her right)
By heavy-handed
And moral persons
Misunderstanding
Her danger bright.

She used not beauty
For man’s beguiling,
She craved no suitor;
Sea-chances brought
To her forest-silent
And crimson-fruited
And snake-green island
Her guests unsought.

She watched those drunken
And tarry sailors
Eat nectar-junket
And Phoenix-nests;
Each moment paler
With pride, she shrunk at
Their leering, railing,
Salt-water jests.

They thought to pluck there
Her rosial splendour?
They thought their luck there
Was near divine?
When the meal ended
She rose and struck them
With wand extended
And made them swine.

With smiles and kisses
No man she tempted;
She scorned love’s blisses
And toils, until
There came, undream’t of,
The tough Ulysses,
From fate exempted
By Pallas’ will.

Then flashed above her
(Poor kneeling Circe,
Her snares discovered)
The hero’s blade.
She lay at mercy,
His slave, his lover,
Forgot her curses,
Blushed like a maid.

She’d none to warn her.
He hacked and twisted
Her hedge so thorny;
It let him pass.
Her awful distance,
Her vestal scornings,
Were bright as crystals,
They broke like glass.

THE LANDING

The ship’s stride faltered with her change of course, awaking us.
Suddenly I saw the land. Astern, the east was red;
Budding like a flower from the pale and rippled vacancy,
The island rose ahead.

All, then, was true; such lands, in solid verity,
Dapple the last sea that laps against the sky;
Apple-gold, the headlands of the singing Hesperides
On glass-clear water lie.

Once before I’d seen it, but that was from Helicon,
Clear and distinct in the circle of a lens,
Peering on tip-toes, one-eyed, through a telescope
— Goddesses’ country, never men’s.

Now we were landing. Bright beasts and manifold
Came like old familiars, nosing at our knees;
Nameless their kinds - Adam’s naming of the animals
Reached not those outer seas.

Up from the shore then, benumbed with hope, we went upon
Danceable lawns and under gum-sweet wood,
Glancing ever up to where a green hill at the centre of
The hush’d island stood.

We climbed to the top and looked over upon limitless
Waters, untravelled, further west. But the three
Daughters of Hesperus were only painted images
Hand-fast around a tree,

And instead of the Dragon we found a brazen telescope
That burned our eyes there, flashing in the sun.
It was turned to the west. As once before on Helicon,
We looked through it, one by one.

There, once again, I beheld it, small and perilous,
Distant beyond measure, in the circle of the lens
- But this time, surely, the true one, the Hesperides’
Country which is not men’s.

Hope died - rose again - quivered, and increased in us
The strenuous longing. We re-embarked to find
That genuine and utter West. Far astern and east of us
The first hope sank behind.

THE DAY WITH A WHITE MARK

All day I have been tossed and whirled in a preposterous happiness:
Was it an elf in the blood? or a bird in the brain? or even part
Of the cloudily crested, fifty-league-long, loud uplifted wave
Of a journeying angel's transit roaring over and through my heart?

My garden's spoiled, my holidays are cancelled, the omens harden;
The plann'd and unplann'd miseries deepen; the knots draw tight.
Reason kept telling me all day my mood was out of season.
It was, too. In the dark ahead the breakers only are white.

Yet I -I could have kissed the very scullery taps. The colour of
My day was like a peacock's chest. In at each sense there stole
Ripplings and dewy sprinkles of delight that with them drew
Fine threads of memory through the vibrant thickness of the soul.

As though there were transparent earths and luminous trees should grow there,
And shining roots worked visibly far down below one's feet,
So everything, the tick of the lock, the cock crowing in the yard
Probing my soul, woke diverse buried hearts of mine to beat,

Recalling either adolescent heights and the inaccessible
Longings and ice-sharp joys that shook my body and turned me pale,
Or humbler pleasures, chuckling as it were in the ear, mumbling
Of glee, as kindly animals talk in a children's tale.

Who knows if ever it will come again, now the day closes?
No one can give me, or take away, that key. All depends
On the elf, the bird, or the angel. I doubt if the angel himself
Is free to choose when sudden heaven in man begins or ends.

DONKEYS' DELIGHT

Ten mortal months I courted
A girl with bright hair,
Unswerving in my service
As the old lovers were.
Almost she had learned to call me
Her dear love. But then,
One moment changed the omens,
She was cold again.
For carelessly, unfairly,
With one glance of his eyes,
A gay, light-hearted sailor
Bore away the prize,
Unbought, which I had sought with
Many gifts and sighs.

In stern disdain I turned to
The Muses' service then,
To seek how the unspeakable
Could be fixed by a pen,
Not to flinch though the ink that
I must use, they said,
Was my dearest blood, nearest
My heart, the richest red.
I obeyed them, I made them
Many a costly lay,
Till carelessly, unfairly,
A boy passed that way
Who set ringing with his singing
All the fields and lanes;
They gave him their favour,
Lost were all my pains.

Then I passed to a Master
Who is higher in repute,
Trusting to find justice

At the world’s root.
With rigid fast and vigil,
Silence, and shirt of hair,
The narrow way to Paradise
I walked with care.
But carelessly, unfairly,
At the eleventh hour there came,
Reckless and feckless,
Without a single claim,
A dare-devil, a ne’er-do-well
Who smelled of shag and gin;
Before me (and far warmer
Was his welcome) he went in.

I stood still in the chill
Of the Great Morning,
Aghast. Then at last
- Oh, I was late learning I repented, I entered
Into the excellent joke,
The absurdity. My burden
Rolled off as I broke
Into laughter; and soon after
I had found my own level;
With Balaam’s Ass daily
Out at grass I revel,
Now playing, now braying
Over the meadows of light,
Our soaring, creaking Gloria,
Our donkeys’ delight.

THE SMALL MAN ORDERS HIS WEDDING

With tambourines of amber, queens
In rose and lily garlanded
Shall go beside my noble bride
With dance and din and harmony,
And sabre clash and tabor crash
And lantern-light and torches flash
On shield and helmet, plume and sash,
The flower of all my armoury;

Till drawn at length by tawny strength
Of lions, lo! her chariot;
Their pride will brook no bridle - look,
No bit they bear, no farrier
Ere shod those feet that plod the street
Silent as ghosts; their savage heat
Is gentled as they draw my sweet,
New tamed herself, to marry me.

New swell from all the belfries tall,
Till towers reel, the revelry
Of iron tongue untiring swung
To booms and clangs of merriment!
While some prepare with trumpet blare
Before my gates to greet us there
When home we come; and everywhere
Let drum he rumbled steadily.

Once in, the roar and din no more
Are heard. The hot festivity
And blazing dies; from gazing eyes
These shadowy halls deliver her.
Yet neither flute nor blither lute
With pluck of amorous string be mute
Where happy maids their queen salute
And candle flames are quivering.

With decent stealth o’er fleecy wealth
Of carpets tripping soberly,
Depart each maid! Your part is played
And I to all her nobleness
Must mate my bare estate. How fair
The whole room has become! The air
Burns as with incense everywhere
Around, beneath, and over her.

What flame before our chamber door
Shines in on love’s security?
Fiercer than day, its piercing ray
Pours round us unendurably.
It’s Aphrodite’s saffron light,
And Jove’s monarchal presence bright
And Genius burning through the night
The torch of man’s futurity.

For her the swords of furthest lords
Have flashed in fields ethereal;
The dynasts seven incline from heaven
With glad regard and serious,
And ponder there beyond our air
The infinite unborn, and care
For history, while the mortal pair
Lie drowned in dreaming weariness.

THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND

Hard light bathed them - a whole nation of eyeless men,
Dark bipeds not aware how they were maimed. A long
Process, clearly, a slow curse,
Drained through centuries, left them thus.

At some transitional stage, then, a luckless few
No doubt, must have had eyes after the up-to-date,
Normal type had achieved snug
Darkness, safe from the guns of heav'n;

Whose blind mouths would abuse words that belonged to their
Great-grandsires, unabashed, talking of light in some
Eunuch'd, etiolated,
Fungoid sense, as a symbol of

Abstract thoughts. If a man, one that had eyes, a poor
Misfit, spoke of the grey dawn or the stars or green
Sloped sea waves, or admired how
Warm tints change in a lady's cheek,

None complained he had used words from an alien tongue,
None question'd. It was worse. All would agree. 'Of course,'
Came their answer. 'We've all felt
Just like that.' They were wrong. And he

Knew too much to be clear, could not explain.
The words Sold, raped, flung to the dogs - now could avail no more;
Hence silence. But the mouldwarps,
With glib confidence, easily

Showed how tricks of the phrase, sheer metaphors could set
Fools concocting a myth, taking the words for things.
Do you think this a far-fetched
Picture? Go then about among

Men now famous; attempt speech on the truths that once,
Opaque, carved in divine forms, irremovable,
Dread but dear as a mountain
Mass, stood plain to the inward eye.

ON BEING HUMAN

Angelic minds, they say, by simple intelligence
Behold the Forms of nature. They discern
Unerringly the Archtypes, all the verities
Which mortals lack or indirectly learn.
Transparent in primordial truth, unvarying,
Pure Earthness and right Stonehood from their clear,
High eminence are seen; unveiled, the seminal
Huge Principles appear.

The Tree-ness of the tree they know - the meaning of
Arboreal life, how from earth's salty lap
The solar beam uplifts it, all the holiness
Enacted by leaves' fall and rising sap;
But never an angel knows the knife-edged severance
Of sun from shadow where the trees begin,
The blessed cool at every pore caressing us
- An angel has no skin.

They see the Form of Air; but mortals breathing it
Drink the whole summer down into the breast.
The lavish pinks, the field new-mown, the ravishing
Sea-smells, the wood-fire smoke that whispers *Rest.*
The tremor on the rippled pool of memory
That from each smell in widening circles goes,
The pleasure and the pang - can angels measure it?
An angel has no nose.

The nourishing of life, and how it flourishes
On death, and why, they utterly know; but not
The hill-born, earthy spring, the dark cold bilberries
The ripe peach from the southern wall still hot,
Full-bellied tankards foamy-topped, the delicate
Half-lyric lamb, a new loaf's billowy curves,
Nor porridge, not the tingling taste of oranges
An angel has no nerves.

Far richer they! I know the senses’ witchery
Guards us, like air, from heavens too big to see;
Imminent death to man that barb’d sublimity
And dazzling edge of beauty unsheathed would be.
Yet here, within this tiny, charm’d interior,
This parlour of the brain, their Maker shares
With living men some secrets in a privacy
Forever ours, not theirs.

THE ECSTASY

Long had we crept in cryptic
Delights and doubts on tiptoes,
The air growing purer, clearer
Continually; and nearer
We went on to the centre of
The garden, hand in hand, finger on lip.

On right and left uplifted
The fountains rose with swifter
And steadier urgence, argent
On steely pillars, larger
Each moment, spreading foamy plumes
Thinner and broader under the blinding sun.

The air grows warmer; firmer
The silence grips it; murmur
Of insect buzz nor business
Of squirrel or bird there is not
Only the fluttering of the butterflies
Above the empty lawns, dance without noise.

So on we fared and forded
A brook with lilies bordered,
So cold it wrung with anguish
Bitterly our hearts. But language
Cannot at all make manifest
The quiet centre we found on the other side.

Never such seal of silence
Did ice on streams or twilight
On birds impose. The pauses
In nature by her laws are
Imperfect; under the surface beats
A sound too constant to be ever observed.

From birth its stroke with equal
Dull rhythm, relentless sequence,
Taps on, unfelt, unaltered,
With beat that never falters
Now known, like breathing, only when
It stopped. The permanent background failed our ear.

Said the voice of the garden, heard in
Our hearts, ‘That was the burden
Of Time, his sombre drum-beat.
Here - oh hard to come by! —
True stillness dwells and will not change,
Never has changed, never begins nor ends.’

Who would not stay there, blither
Than memory knows? but either
Whisper of pride essayed us
Or meddling though betrayed us,
Then shuddering doubt - oh suddenly
We were outside, back in the wavering world.

THE SABOTEUSE

Pity hides in the wood,
The years and tides,
The earth, the bare moon,
Death and birth,
The freezing skies, the sun
And the populous seas
Against her, one and all,
Are furiously incensed.

They have clashed spears to drown
The noise of her tears;
They have whetted swords. Still
They cannot forget.
Her faint noise in the wood
Destroys all,
A soul-tormenting treason
Threatening revolt.

They beat with clamorous gongs
And din with hammers
To stun so light a noise
They fear if once
Pity were heard aloud
In the strong city,
Topless towers would fall,
Engines stop.

Horribly alarmed, they have levied
Their war and armed
All natural things against her.
From horns and stings,
Mandibles, claws and paws
And the human hand,
From suns and ice, like a deer
Pity runs;

Lest, if she wept in peace,
While they slept,
(So they believe) the slow
Descending stream
Would grow to a pool, spread,
Widen and overflow
And creep forth from the wood,
Grown strong and deep.

And they would wake at morning
And find a lake
Lapping against their walls,
Mining, sapping,
Patiently eating away
The strong foundations
Of the towers of pain, rising
An inch in an hour;

Till the compassionate water
Would ripple and plash
Far overhead, and the Powers
Lay drowned and dead
Below, sharing the dark
With shark and squid
And the forgotten shapes
Of rotting wheels.

Therefore they woke destruction
Against her and invoked
The Needs of the Sum of Things
And the Coming Race
And the Claims of Order - oh all
The holiest names
Known in our hearts. They even
Included her own.

THE LAST OF THE WINE

You think if we sigh, drinking the last decanter,
We're sensual topers, and thence you are ready to prose
And read your lecture. Need you? Why should you banter
Or badger us? Better imagine it thus; suppose

A man to have come from Atlantis eastward sailing
Lemuria has fallen in the fury of a tidal wave,
The cities are drowned, the pitiless all-prevailing
Inhuman sea is Numinor's salt grave.

To Europe he comes from Lemuria, saved from the wreck
Of the gilded, loftily builded, countless fleet
With the violet sails. A phail hangs from his neck,
Holding the last of a golden cordial, subtle and sweet.

Unnamed is Europe, untamed; wet desolation
Of unwelcoming woods, the elk, the mammoth and the bear,
The fen and the forest. Men of a barbarous nation
On the sand in a circle standing await him there.

Horribly ridged are their foreheads. Weapons of bone,
Unhandy and blunt, they brandish in their clumsy grips.
Their females set up a screaming, their bagpipes drone;
They gaze and mumble. He raises the flask to his lips.

It brings to his mind the strings, the flutes, the tabors,
How he drank with poets at the banquet, robed and crowned,
He recalls the pillared halls carved with the labours
Of curious masters, (Lemuria's cities lie drowned),

The festal nights; the jest that flashed for a second
Light as a bubble, bright with a thousand years
Of nurture; the honour and virtue, the grace unreckoned
That sat like a robe on the Atlantean peers.

It has made him remember ladies, proud glances,
Fearless and peerless beauty, flower-like hair,
Ruses and mockery, the music of grave dances
(Where musicians played, huge fishes goggle and stare).

He sighs, like us; then rises and turns to meet
Those naked men. Will they make him their spoil and prey
Or salute him as god and brutally fawn at his feet?
And which would be worse? He pitches the phial away.

AS ONE OLDSTER TO ANOTHER

Well, yes the bones ache. There were easier
Beds thirty years back. Sleep, then importunate,
Now with reserve doles out her favours;
Food disagrees; there are draughts in houses.

Headlong, the down night train rushes on with us,
Screams through the stations... how many more? Is it
Time soon to think of taking down one’s
Case from the rack? Are we nearly there now?

Yet neither loss of friends, nor an emptying
Future, not England tamed and the ruin of
Long-billed hopes thus far have taught my
Obstinate heart a sedate deportment.

Still beauty calls as once in the mazes of
Boyhood. The bird-like soul quivers. Into her
Flash darts of unfulfill’d desire and
Pierce with a bright, unabated anguish.

Armed thus with anguish, joy met us even in
Youth - who forgets? This side of the terminus,
Then, now, and always, thus, and only
Thys, were the doors of delight set open.

BALLADE OF DEAD GENTLEMEN

Where, in what bubbly land, below
What rosy horizon dwells today
That worthy man Monsieur Cliquot
Whose widow has made the world so gay?
Where now is Mr Tanqueray?
Where might the King of Sheba be
(Whose wife stopped dreadfully long away)?
Mais où sont messieurs les maris?

Say where did Mr Beeton go
With rubicund nose and whiskers grey
To dream of dumplings long ago,
Of syllabub soups, and *entremets?*
In what dim isle did Twankey lay
His aching head? What murmuring sea
Lulls him after the life-long fray?
Mais où sont messieurs les maris?

How Mr Grundy's cheeks may glow
By a bathing-pool where lovelies play,
I guess, but shall I ever know?
Where - if it comes to that, *who*, pray -

Is Mr Masham? Sévigné
And Mr Siddons and Zebedee
And Gamp and Hemans, where are they?
Mais où sont messieurs les maris?

Princesses all, beneath your sway
In this grave world they bowed the knee;
Libertine airs in Elysium say
Mais où sont messieurs les maris?

THE ADAM UNPARADISED

Faltering, with bowed heads, our altered parents
Slowly descended from their holy hill,
All their good fortune left behind and done with,
Out through the one-way pass

Into the dangerous world, these strange countries.
No rumour in Eden had reached the human pair
Of things not men, yet half like men, that wandered
The earth beyond its walls;

But now they heard the mountains stirred and shaken,
All the heap’d crags re-echoing, the deep tarns
And caverns shuddering and the abysmal gorges
With dismal drums of Dwarfs;

Or, some prodigious night, waked by a thumping
Shock as of piles being driven two miles away,
Ran till the sunrise shone upon the bouncing
Monopods at their heels;

Or held their breath, hiding, and saw their elders,
The race of giants - the bulldozer’s pace,
Heads like balloons, toad-thick, ungainly torsos
Dotting the plain like ricks.

They had more to fear once Cain had killed a quarter
Of human kind and stolen away, and the womb
Of an unsmiling Hominid to the turncoat
Had littered ominous sons.

A happy noise of liquid shapes, a lapping
Of small waves up and up the hills till all
Was smooth and silver, the clear Flood ascended
Ending that crew; but still

Memory, not built upon a fake from Piltdown,
Reaches us. We know more than bones can teach.
Eve’s body’s language, Seth within her quickening,
Taught him the sickening fear.

He passed the word. Before we’re born we have heard
Long-silenced ogres boom, voices like gongs
Reverberate in the mind, a Dwarf-drum rolls,
Trolls wind unchancy horns.

Except at the making of Eve Adam slept
Not at all (as men now sleep) before the Fall;
Sin yet unborn, he was free from that dominion
Of the blind brother of death who occults the mind.

Instead, when stars and twilight had him to bed
And the dutiful owl, whirring over Eden, had hooted
A warning to the other beasts to be hushed till morning
And curbed their plays that the Man should be undisturbed,

He would lie, relaxed, enormous, under a sky
Starry as never since; he would set ajar
The door of his mind. Into him thoughts would pour
Other than day’s. He rejoined Earth, his mother.

He melted into her nature. Gradually he felt
As though through his own flesh the elusive growth,
The hardening and spreading of roots in the deep garden;
In his veins, the wells filling with the silver rains,

And, thrusting down far under his rock-crust,
Finger-like, rays from the heavens that probed, bringing
To bloom the gold and diamond in his dark womb.
The seething, central fires moved with his breathing.

He guided his globe smoothly in the heaven, riding
At one with his planetary peers around the Sun;

Courteously he saluted the hard virtue of Mars
And Venus’ liquid glory as he spun between them.

Over Man and his mate the Hours like waters ran
Till darkness thinned in the east. The treble lark,
Carolling, awoke the common people of Paradise
To yawn and scratch, to bleat and whinny, in the dawn.

Collected now in themselves, human and erect,
Lord and Lady walked on the dabbled sward,
As if two trees should arise dreadfully gifted
With speech and motion. The Earth’s strength was in each.

SOLOMON

Many a column of cedar was in Solomon’s hall,
Much jade of China on the inlaid wall.
Cast aloft by the fountains with their soft foam,
A tremor of light was dancing in the emerald dome.

The popinjays on their perches without stopping praised
The unspeakable Name. The flamingoes and the peacocks blazed.
Incense richly darkened the day. Princes stood
Waiting - a motley diapason of robes hotly hued.

Like the column of a palm-tree, like a dolomite tower,
Like the unbearable noon-day in the glare of its power,
So solemn and so radiant was Solomon to behold,
Men feared his immense forehead and his beard of gold.

At his entry on the dais there went round
Flash of diamond, rustle of raiment, and a sighing sound
From among the ladies. They were wrung with desire,
Enslaving the heart. Musicians plucked the grave wire.

Like thunder at a distance came from under his feet
The rumble of captive Jinn and of humbled Efreet;
Column and foundation trembled; to Solomon’s ring
Hell’s abyss was obedient, and to the spells of the King.

By his bed lay crouching many a deadly Jinn;
He erected glory on their subjected sin,
By adamant will he was seeking the Adamite state,
The flame-like monarchy of Man. But he came late.

He was wrong. It was possible no longer. Among leaves
Bird-shaken, dew-scattering, it would have wakened Eve’s
Maiden-cool laughter, could that lady have foretold
All his tragic apparatus - wives, magic, and gold.

THE LATE PASSENGER

The sky was low, the sounding rain was falling dense and dark,
And Noah's sons were standing at the window of the Ark.

The beasts were in, but Japhet said, T see one creature more
Belated and unmated there come knocking at the door.'

'Well let him knock,' said Ham, 'Or let him drown or learn to swim.
We're overcrowded as it is; we've got no room for him.'

'And yet it knocks, how terribly it knocks,' said Shem, 'Its feet
Are hard as horn - but oh the air that comes from it is sweet.'

'Now hush,' said Ham, 'You'll waken Dad, and once he comes to see
What's at the door, it's sure to mean more work for you and me.'

Noah's voice came roaring from the darkness down below,
'Some animal is knocking. Take it in before we go.'

Ham shouted back, and savagely he nudged the other two,
'That's only Japhet knocking down a brad-nail in his shoe.'

Said Noah, 'Boys, I hear a noise that's like a horse's hoof.'
Said Ham, 'Why, that's the dreadful rain that drums upon the roof.'

Noah tumbled up on deck and out he put his head;
His face went grey, his knees were loosed, he tore his beard and said,

'Look, look! It would not wait. It turns away. It takes its flight.
Fine work you've made of it, my sons, between you all to-night!

'Even if I could outrun it now, it would not turn again
- Not now. Our great discourtesy has earned its high disdain.

'Oh noble and unmated beast, my sons were all unkind;
In such a night what stable and what manager will you find?

‘Oh golden hoofs, oh cataracts of mane, oh nostrils wide
With indignation! Oh the neck wave-arched, the lovely pride!

‘Oh long shall be the furrows ploughed across the hearts of men
Before it comes to stable and to manger once again,

‘And dark and crooked all the ways in which our race shall walk,
And shrivelled all their manhood like a flower with broken stalk,

‘And all the world, oh Ham, may curse the hour when you were born;
Because of you the Ark must sail without the Unicorn.’

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

Breathless was the air over Bethlehem. Black and bare
Were the fields; hard as granite the clods;
Hedges stiff with ice; the sedge in the vice
Of the pool, like pointed iron rods.
And the deathly stillness spread from Bethlehem. It was shed
Wider each moment on the land;
Through rampart and wall into camp and into hall
Stole the hush; all tongues were at a stand.
At the Procurator's feast the jocular freedman ceased
His story, and gaped. All were glum.
Travellers at their beer in a tavern turned to hear
The landlord; their oracle was dumb.
But the silence flowed to the islands and the North
And smoothed the unquiet river bars
And levelled out the waves from their revelling and paved
The sea with cold reflected stars.
Where the Caesar on Palatine sat at ease to sign,
Without anger, signatures of death,
There stole into his room and on his soul a gloom,
And his pen faltered, and his breath.
Then to Carthage and the Gauls, past Parthia and the Falls
Of Nile and Mount Amara it crept;
The romp and war of beast in swamp and jungle ceased,
The forest grew still as though it slept.
So it ran about the girth of the planet. From the Earth
A signal, a warning, went out
And away behind the air. Her neighbours were aware
Of change. They were troubled with a doubt.

Salamanders in the Sun that brandish as they run
Tails like the Americas in size
Were stunned by it and dazed; wondering, they gazed
Up at Earth, misgiving in their eyes.
In houses and Signs Ousiarchs divine
Grew pale and questioned what it meant;

Great Galactal lords stood back to back with swords
Half-drawn, awaiting the event,
And a whisper among them passed, ‘Is this perhaps the last
Of our story and the glories of our crown?
- The entropy worked out? - The central redoubt
Abandoned? The world-spring running down?’
Then they could speak no more. Weakness overbore
Even them. They were as flies in a web,
In their lethargy stone-dumb. The death had almost come;
The tide lay motionless at ebb.

Like a stab at that moment, over Crab and Bowman,
Over Maiden and Lion, came the shock
Of returning life, the start and burning pang at heart,
Setting Galaxies to tingle and rock;
And the Lords dared to breathe, and swords were sheathed
And a rustling, a relaxing began,
With rumour and noise of the resuming of joys,
On the nerves of the universe it ran.
Then pulsing into space with delicate, dulcet pace
Came a music, infinitely small
And clear. But it swelled and drew nearer and held
All worlds in the sharpness of its call.
And now divinely deep, and louder, with the sweep
And quiver of inebriating sound,
The vibrant dithyramb shook Libra and the Ram,
The brains of Aquarius spun round;
Such a note as neither Throne nor Potentate had known
Since the Word first founded the abyss,
But this time it was changed in a mystery, estranged,
A paradox, an ambiguous bliss.
Heaven danced to it and burned.
Such answer was returned
To the hush, the *Favete*, the fear
That Earth had sent out; revel, mirth and shout
Descended to her, sphere below sphere.
Saturn laughed and lost his latter age’s frost,

His beard, Niagara-like, unfroze;
Monsters in the Sun rejoiced; the Inconstant One,
The unwedded Moon, forgot her woes.
A shiver of re-birth and deliverance on the Earth
Went gliding. Her bonds were released.
Into broken light a breeze rippled and woke the seas,
In the forest it startled every beast.
Capripods fell to dance from Taproban to France,
Leprechauns from Down to Labrador,
In his green Asian dell the Phoenix from his shell
Burst forth and was the Phoenix once more.

So death lay in arrest. But at Bethlehem the bless’d
Nothing greater could be heard
Than a dry wind in the thorn, the cry of the One new-born,
And cattle in stall as they stirred.

PART II. THE BACKWARD GLANCE

EVOLUTIONARY HYMN

Lead us, Evolution, lead us
Up the future's endless stair:
Chop us, change us, prod us, weed us.
For stagnation is despair:
Groping, guessing, yet progressing,
Lead us nobody knows where.

Wrong or justice in the present,
Joy or sorrow, what are they
While there's always jam to-morrow,
While we tread the onward way?
Never knowing where we're going,
We can never go astray.

To whatever variation
Our posterity may turn
Hairy, squashy, or crustacean,
Bulbous-eyed or square of stern,
Tusked or toothless, mild or ruthless,
Towards that unknown god we yearn.

Ask not if it's god or devil,
Brethren, lest your words imply
Static norms of good and evil
(As in Plato) throned on high;
Such scholastic, inelastic,
Abstract yardsticks we deny.

Far too long have sages vainly
Glossed great Nature's simple text;
He who runs can read it plainly,
'Goodness=what comes next.'
By evolving, Life is solving
All the questions we perplexed.

Oh then! Value means survival —
Value. If our progeny
Spreads and spawns and licks each rival,
That will prove its deity
(Far from pleasant, by our present
Standards, though it well may be).

PRELUDE TO SPACE

An Epithalamium
So Man, grown vigorous now,
Holds himself ripe to breed,
Daily devises how
To ejaculate his seed
And boldly fertilize
The black womb of the unconsenting skies.

Some now alive expect
(I am told) to see the large,
Steel member grow erect,
Turgid with the fierce charge
Of our whole planet's skill,
Courage, wealth, knowledge, concentrated will;

Straining with lust to stamp
Our likeness on the abyss
Bombs, gallows, Belsen camp,
Pox, polio, Thais' kiss
Or Judas', Moloch's fires
And Torquemada's (sons resemble sires).

Shall we, when the grim shape
Roars upward, dance and sing?
Yes: if we honour rape,
If we take pride to fling
So bountifully on space
The sperm of our long woes, our large disgrace.

SCIENCE-FICTION CRADLESONG

By and by Man will try
To get out into the sky,
Sailing far beyond the air
From Down and Here to Up and There.
Stars and sky, sky and stars
Make us feel the prison bars.

Suppose it done. Now we ride
Closed in steel, up there, outside;
Through our port-holes see the vast
Heaven-scape go rushing past.
Shall we? All that meets the eye
Is sky and stars, stars and sky.

Points of light with black between
Hang like a painted scene
Motionless, no nearer there
Than on Earth, everywhere
Equidistant from our ship.
Heaven has given us the slip.

Hush, be still. Outer space
Is a concept, not a place.
Try no more. Where we are
Never can be sky or star.
From prison, in a prison, we fly;
There’s no way into the sky.

AN EXPOSTULATION

Against too many writers of science fiction
Why did you lure us on like this,
Light-year on light-year, through the abyss,
Building (as though we cared for size!)
Empires that cover galaxies,
If at the journey's end we find
The same old stuff we left behind,
Well-worn Tellurian stories of
Crooks, spies, conspirators, or love,
Whose setting might as well have been
The Bronx, Montmartre, or Bethnal Green?

Why should I leave this green-floored cell,
Roofed with blue air, in which we dwell,
Unless, outside its guarded gates,
Long, long desired, the Unearthly waits,
Strangeness that moves us more than fear
Beauty that stabs with tingling spear,
Or Wonder, laying on one's heart
That finger-tip at which we start
As if some thought too swift and shy
For reason's grasp had just gone by?

ODORA CANUM VIS

A defence of certain modem biographers and critics

Come now, don’t be too eager to condemn
Our little smut-hounds if they wag their tails
(Or shake like jellies as the tails wag them)
The moment the least whiff of sex assails
Their quivering snouts. Such conduct after all,
Though comic, is in them quite natural.

As those who have seen no lions must revere
A bull for Pan’s *fortissimo*, or those
Who never tasted wine will value beer
Too highly, so the smut-hound, since he knows
Neither God, hunger, thought, nor battle, must
Of course hold disproportioned views on lust.

Of all the Invaders that’s the only one
Even he could not escape; so have a heart,
Don’t tie them up or whip them, let them run.
So! Cock your ears, my pretties! Play your part!
The dead are all before you, take your pick.
Fetch! Paid for! Slaver, snuff, defile and lick.

ON A VULGAR ERROR

No. It’s an impudent falsehood. Men did not
Invariably think the newer way
Porsaic, mad, inelegant, or what not.

Was the first pointed arch esteemed a blot
Upon the church? Did anybody say
How modem and how ugly? They did not.

Plate-armour, or windows glazed, or verse fire-hot
With rhymes from France, or spices from Cathay,
Were these at first a horror? They were not.

If, then, our present arts, laws, houses, food
All set us hankering after yesterday,
Need this be only an archaising mood?

Why, any man whose purse has been let blood
By sharpers, when he finds all drained away
Must compare how he stands with how he stood.

If a quack doctor’s breezy ineptitude
Has cost me a leg, must I forget straightway
All that I can’t do now, all that I could?

So, when our guides unanimously decry
The backward glance, I think we can guess why.

THE FUTURE OF FORESTRY

How will the legend of the age of trees
Feel, when the last tree falls in England?
When the concrete spreads and the town conquers
The country’s heart; when contraceptive
Tarmac’s laid where farm has faded,
Tramline flows where slept a hamlet,
And shop-fronts, blazing without a stop from
Dover to Wrath, have glazed us over?
Simples tales will then bewilder
The questioning children, ‘What was a chestnut?
Say what it means to climb a Beanstalk.
Tell me, grandfather, what an elm is.
What was Autumn? They never taught us.’
Then, told by teachers how once from mould
Came growing creatures of lower nature
Able to live and die, though neither
Beast nor man, and around them wreathing
Excellent clothing, breathing sunlight
Half understanding, their ill-acquainted
Fancy will tint their wonder-paintings
-Trees as men walking, wood-romances
Of goblins stalking in silky green,
Of milk-sheen froth upon the lace of hawthorn’s
Collar, pallor on the face of birchgirl.
So shall a homeless time, though dimly
Catch from afar (for soul is watchful)
A sight of tree-delighted Eden.

LINES DURING A GENERAL ELECTION

Their threats are terrible enough, but we could bear
All that; it is their promises that bring despair.
If beauty, that anomaly, is left us still,
The cause lies in their poverty, not in their will.
If they had power (‘amenities are bunk’), conceive
How their insatiate gadgetry by this would leave
No green, nor growth, nor quietude, no sap at all
In England from the Land’s-End to the Roman Wall.
Think of their roads - broad as the road to Hell - by now
Murdering a million acres that demand the plough,
The thick-voiced Tannoy blaring over Arthur’s grave,
And all our coasts one Camp till not the tiniest wave
Stole from the beach unburdened with its festal scum
Of cigarette-ends, orange-peel, and chewing-gum.
Nor would one island’s rape suffice. Their visions are
Global; they mean the desecration of a Star;
Their happiest fancies dwell upon a time when Earth,
Flickering with sky-signs, gibbering with mechanic mirth,
One huge celestial charabanc, will stink and roll
Through patient heaven, subtopianized from pole to pole.

THE CONDEMNED

There is a wildness still in England that will not feed
In cages; it shrinks away from the touch of the trainer’s hand,
Easy to kill, not easy to tame. It will never breed
In a zoo for the public pleasure. It will not be planned.

Do not blame us too much if we that are hedgerow folk
Cannot swell the rejoicings at this new world you make
- We, hedge-hoggèd as Johnson or Borrow, strange to the yoke
As Landor, surly as Cobbett (that badger), birdlike as Blake.

A new scent troubles the air - to you, friendly perhaps
But we with animal wisdom have understood that smell.
To all our kind its message is Guns, Ferrets, and Traps,
And a Ministry gassing the little holes in which we dwell.

THE GENUINE ARTICLE

You do not love the Bourgeoisie. Of course: for they
Begot you, bore you, paid for you, and punched your head;
You work with them; they’re intimate as board and bed;
How could you love them, meeting them thus every day?
You love the Proletariat, the thin, far-away
Abstraction which resembles any workman fed
On mortal food as closely as the shiny red
Chessknight resembles stallions when they stamp and neigh.

For kicks are dangerous; riding schools are painful, coarse
And ribald places. Every way it costs far less
To leave the harmless manage of the wooden horse
 — So calculably taking the small jumps of chess.
Who, that can love nonentities, would choose the labour
Of loving the quotidian face and fact, his neighbour?

ON THE ATOMIC BOMB

Metrical Experiment

So; you have found an engine
Of injury that angels
Might dread. The world plunges,
Shies, snorts, and curvets like a horse in danger.

Then comfort her with fondlings,
With kindly word and handling,
But do not believe blindly
This way or that. Both fears and hopes are swindlers.

What's here to dread? For mortals
Both hurt and death were certain
Already; our light-hearted
Hopes from the first sentenced to final thwarting.

This marks no huge advance in
The dance of Death. His pincers
Were grim before with chances
Of cold, fire, suffocation, Ogpu, cancer.

Nor hope that this last blunder
Will end our woes by rending
Tellus herself asunder
All gone in one bright flash like dryest tinder.,

As if your puny gadget
Could dodge the terrible logic
Of history! No; the tragic
Road will go on, new generations trudge it.

Narrow and long it stretches,
Wretched for one who marches
Eyes front. He never catches
A glimpse of the fields each side, the happy orchards.

TO THE AUTHOR OF FLOWERING RIFLE

Rifles may flower and terrapins may flame
But truth and reason will be still the same.
Call them Humanitarians if you will,
The merciful are promised mercy still;
Loud fool! to think a nickname could abate
The blessing given to the compassionate.
Fashions in polysyllables may fright
Those Charlies on the Left of whom you write;
No wonder; since it was from them you learned
How white to black by jargon can be turned,
And though your verse outsoars with eagle pride
Their nerveless rhythms (of which the old cow died)
Yet your shrill covin-politics and theirs
Are two peas in a single pod - who cares
Which kind of shirt the murdering Party wears?
Repent! Recant! Some feet of sacred ground,
A target to both gangs, can yet be found,
Sacred because, though now it’s no-man’s land,
There stood your father’s house; there you should stand.
Dear Roy - Why should each wowzer on the list
Of those you damn be dubbed Romanticist?
In England the romantic stream flows not
From waterish Rousseau but from manly Scott,
A right branch on the old European tree
Of valour, truth, freedom, and courtesy,
A man (though often slap-dash in his art)
Civilized to the centre of his heart,
A man who, old and cheated and in pain,
Instead of snivelling, got to work again,
Work without end and without joy, to save
His honour, and go solvent to the grave;
Yet even so, wrung from his failing powers,
One book of his would furnish ten of ours
With characters and scenes. The very play
Of mind, I think, is birth-controlled to-day.

It flows, I say, from Scott; from Coleridge too.
A bore? A sponge? A laudanum-addict? True;
Yet Newman in that ruinous master saw
One who restored our faculty for awe,
Who re-discovered the soul's depth and height,
Who pricked with needles of the eternal light
An England at that time half numbed to death
With Paley's, Bentham's, Malthus' wintry breath.
For this the reigning Leftist cell may be
His enemies, no doubt. But why should we?
Newman said much the same of Wordsworth too.
Now certain critics, far from dear to you,
May also fondle Wordsworth. But who cares?
Look at the facts. He's far more ours than theirs;
Or, if we carve him up, then all that's best
Falls to our share - we'll let them take the rest.
By rights the only half they should enjoy
Is the rude, raw, unlicked, North Country boy.

CORONATION MARCH

Blow the trumpet! guardee tramp it!
Once to lord it thus was vulgar;
Then we could afford it; empire simpered,
Gold and gunboats were an ace of trumps.
Ranting poets then were plenty,
Loyalty meant royalties. Life is changing.
Now that bandogs mouth at random
Lion fallen into age and clawless,
Mid their snarling is the time for skirling
Pipes, and carefree scarlet. Therefore,
Rumble in the pageant drum-beat's magic,
Bunting wave on frontage bravely,
Grammar of heraldic rules unfolded
Spill forth gold and gules, and needling
Spire in floodlight pierce the midnight,
Pale as paper! Bright as any trumpet
Twinkle under taper gold of saintly
Crown of Edward; faintlier silver's
Elven gleam give female answer
With robe and globe and holiness of mitre.
Bray the trumpet, rumble tragic
Drum-beat's magic, sway the logic
Of legs that march a thousand in a uniform,
Flags and arches, the lion and the unicorn
Romp it, rampant, pompous tramping...
Some there are that talk of Alexander
With a tow-row-row-row-row-row.

MAN IS A LUMPE WHERE ALL BEASTS KNEADED BE

Is this your duty? Never lay your ear
Back to your skull and snarl, bright Tiger! Down
Bruin! Grimalkin back! Did you not hear
Man’s voice and see Man’s frown?

Too long, sleek purring Panther, you have paid
Your flatteries; far too long about my breast
You, Snake, like ivy have coiled. I’ll not be stayed,
I know my own way best.

Down, the whole pack! or else... so; now you are meek.
But then, alas, your eyes. Poor cowering brutes,
Your boundless pain, your strength to bear so weak
It bites at my heart-roots.

Oh, courage. I’ll come back when I’ve grown shepherd
To feed you, and grown child to lead you all
Where there’s green pasture waiting for the leopard
And for the wolf a stall;

But not before I’ve come where I am bound
And made the end and the beginning meet,
When over and under Earth I have travelled round
The whole heaven’s milky street.

ON A PICTURE BY CHIRICO

Two sovereign horses standing on the sand. There are no men,
The men have died, the houses fallen. A thousand years' war
Conclude in grass and graves and bones and waves on a bare shore
Are rolled in a cold evening when there is rain in the air.

These were not killed and eaten with the rest. They were two swift
And strong for the last, stunted men to hunt in the great dearth.
Then they were already terrible. They inherit the large earth,
The pleasant pastures, resonant with their snorting charge.

Now they have come to the end of land. They meet for the first time
In early, bitter March the falling arches of the sea, vast
And vacant in the sunset light, where once the ships passed.
They halt, sniffing the salt in the air, and whinny with their lips.

These are not like the horses we have ridden; that old look
Of half-indignant melancholy and delicate alarm's gone.
Thus perhaps looked the breeding-pair in Eden when a day shone
First upon tossing manes and glossy flanks at play.

They are called. Change overhangs them. Their neighing is half speech.
Death-sharp across great seas, a seminal breeze from the far side
Calls to their new-crowned race to leave the places where Man
died The offer, is it? the prophecy, of a Houyhnhnms' Land?

ON A THEME FROM NICOLAS OF CUSA

(De Docta Ignorantia, III ix.)

When soul and body feed, one sees
Their differing physiologies.
Firmness of apple, fluted shape
Of celery, or tight-skinned grape
I grind and mangle when I eat,
Then in dark, salt, internal heat,
Annihilate their natures by
The very act that makes them I.

But when the soul partakes of good
Or truth, which are her savoury food,
By some far subtler chemistry
It is not they that change, but she,
Who feels them enter with the state
Of conquerors her opened gate,
Or, mirror-like, digests their ray
By turning luminous as they.

WHAT THE BIRD SAID EARLY IN THE YEAR

I heard in Addison’s Walk a bird sing clear
‘This year the summer will come true. This year. This year.

‘Winds will not strip the blossom from the apple trees
This year, nor want of rain destroy the peas.

‘This year time’s nature will no more defeat you,
Nor all the promised moments in their passing cheat you.

‘This time they will not lead you round and back
To Autumn, one year older, by the well-worn track.

‘This year, this year, as all these flowers foretell,
We shall escape the circle and undo the spell.

‘Often deceived, yet open once again your heart,
Quick, quick, quick, quick! - the gates are drawn apart.’

THE SALAMANDER

I stared into the fire; blue waves
Of shuddering heat that rose and fell,
And blazing ships and blinding caves,
Canyons and streets and hills of hell;
Then presently amidst it all
I saw a living creature crawl.

Forward it crept and pushed its snout
Between the bars, and with sad eyes
Into my quiet room looked out,
As men looked out upon the skies;
And from its scalding throat there came
A faint voice hissing like a flame:

‘This is the end, the stratosphere,
The rim of the world where all life dies,
The vertigo of space, the fear
Of nothingness; before me lies
Blank silence, distances untold
Of unimaginable cold.

‘Faint lights that fitfully appear
Far off in that immense abyss
Are but reflections cast from here,
There is no other fire but this,
This speck of life, this fading spark
Enisled amid the boundless dark.

‘Blind Nature’s measureless rebuke
To all we value, I received
Long since (though wishes bait the hook
With tales our ancestors believed)
And now can face with fearless eye
Negation’s final sovereignty.’

INFATUATION

Body and soul most fit for love can best
Withstand it. I am ill, and cannot rest,
Therefore I’m caught. Disease is amorous, health
At love’s door has the pass both in and out.
Want cannot choose but grub with needy snout
In ravenous dreams, let temperance wait on wealth.
Don’t think of her tonight... the very strain
Wears the will down; then in she comes by stealth.

How am I made that such a thing can trouble
My fancy for a day? Her brain’s a bubble,
Her soul, a traveller’s tale. Her every thrust
And trick I understand... the mould so mean,
And she the thousandth copy, comes between
My thoughts and me... unfrank, unfit for trust,
Yet ignorant in her cunning, a blind tool,
When nature bids her, labouring as she must.

Back to my book. Read. Read. Don’t think upon her,
Where every thought is hatred and dishonour.
I do not love her, like her, wish her well.
Is it mere lust? But lust can quench his thirst
In any water; rather, at the first,
There was one moment when I could not tell
The thing she surely is. I stood unarmed
That moment, and the stroke that moment fell.

She stood, an image lost as soon as seen,
Like beauty in a vision half-caught between
Two aimless and long-lumbering dreams of night.
The thing I seek for was not anywhere
At any time on earth. That huntress air
And morning freshness was not hers by right.
She spoke, she smiled; put out what seemed the flame,
Left me the cold charred sticks, the ashes white.

And from these sprang the dream I dare not chase,
Lest, the long hunt being over, I embrace
My shadow. (Furies wait upon that bed)
It plucks me at the elbow... ‘love can reach
That other soul of hers... charity teach
Atrophied powers once more to raise the head,
Sweet charity.’ But she can never learn;
And what am I, whose voice should wake the dead?

How could she learn, who never since her birth
Looked out of her desires and saw the earth
Unshadowed by herself. She knows that man
Has whimsies, and will talk, and take concern
With wonderings and desires that serve no turn
Of woman. She would ape, (for well she can),
The rapt disciple at her need, till mask
Was needless... And all ends where it began.

Her holiest moods are gaudy desecrations
Of poor half holy things: her exaltations
Are frothed from music, moonlight, wine and dance;
Love is to her a dream of bridal dresses,
Friendship, a tittering hour of girl’s caresses,
Virtue, a steady purpose to advance,
Honoured, and safe, by the old well-proven roads,
No loophole left to passion or to chance.

I longed last night to make her know the truth
That none of them has told her. Flushed with youth,
Dazed with a half-hour triumph, she held the crowd.
She loved the boys that buzzed on her like flies,
She loved the envy in the woman’s eyes,
Faster she talked. I longed to cry aloud,
‘What, has no brother told you yet, with whom
With what, you share the power that makes you proud?’

Could she have looked so noble, and no seed
Of spirit in her at all? But mother-greed

Has linked her boy-like splendour to the yoke.
Venus infernal taught such voice and eyes
To bear themselves abroad for merchandise...
Horrible woman-nature, at one stroke
Making the beauty, bending beauty down
To ruthless tasks, before the spirit awoke.

Thank heaven, though I were meshed and made secure,
Its odds, she’d never have me. I am poor...
Thank heaven, for if she did, what comes behind!
Can I not see her now, marked with my name,
Among my friends (shame not to hide my shame),
And her glib tongue runs on and rambles blind
Through slippery paths, revealing and revealing,
While they for my sake cover it and are kind.

Kind? Let them look at home. Which of them all
Knows how his act or word next hour may fall?
Into them, too, this might have come, unbidden,
Unlooked for. For each one of us, down below
The caldron brews in the dark. We do not know
By whom, or on what fields, we are reined and ridden.
There are not acts; spectators of ourselves
We wait and watch the event, the cause is hidden.

All power in man is mummery: good report
A fable: this apparent mind, the sport
For mumbling dynasts old as wind and tide.
Talk, posture, gild it over... still the motion
That moves us is not ours, but in the ocean
Of hunger and bleak fear, like buoys we ride,
And seem to move ourselves, and in the waves
Lifting and falling take our shame and pride.

VOWELS AND SIRENS

Chosen to seduce you,
Those dove-like vowels;
Deuro - Kudos - Odusseus
Opening the bay, his prow

Appeared. Air rang with
Siren voices;
The hero, bound, in anguish,
Strove to retract his choice.

Nothing of solace
For lovers' longings
They breathed. Of vanished knowledge
Was their intemperate song,

A music that resembled
Some earlier music
That men are born remembering.
What all the gods refuse
The backward journey
To the steep river's
Hid source, the great returning
The Sirens feigned to give.

Cool voices, lying
Words abuse us,
Cooing *Kudos Acbaiôn,*
Warbling their half-true news.

THE PRUDENT JAILER

Always the old nostalgia? Yes.
We still remember times before
We had learned to wear the prison dress
Or steel rings rubbed our ankles sore.

Escapists? Yes. Looking at bars
And chains, we think of files; and then
Of black nights without moon or stars
And luck befriending hunted men.

Still when we hear the trains at night
We envy the free travellers, whirled
In how few moments past the sight
Of the blind wall that bounds our world.

Our Jailer (well he may) prefers
Our thoughts should keep a narrower range.
‘The proper study of prisoners
Is prison,’ he tells us. Is it strange?

And if old freedom in our glance
betrays itself, he calls it names
‘Dope’ - ‘Wishful thinking’ - or ‘Romance’,
Till tireless propaganda tames.

All but the strong whose hearts they break,
All but the few whose faith is whole.
Stone walls cannot a prison make
Half so secure as rigmarole.

AUBADE

Eight strokes sound from within. The crowd, assembled
Outside, stare at the gate (it disregards them).
What lure brings them so early, under driving
Smoke-grey cloud with a hint of rain, before their
Day’s work? Might pity draw them? Was the motive
Self-pleased - say, Pharisaical - delight in
Earth’s old *lex talionis?* Easy answers,
Yet both short of the truth perhaps. The sharpest
Cause might be that amid the swirl of phantoms
Film, broadcast, propaganda, picture-thinking Death, like cancer or crime or copulation,
Stands out real; and the soul with native hunger
(Called sensationalism in culture circles)
Seeks food ev’n in the dingiest of quarters.
I, snugged down in a bed, in warm refinement,
Dare not judge what attraction called and kept them,
Packed thus, waiting an hour or so to see the
Jail’s black flag running up between the chimneys.

PATTERN

Some believe the slumber
Of trees is in December
When timber’s naked under sky
And squirrel keeps his chamber.

But I believe their fibres
Awake to life and labour
When turbulence comes roaring up
The land in loud October,

And plunders, strips, and sunders
And sends the leaves to wander
And undisguises prickly shapes
Beneath the golden splendour.

Then form returns. In warmer,
Seductive days, disarming
Its firmer will, the wood grew soft
And put forth dreams to murmur.

Into earnest winter
With spirit alert it enters;
The hunter wind and the hound frost
Have quelled the green enchanter.

AFTER ARISTOTLE

Virtue, thou whom men with toil
Seek as their most precious spoil,
Gladly here in Greece for thy
Beauty, Virgin, men will die
And will live laborious days
And pass, unwearying, hard assays;
So arch-potent is thy touch
Upon mortal hearts, and such
Thy unfading fruit; by far
More esteemed than riches are;
Dearer than, and loved beyond
Our father kind, our mother fond;
Dearer even than the deep
Dark eyes of the god of Sleep.

Swift as hounds in chase of thee
Leda's twin-born progeny
And Heracles, whom Zeus begot,
To their last hour fainted not;
Following through labours long
Thee who mak'st thy lovers strong;
So for thee Achilles and
Aias sought the silent land.

And now of late the nursling of
Atameus town for thy dear love
Thought it not much to throw away
The sunlight of our mortal day.
Therefore all the daughters nine
Of Mnemosyne divine

Beyond the reach of death will raise
His name in song, nor from his praise
Disjoin the lauds of Zeus who best
Champions the truth of host to guest

And hallows the find cords that tie
Friendship indissolubly.

REASON

Set on the soul’s acropolis the reason stands
A virgin, arm’d, commercing with celestial light,
And he who sins against her has defiled his own
Virginity: no cleansing makes his garment white;
So clear is reason. But how dark, imagining,
Warm, dark, obscure and infinite, daughter of Night:
Dark is her brow, the beauty of her eyes with sleep
Is loaded, and her pains are long, and her delight.
Tempt not Athene. Wound not in her fertile pains
Demeter, nor rebel against her mother-right.
Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother,
Who make in me a concord of the depth and height?
Who make imagination’s dim exploring touch
Ever report the same as intellectual sight?
Then could I truly say, and not deceive,
Then wholly, say, that! BELIEVE.

TO ANDREW MARVELL

Marvell, they say your verse is faint
Beside the range of Donne’s;
Too clear for them, too free from taint
Of noise, your music runs.

Their sultry minds can ill conceive
How godlike power should dwell
Except where lungs with torment heave
And giant muscles swell.

The better swordsman with a smile
His cool *passado* gives;
Smooth is the flooding of the Nile
By which all Egypt lives.

Sweetness and strength from regions far
Withdrawn and strange you bring,
And look no stronger than a star,
No graver than the spring.

LINES WRITTEN IN A COPY OF MILTON’S WORKS

Alas! the happy beasts at pasture play
All, all alike; all of one mind are they;
By Nature with indifferent kindness blessed,
None loves a special friend beyond the rest;
No sparrow lacks a friend with whom to roam
All day for seeds till evening bids them home;
Whom if with cunning beak the cruel kite
Or peasant’s arrow snatch from him tonight,
With a new friend next day, content, he wings his flight.
Not so is Man, who in his fellows finds
(Hard fate!) discordant souls and alien minds!
To him, though searching long, will scarce be shown
One heart amidst a thousand like his own;
Or if, at last relenting, fate shall send
In answer to his prayer, the authentic friend,
Him in some unsuspected hour, some day
He never dreaded, Death will snatch away
And leave behind a loss that time can ne’er allay.

Who now can charm to rest each eating care?
Who now the secrets of my bosom share?
Who now can while away with the delight
Of his discourse the livelong winter night,
When cracking nuts and hissing apples roast
Upon the hearth and from his southern coast
The wet wind in the elm-tree branches roars
And makes one vast confusion out of doors?

Alone I walk the fields and plains, alone
The dark vales with dense-branches overgrown.
Here, as day fades, I wait, and all around
I hear the rain that falls with sullen sound.

SCHOLAR’S MELANCHOLY

The mind too has her fossils to record her past,
Cold characters, immobile, of what once was new
And hot with life. Old papers, as we rummage through
Neglected drawers, still show us where the pen, fast, fast,
Ate up the sheets: and wondering, we remember vast
Designs and knowledge gathered, and intent to do
What we were able then to have done... something drew
A sponge across that slate. The ferly would not last.

Though Will can stretch his viaduct with level thrust
High above shagg’d woods, quaking swamp, and desert dust
Of changing times, yet he must dig for his material
In local quarries of the varying moment - must
Use wattle and daub in countries without stone, and trust
To basest matter the proud arches’ form imperial.

PART III. A LARGER WORLD

WORMWOOD

Thou only art alternative to God, oh, dark
And burning island among spirits, tenth hierarch,
Wormwood, immortal Satan, Ahriman, alone
Second to Him to whom no second else were known,
Being essential fire, sprung of His fire, but bound
Within the lightless furnace of thy Self, bricked round
To rage in the reverberated heat from seven
Containing walls: hence power thou hast to rival heaven.
Therefore, except the temperance of the eternal love
Only thy absolute lust is worth thinking of.
All else is weak disguising of the wishful heart,
All that seemed earth is Hell, or Heaven. God is: thou art:
The rest, illusion. How should man live save as glass
To let the white light without flame, the Father, pass
Unstained: or else - opaque, molten to thy desire,
Venus infernal starving in the strength of fire!

Lord, open not too often my weak eyes to this.

VIRTUE’S INDEPENDENCE

I have scraped clean the plateau from the filthy earth,
Earth the unchaste, the fruitful, the great grand maternal,
Sprawling creature, lolling at random and supine
The broad-faced, sluttish helot, the slave wife
Grubby and warm, who opens unashamed
Her thousand wombs unguarded to the lickerous sun.
Now I have scoured my rock clean from the filthy earth
On it no root can strike and no blade come to birth,
And though I starve of hunger it is plainly seen
That I have eaten nothing common or unclean.

I have by fasting purged away the filthy flesh,
Flesh the hot, moist, salt scum, the obscenity
And parasitic tetter, from my noble bones.
I have torn from my breasts -I was an udder’d beast
My child, for he was fleshly. Flesh is caught
By a contagion carried from impure
Generation to generation through the body’s sewer.
And now though I am barren, yet no man can doubt
I am clean and my iniquities are blotted out.

I have made my soul (once filthy) a hard, pure, bright
Mirror of steel: no damp breath breathes upon it
Warming and dimming it: it would freeze the finger
If any touched it. I have a mineral soul.
Minerals eat no food and void no excrement.
So I, borrowing nothing and repaying
Nothing, neither growing nor decaying,
Myself am to myself, a mortal God, a self-contained
Unwindowed monad, unindebted and unstained.

POSTURING

Because of endless pride
Reborn with endless error,
Each hour I look aside
Upon my secret mirror
Trying all postures there
To make my image fair.

Thou givest grapes, and I,
Though starving, turn to see
How dark the cool globes lie
In the white hand of me,
And linger gazing thither
Till the live clusters wither.

So should I quickly die
Narcissus-like of want,
But, in the glass, my eye
Catches such forms as haunt
beyond nightmare, and make
Pride humble for pride’s sake.

Then and then only turning
The stiff neck round, I grow
A molten man all burning
And look behind and know
Who made the glass, whose light makes dark, whose fair
Makes foul, my shadowy form reflected there
That self-love, brought to bed of
Love may die and bear
Her sweet son in despair.

DECEPTION

Iron will eat the world’s old beauty up.
Girder and grid and gantry will arise,
Iron forest of engines will arise,
Criss-cross of iron crotchet. For your eyes
No green or growth. Over all, the skies
Scribbled from end to end with boasts and lies.
(When Adam ate the irrevocable apple, Thou
Saw’st beyond death the resurrection of the dead.)

Clamour shall clean put out the voice of wisdom,
The printing-presses with their clapping wings,
Fouling your nourishment. Harpy wings,
Filling your minds all day with foolish things,
Will tame the eagle Thought: till she sings
Parrot-like in her cage to please dark kings.
(When Israel descended into Egypt, Thou
Didst purpose both the bondage and the coming out.)

The new age, the new art, the new ethic and thought,
And fools crying, Because it has begun
It will continue as it has begun!
The wheel runs fast, therefore the wheel will run
Faster for ever. The old age is done,
We have new lights and see without the sun.
(Though they lay flat the mountains and dry up the sea,
Wilt thou yet change, as though God were a god?)

DEADLY SINS

Through our lives thy meshes run
Deft as spiders' catenation,
Crossed and crossed again and spun
Finer than the fiend's temptation.

Greed into herself would turn
All that's sweet: but let her follow
Still that path, and greed will learn
How the whole world is hers to swallow.

Sloth that would find out a bed
Blind to morning, deaf to waking,
Shuffling shall at last be led
To the peace that knows no breaking.

Lechery, that feels sharp lust
Sharper from each promised staying,
Goes at long last - go she must
Where alone is sure allaying

Anger, postulating still
Inexcusables to shatter,
From the shelter of thy will
Finds herself her proper matter.

Envy had rather die than see
Other's course her own outflying;
She will pay with death to be
Where her Best brooks no denying.

Pride, that from each step, anew
Mounts again with mad aspiring,
Must find all at last, save you,
Set too low for her desiring.

Avarice, while she finds an end,
Counts but small the largest treasure.
Whimperingly at last she’ll bend
To take free what has no measure.

So inexorably thou
On thy shattered foes pursuing,
Never a respite dost allow
Save what works their own undoing.

THE DRAGON SPEAKS

Once the worm-laid egg shattered in the wood.
I came forth shining into the trembling wood:
The sun was on my scales, dew upon the grasses,
The cold, sweet grasses and the sticky leaves.
I loved my speckled mate. We played at druery
And sucked warm milk dropping from the ewes' teats.

Now I keep watch on the gold in my rock cave
In a country of stones: old, deplorable dragon,
Watching my hoard. In winter night the gold
Freezes through tough scales my cold belly;
Jagged crowns, cruelly twisted rings,
Icy and knobb'd, are the old dragon's bed.

Often I wish I had not eaten my wife
(Though worm grows not to dragon till he eats worm).
She could have helped me, watch and watch about,
Guarding the gold; the gold would have been safer.
I could uncoil my tired body and take
Sometimes a little sleep when she was watching.

Last night under the moonset a fox barked,
Startled me; then I knew I had been sleeping.
Often an owl flying over the country of stones
Startles me; then I think that I must have slept,
Only a moment. That very moment a Man
might have come from the towns to steal my gold.

They make plots in the towns to take my gold,
They whisper of me in the houses, making plans,
Merciless men. Have they not ale upon the benches,
Warm wives in bed, and song, and sleep the whole night?
I leave my cave once only in the winter
To drink at the rock pool; in summer twice.

They have no pity for the old, lugubrious dragon.
Lord that made the dragon, grant me thy peace,
But say not that I should give up the gold,
Nor move, nor die. Others would have the gold.
Kill rather, Lord, the Men and the other dragons;
Then I can sleep; go when I will to drink.

DRAGON-SLAYER

I have come back with victory got
But stand away - touch me not
Even with your clothes. I burn red-hot.

The worm was bitter. When she saw
My shield glitter beside the shaw
She spat flame from her golden jaw.

When on my sword her vomit spilt
The blade took fire. On the hilt
Beryl cracked, and bubbled gilt.

When sword and sword arm were all flame
With the very heat that came
Out of the brute, I flogged her tame.

In her own spew the worm died.
I rolled her round and tore her wide
And plucked the heart from her boiling side.

When my teeth were in the heart
I felt a pulse within me start
As though my breast would break apart.
It shook the hills and made them reel
And spun the woods round like a wheel.
The grass singed where I set my heel.

Behemoth is my serving man!
Before the conquered hosts of Pan
Riding tamed Leviathan,
Loud I sing for well I can
RESVRGAM and *Io PAEAN*,
Io, *Io*, *Io*, *PAEAN!*
Now I know the stake I played for,
Now I know what a worm’s made for!

LILITH

When Lilith means to draw me
Within her secret bower,
She does not overawe me
With beauty’s pomp and power,
Nor, with angelic grace
Of courtesy, and the pace
Of gliding ships, comes veiled at evening hour.

Eager, unmasked, she lingers
Heart-sick and hunger sore;
With hot, dry, jewelled fingers
Stretched out, beside her door,
Offering with gnawing haste
Her cup, whereof who taste,
(She promises not better) thirst far more.

What moves me, then, to drink it?
- Her spells, which all around
So change the land, we think it
A great waste where a sound
Of wind like tales twice told
Blusters, and cloud is rolled
Always above yet no rain falls to ground.

Across drab iteration
Of bare hills, line on line,
The long road’s sinuation
Leads on. The witch’s wine,
Though promising nothing, seems
In that land of no streams,
To promise best - the unrelished anodyne.

A PAGEANT PLAYED IN VAIN

Watching the thought that moves
Within my conscient brain,
I learn how often that appearance proves
A pageant played in vain.

Holding what seems the helm,
I make a show to steer,
But winds, for worse and better, overwhelm
My purpose, and I veer.

Thus, if thy guidance reach
Only my head, then all
Hardest attempt of mine serves but to teach
How oddly the dice fall.

To limbs, and loins, and heart,
Search with thy chemic beam,
Strike where the self I know not lives apart,
Beneath the surface dream.

break, Sun, my crusted earth,
Pierce, razor-edged, within,
Where blind, immortal metals have their birth,
And crystals clear begin.

Thy spirit in secret flows
About our lives. In gloom,
The mother helping not nor hindering, grows
The child within the womb.

WHEN THE CURTAIN'S DOWN

I am not one that easily flits past in thought
The ominous stream, imagining death made for nought.
This person, mixed of body and breath, to which concurred
Once only one articulation of thy word,
Will be resolved eternally: nor can time bring
(Else time were vain) once back again the self-same thing.
Therefore among the riddles that no man has read
I put thy paradox, Who liveth and was dead.
As Thou hast made substantially, Thou wilt unmake
In earnest and for everlasting. Let none take
Comfort in frail supposal that some hour and place
To those who mourn recovers the wished voice and face.
Whom Thy great *Exit* banishes, no after age
Of epilogue leads back upon the lighted stage.
Where is Prince Hamlet when the curtain's down? Where fled
Dreams at the dawn, or colours when the light is sped?
We are thy colours, fugitive, never restored,
Never repeated again. Thou only art the Lord,
Thou only art holy. In the shadowy vast
Of thine Osirian wings Thou dost enfold the past.
There sit in throne antediluvian, cruel kings,
There the first nightingale that sang to Eve yet sings,
There are the irrecoverable guiltless years,
There, yet unfallen, Lucifer among his peers.

For thou art also a deity of the dead, a god
Of graves, with necromancies in thy potent rod;
Thou art Lord of the unbreathable transmortal air
Where mortal thinking fails: night's nuptial darkness, where
All lost embraces intermingle and are bless'd,
And all die, but all are, while Thou continuest.

DIVINE JUSTICE

God in His mercy made
The fixed pains of Hell.
That misery might be stayed,
God in His mercy made
Eternal bounds and bade
Its waves no further swell.
God in His mercy made
The fixed pains of Hell

EDEN’S COURTESY

Such natural love twixt beast and man we find
That children all desire an animal book,
And all brutes, not perverted from their kind,
Woo us with whinny, tongue, tail, song, or look;
So much of Eden’s courtesy yet remains.
But when a creature’s dread, or mine, has built
A wall between, I think I feel the pains
That Adam earned and do confess my guilt.
For till I tame sly fox and timorous hare
And lording lion in my self, no peace
Can be without; but after, I shall dare
Uncage the shadowy zoo and war will cease;
Because the brutes within, I do not doubt,
Are archetypal of the brutes without.

THE METEORITE

Among the hills a meteorite
Lies huge; and moss has overgrown,
And wind and rain with touches light
Made soft, the contours of the stone.

Thus easily can Earth digest
A cinder of sidereal fire,
And make the translunary guest
Thus native to an English shire.

Nor is it strange these wanderers
Find in her lap their fitting place,
For every particle that’s hers
Came at the first from outer space.

All that is Earth has once been sky;
Down from the Sun of old she came,
Or from some star that travelled by
Too close to his entangling flame.

Hence, if belated drops yet fall
From heaven, on these her plastic power
Still works as once it worked on all
The glad rush of the golden shower.

TWO KINDS OF MEMORY

Oh still vacation, silver
Pause and relaxing of severer laws,
Oh Memory the compassionate,
Forever in dim labyrinths of reverie
The cruel past disarming and refashioning!

But iron Memory, tyrant
Importunate by night, with lucid torture
Still back into the merciless
Unalterable fact, the choking halter of
The finished past, where nothing grows, coercing us!

Well did our brooding elders
Appoint both king and queen, two powers with joint
Authority in the underworld;
Persephone, the lost and found, the ineffable
Daughter of the buried spring, the wise, the wonderful;

But made her consort Hades
Stem and exact, whom no one's prayer can turn
Nor length of years can mitigate.
On Orpheus when, the second time, he forfeited
Eurydice, he gazed, correct and pitiless.

His Mercies ev'n are cursèd
Mockeries of life, cold, cold as lunar rock,
And all his famed Elysium
Worthless, if former joys in all their earthliness
Are there repeated, manically, dizzily,

And round forever, bound for
No goal, upon a circling track, the soul
Re-lives her past; - Orion on
His quarry, and upon his foe the warrior,
Ever pursuing or forever triumphing.

In her the heaviest burthen
Grows light; old shame or sorrow or heart-blight
Seen in her glass turn magical;
A splendour, a rich gloom, a dewy tenderness
Silently overgrows the graves of tragedy.

And joys remembered, poising
A moment on the past which was their home,
Soon without longer tarrying
Take flight and never rest until they light upon
The branches of the deep-leaved woods of Paradise.

Who calls such magic falsehood
Must swear the mummy tells of the dead Pharaoh
More truth than all the merriment
And gold of all the harvests ever told us of
The seed that yearly breaks from yearly burial.

RE-ADJUSTMENT

I thought there would be a grave beauty, a sunset splendour
In being the last of one’s kind: a topmost moment as one watched
The huge wave curving over Atlantis, the shrouded barge
Turning away with wounded Arthur, or Ilium burning.
Now I see that, all along, I was assuming a posterity
Of gentle hearts: someone, however distant in the depths of time,
Who could pick up our signal, who could understand a story. There won’t be.
Between the new *Hominidae* and us who are dying, already
There rises a barrier across which no voice can ever carry,
For devils are unmaking language. We must let that alone forever.
Uproot your loves, one by one, with care, from the future,
And trusting to no future, receive the massive thrust
And surge of the many-dimensional timeless rays converging
On this small, significant dew drop, the present that mirrors all.

NEARLY THEY STOOD

Nearly they stood who fall.
Themselves, when they look back,
See always in the track
One torturing spot where all
By a possible quick swerve
Of will yet unenslaved
By the infinitesimal twitching of a nerve
Might have been saved.

Nearly they fell who stand.
These with cold after-fear
Look back and note how near
They grazed the Siren’s land,
Wondering to think that fate,
By threads so spidery-fine,
The choice of ways so small, the event so great,
Should thus entwine.

Therefore I sometimes fear
Lest oldest fears prove true,
Lest, when no bugle blew
My mort, when skies looked clear,
I may have stepped one hair’s
Breadth past the hair-breadth bourn
Which, being once crossed forever unawares,
Forbids return.

RELAPSE

Out of the wound we pluck
The shrapnel. Thorns we squeeze
Out of the hand. Even poison forth we suck,
And after pain have ease.

But images that grow
Within the soul have life
Like cancer and, often cut, live on below
The deepest of the knife,

Waiting their time to shoot
At some defenceless hour
Their poison, unimpaired, at the heart's root,
And, like a golden shower,

Unanswerably sweet,
Bright with returning guilt,
Fatally in a moment's time defeat
Our brazen towers long-built;

And all our former pain
And all our surgeon's care
Is lost, and all the unbearable (in vain
Borne once) is still to bear.

LATE SUMMER

I, dust and bedraggled as I am,
Pestered with wasps and weeds and making jam,
Blowzy and stale, my welcome long outstayed,
Proved false in every promise that I made,
At my beginning I believed, like you,
Something would come of all my green and blue.
Mortals remember, looking on the thing
I am, that I, even I, was once a spring.

TO A FRIEND

If knowledge like the mid-day heat
Uncooled with cloud, unstirred with breath
Of undulant air, begins to beat
On minds one moment after death,

From your rich soil what lives will spring,
What flower-entangled paradise,
Through what green walks the birds will sing,
What med'cinable gums, what spice,

Apples of what smooth gold! But fear
Gnaws at me for myself; the noon
That nourishes Earth can only sear
And scald the unresponding Moon.

Her gaping valleys have no soil,
Her needle-pointed hills are bare;
Water, poured on those rocks, would boil,
And day lasts long, and long despair.

TO CHARLES WILLIAMS

Your death blows a strange bugle call, friend, and all is hard
To see plainly or record truly. The new light imposes change,
Re-adjusts all a life-landscape as it thrusts down its probe from the sky,
To create shadows, to reveal waters, to erect hills and deepen glens.
The slant alters. I can’t see the old contours. It’s a larger world
Than I once thought it. I wince, caught in the bleak air that blows on the ridge.
Is it the first sting of the great winter, the world-waning? Or the cold of spring?

A hard question and worth talking a whole night on. But with whom?
Of whom now can I ask guidance? With what friend concerning your death
Is it worth while to exchange thoughts unless - oh unless it were you?

AFTER VAIN PRETENCE

When the grape of the night is pressed
Nearly dry, and the trains rest
And roads are empty and the moon low,
out of my body’s breast I go,
Insecure, as a child escaped,
Animula flittering in the night unshaped;
Lacking wings; but I leap so high
It wants but a little more to fly.
Down I swoop with a seven-league stride
From church’s spire to river side,
There scarce touching the ground, and then
Up to the elm-tree tops again;
Rising higher each leap and still
Sinking lower again, until
Lured to venture at last too much
I dream of flying indeed - no touch
Of earth between; then, holding breath
I poise on a perilous edge. But faith
All goes out of my soul - too late!
Air is emptiness: man has weight.
Unsupported I drop like lead
To where my body awakes in bed
Screaming-scared - and yet glad, as one
Who, after vain pretence, has done
With keeping company too great
For his lean purse and low estate.

ANGEL’S SONG

I know not, I,
What the men together say,
How lovers, lovers die
And youth passes away.

Cannot understand
Love that mortal bears
To native, native land,
All lands are theirs;

Why at grave they grieve
For one voice and face,
And not, and not receive
Another in its place.

I above the cone
Of the circling night
Flying, never have known
Less or greater light.

Sorrow it is they call
This cup whence my lip
(Woe’s me!) never in all
My endless days can sip.

JOYS THAT STING

Oh doe not die, says Donne, *for I shall hate*
All women so. How false the sentence rings.
Women? But in a life made desolate
It is the joys once shared that have the stings.

To take the old walks alone, or not at all,
To order one pint where I ordered two,
To think of, and then not to make, the small
Time-honoured joke (senseless to all but you);

To laugh (oh, one'll laugh), to talk upon
Themes that we talked upon when you were there,
To make some poor pretence of going on,
Be kind to one's old friends, and seem to care,

While no one (O God) through the years will say
The simplest, common word in just your way.

OLD POETS REMEMBERED

One happier look on your kind, suffering face,
And all my sky is domed with cloudless blue;
Eternal summer in a moment’s space
Breathes with sweet air and glows and warms me through.

One droop of your dear mouth, one tear of yours,
One gasp of Faith half-strangled by its foe,
And down through a waste world of slag and sewers
And hammering and loud wheels once more I go.

Thus, what old poets told me about love
(Tristram’s obedience, Isoud’s sovereignty...)
Turns true in a dread mode I dreamed not of,
- What once I studied, now I learn to be;

Taught, oh how late! in anguish, the response
I might have made with exultation once.

AS THE RUIN FALLS

All this is flashy rhetoric about loving you.
I never had a selfless thought since I was born.
I am mercenary and self-seeking through and through:
I want God, you, all friends, merely to serve my turn.

Peace, re-assurance, pleasure, are the goals I seek,
I cannot crawl one inch outside my proper skin:
I talk of love - a scholar’s parrot may talk Greek
But, self-imprisoned, always end where I begin.

Only that now you have taught me (but how late) my lack.
I see the chasm. And everything you are was making
My heart into a bridge by which I might get back
From exile, and grow man. And now the bridge is breaking.

For this I bless you as the ruin falls. The pains
You give me are more precious than all other gains.

PART IV. NOON’S INTENSITY

POEM FOR PSYCHOANALYSTS AND/OR THEOLOGIANS

Naked apples, woolly-coated peaches
Swelled on the garden’s wall. Unbounded
Odour of windless, spice-bearing trees
Surrounded my lying in sacred turf,
Made dense the guarded air - the forest of trees
Buoyed up therein like weeds in ocean
Lived without motion. I was the pearl,
Mother-of-pearl my bower. Milk-white the cirrhus
Streaked the blue egg-shell of the distant sky,
Early and distant, over the spicy forest;
Wise was the fangless serpent, drowsy.
All this, indeed, I do not remember.
I remember the remembering, when first waking
I heard the golden gates behind me
Fall to, shut fast. On the flinty road,
Black-frosty, blown on with an eastern wind,
I found my feet. Forth on journey,
Gathering thin garment over aching bones,
I went. I wander still. But the world is round.
Till your alchemic beams turn all to gold
There must be many metals. From the night
You will not yet withdraw her silver light,
And often with Saturnian tints the cold
Atlantic swells at morning shall enfold
The Cornish cliffs burnished with copper bright;
Till trained by slow degrees we have such sight
As dares the pure projection to behold.
Even when Sol comes ascendant, it may be
More perfectly in him our eyes shall see
All baser virtues; thus shall hear you talking
And yet not die. Till then, you have left free,
Unscorched by your own noon’s intensity
One cool and evening hour for garden walking.

SWEET DESIRE

These faint wavering far-travell’d gleams
Coming from your country, fill me with care. That scent,
That sweet stabbing, as at the song of thrush,
That leap of the heart - too like they seem
To another air; unlike as well
So that I am dazed with doubt. As a dungeoned man
Who has heard the hinge on the hook turning
Often. Always that opened door
Let new tormentors in. If now at last
It opened again, but outward, offering free way,
(His Kind one come, with comfort) he
Yet shrinks, in his straw, struggling backward,

From his dear, from his door, into the dark’st corner,
Furthest from freedom. So, fearing, I
Taste not but with trembling. I was tricked before.
All the heraldry of heaven, holy monsters,
With hazardous and dim half-likeness taunt
Long-haunted men. The like is not the same.
Always evil was an ape. I know.
Who passes to paradise, within that pure border
Finds there, refashioned, all that he fled from here.
And yet...
But what’s the use? For yield I must,
Though long delayed, at last must dare
To give over, to be eased of my iron casing,
Molten at thy melody, as men of snow
In the solar smile. Slow-paced I come,
Yielding by inches. And yet, oh Lord, and yet,
- Oh Lord, let not likeness fool me again.

CAUGHT

You rest upon me all my days
The inevitable Eye,
Dreadful and undeflected as the blaze
Of some Arabian sky;

Where, dead still, in their smothering tent
Pale travellers crouch, and, bright
About them, noon’s long-drawn Astonishment
Hammers the rocks with light.

Oh, for but one cool breath in seven,
One air from northern climes,
The changing and the castle-clouded heaven
Of my old Pagan times!

But you have seized all in your rage
Of Oneness. Round about,
Beating my wings, all ways, within your cage,
I flutter, but not out.

FORBIDDEN PLEASURE

Quick! The black, sulphurous, never quenched,
Old festering fire begins to play
Once more within. Look! By brute force I have wrenched
Unmercifully my hands the other way.

Quick, Lord! On the rack thus, stretched tight,
Nerves clamouring as at nature’s wrong.
Scorched to the quick, whipp’d raw - Lord, in this plight
You see, you see no man can suffer long.

Quick, Lord! Before new scorpions bring
New venom - ere fiends blow the fire
A second time - quick, show me that sweet thing
Which, ‘spite of all, more deeply I desire.

THE NAKED SEED

My heart is empty. All the fountains that should run
With longing, are in me
Dried up. In all my countryside there is not one
That drips to find the sea.
I have no care for anything thy love can grant
Except the moment’s vain
And hardly noticed filling of the moment’s want
and to be free from pain.
Oh, thou that art unwearying, that dost neither sleep
Nor slumber, who didst take
All care for Lazarus in the careless tomb, oh keep
Watch for me till I wake.
If thou think for me what I cannot think, if thou
Desire for me what I
Cannot desire, my soul’s interior Form, though now
Deep-buried, will not die,
— No more than the insensible dropp’d seed which grows
Through winter ripe for birth
Because, while it forgets, the heaven remembering throws
Sweet influence still on earth,
— Because the heaven, moved moth-like by thy beauty, goes
Still turning round the earth.

SCAZONS

Walking to-day by a cottage I shed tears
When I remembered how once I had walked there
With my friends who are mortal and dead. Years
Little had healed the wound that was laid bare.

Out little spear that stabs! I, fool, believed
I had outgrown the local, unique sting,
I had transmuted wholly (I was deceived)
Into Love universal the lov'd thing.

But Thou, Lord, surely knewest thine own plan
When the angelic indifferencies with no bar
Universally loved, but Thou gav'st man
The tether and pang of the particular,

Which, like a chemic drop, infinitesimal,
Plashed into pure water, changing the whole,
Embodies and embitters and turns all
Spirit's sweet water into astringent soul,

That we, though small, might quiver with fire's same
Substantial form as Thou - not reflect merely
Like lunar angels back to Thee cold flame.
Gods are we, Thou hast said; and we pay dearly.

LEGION

Lord, hear my voice, my present voice I mean,
Not that which may be speaking an hour hence
(For I am Legion) in an opposite sense,
And not by show of hands decide between
The multiple factions which my state has seen
Or will see. Condescend to the pretence
That what speaks now is I; in its defence
Dissolve my parliament and intervene.

Thou wilt not, though we asked it, quite recall
Free will once given. Yet to this moment's choice
Give unfair weight. Hold me to this. Oh strain
A point - use legal fictions; for if all
My quarrelling selves must bear an equal voice,
Farewell, thou has created me in vain.

PILGRIM'S PROBLEM

By now I should be entering on the supreme stage
Of the whole walk, reserved for the late afternoon.
The heat was to be over now; the anxious mountains,
The airless valleys and the sun-baked rocks, behind me.

Now, or soon now, if all is well, come the majestic
Rivers of foamless charity that glide beneath
Forests of contemplation. In the grassy clearings
Humility with liquid eyes and damp, cool nose
Should come, half-tame, to eat bread from my hermit hand.
If storms arose, then in my tower of fortitude
It ought to have been in sight by this -I would take refuge;
But I expected rather a pale mackerel sky,
Feather-like, perhaps shaking from a lower cloud
Light drops of silver temperance, and clovery earth
Sending up mists of chastity, a country smell,
Till earnest stars blaze out in the established sky
Rigid with justice; the streams audible; my rest secure.

I can see nothing like all this. Was the map wrong?
Maps can be wrong. But the experienced walker knows
That the other explanation is more often true.

SONNET

Dieu a établi la prière pour communiquer à ses creatures la dignité de la causalité - PASCAL

The Bible says Sennacherib's campaign was spoiled
By angels: in Herodotus it says, by mice
Innumerably nibbling all one night they toiled
To eat his bowstrings piecemeal as warm wind eats ice.

But muscular archangels, I suggest, employed
Seven little jaws at labour on each slender string,
And by their aid, weak masters though they be, destroyed
The smiling-lipped Assyrian, cruel-bearded king.

No stranger that omnipotence should choose to need
Small helps than great - no stranger if His action lingers
Till men have prayed, and suffers their weak prayers indeed
To move as very muscles His delaying fingers,

Who, in His longanimity and love for our
Small dignities, enfeebles, for a time, His power.

THE PHOENIX

The Phoenix flew into my garden and stood perched upon
A sycamore; the feathered flame with dazzling eyes
Lit up the whole lawn like a bonfire on midsummer’s eve.
I ran out, slipping on the grass, reeling beneath
The news I bore: ‘The Sole Bird is not fabulous! Look! Look!’
The dark girl, passing in the road, heard me. Her eyes
Lit up (I saw her features flood-lit in those golden rays)
So that I called, or else the Bird called, and we went
Over the wet lawn - shadows for our train - towards the Wonder.
Then, looking round, I saw her eyes... could it be true?
Was I deceived?... oh, say I was deceived... I thought her eyes
Had all along been fixed on me, not on the Bird.

Thrice-honoured Lady, make not of your spoon your meat, for silver
(How much less, tin or wood?) contains no nourishment.
I will be all things, any thing, to you, save only that.
Break not our hearts by telling me you never saw
The Phoenix, that my trumpery silhouette, thrusting between,
Made an eclipse. For I had dreamed that I had caught
For his own beak a silver, shining fish such as he loves,
And, having little of my own to offer Him,
Was building much on this miraculous draught. If the line breaks,
Oh with what empty hands you send me back to Him!

THE NATIVITY

Among the oxen (like an ox I’m slow)
I see a glory in the stable grow
Which, with the ox’s dullness might at length
Give me an ox’s strength.

Among the asses (stubborn I as they)
I see my Saviour where I looked for hay;
So may my beastlike folly learn at least
The patience of a beast.

Among the sheep (I like a sheep have strayed)
I watch the manger where my Lord is laid;
Oh that my baa-ing nature would win thence
Some woolly innocence!

PRAYER

Master, they say that when I seem
To be in speech with you,
Since you make no replies, it’s all a dream
- One talker aping two.

They are half right, but not as they
Imagine; rather, I
Seek in myself the things I meant to say,
And lo! the wells are dry.

Then, seeing me empty, you forsake
The Listener’s rôle, and through
My dead lips breathe and into utterance wake
The thoughts I never knew.

And thus you neither need reply
Nor can; thus, while we seem
Two talking, thou art One forever, and I
No dreamer, but thy dream.

LOVE’S AS WARM AS TEARS

Love’s as warm as tears,
Love is tears:
Pressure within the brain,
Tension at the throat,
Deluge, weeks of rain,
Haystacks afloat,
Featureless seas between
Hedges, where once was green.

Love’s as fierce as fire,
Love is fire:
All sorts - infernal heat
Clinkered with greed and pride,
Lyric desire, sharp-sweet,
Laughing, even when denied,
And that empyreal flame
Whence all loves came.

Love’s as fresh as spring,
Love is spring:
Bird-song hung in the air,
Cool smells in a wood,
Whispering ‘Dare! Dare!’
To sap, to blood,
Telling ‘Ease, safety, rest,
Are good; not best.’

Love’s as hard as nails,
Love is nails:
Blunt, thick, hammered through
The medial nerves of One
Who, having made us, knew
The thing He had done,
Seeing (with all that is)
Our cross, and His.

NO BEAUTY WE COULD DESIRE

Yes, you are always everywhere. But I,
Hunting in such immeasurable forests,
Could never bring the noble Hart to bay.

The scent was too perplexing for my hounds;
Nowhere sometimes, then again everywhere.
Other scents, too, seemed to them almost the same.

Therefore I turn my back on the unapproachable
Stars and horizons and all musical sounds,
Poetry itself, and the winding stair of thought.

Leaving the forests where you are pursued in vain
- Often a mere white gleam -I turn instead
To the appointed
place where you pursue.

Not in Nature, not even in Man, but in one
Particular Man, with a date, so tall, weighing
So much, talking Aramaic, having learned a trade;

Not in all food, not in all bread and wine
(Not, I mean, as my littleness requires)
But this wine, this bread... no beauty we could desire.

STEPHEN TO LAZARUS

But was I the first martyr, who
Gave up no more than life, while you,
Already free among the dead,
Your rags stripped off, your fetters shed,
Surrendered what all other men
Irrevocably keep, and when
Your battered ship at anchor lay
Seemingly safe in the dark bay
No ripple stirs, obediently
Put out a second time to sea
Well knowing that your death (in vain
Died once) must all be died again?

FIVE SONNETS

I

You think that we who do not shout and shake
Our fists at God when youth or bravery die
Have colder blood or hearts less apt to ache
Than yours who rail. I know you do. Yet why?
You have what sorrow always longs to find,
Someone to blame, some enemy in chief;
Anger's the anaesthetic of the mind,
It does men good, it fumes away their grief.
We feel the stroke like you; so far our fate
Is equal. After that, for us begin
Half-hopeless labours, learning not to hate,
And then to want, and then (perhaps) to win
A high, unearthly comfort, angel's food,
That seems at first mockery to flesh and blood.

2

There's a repose, a safety (even a taste
Of something like revenge?) in fixed despair
Which we're forbidden. We have to rise with haste
And start to climb what seems a crazy stair.
Our consolation (for we are consoled,
So much of us, I mean, as may be left
After the dreadful process has unrolled)
For one bereavement makes us more bereft.
It asks for all we have, to the last shred;
Read Dante, who had known its best and worst
He was bereaved and he was comforted
- No one denies it, comforted - but first
Down to the frozen centre, up the vast
Mountain of pain, from world to world, he passed.

3

Of this we're certain; no one who dared knock
At heaven's door for earthly comfort found
Even a door - only smooth, endless rock,
And save the echo of his cry no sound.
It's dangerous to listen; you'll begin
To fancy that those echoes (hope can play
Pitiful tricks) are answers from within;
Far better to turn, grimly sane, away.
Heaven cannot thus, Earth cannot ever, give
The thing we want. We ask what isn't there
And by our asking water and make live
That very part of love which must despair
And die and go down cold into the earth
Before there's talk of springtime and re-birth.

4

Pitch your demands heaven-high and they'll be met.
Ask for the Morning Star and take (thrown in)
Your earthly love. Why, yes; but how to set
One's foot on the first rung, how to begin?
The silence of one voice upon our ears
Beats like the waves; the coloured morning seems
A lying brag; the face we loved appears
Fainter each night, or ghastlier, in our dreams.
'That long way round which Dante trod was meant
For mighty saints and mystics not for me,'
So Nature cries. Yet if we once assent
To Nature's voice, we shall be like the bee
That booms against the window-pane for hours
Thinking that way to reach the laden flowers.

5

'If we could speak to her,' my doctor said,
'And told her, "Not that way! All, all in vain
You weary out your wings and bruise your head,"
Might she not answer, buzzing at the pane,

“Let queens and mystics and religious bees
Talk of such inconceivables as glass;
The blunt lay worker flies at what she sees,
Look there - ahead, ahead - the flowers, the grass!”
We catch her in a handkerchief (who knows
What rage she feels, what terror, what despair?)
And shake her out - and gaily out she goes
Where quivering flowers stand thick in summer air,
To drink their hearts. But left to her own will
She would have died upon the window-sill.’

EVENSONG

Now that night is creeping
O’er our travail’d senses,
To Thy care unsleeping
We commit our sleep.
Nature for a season
Conquers our defences,
But th’ eternal Reason
Watch and ward will keep.

All the soul we render
Back to Thee completely,
Trusting Thou wilt tend her
Through the deathlike hours,
And all night remake her
To Thy likeness sweetly,
Then with dawn awake her
And give back her powers.

Slumber’s less uncertain
Brother soon will bind us
- Darker falls the curtain,
Stifling-close ’tis drawn:
But amidst that prison
Still Thy voice can find us,
And, as Thou has risen,
Raise us in Thy dawn.

THE APOLOGIST’S EVENING PRAYER

From all my lame defeats and oh! much more
From all the victories that I seemed to score;
From cleverness shot forth on Thy behalf
At which, while angels weep, the audience laugh;
From all my proofs of Thy divinity,
Thou, who wouldst give no sign, deliver me.

Thoughts are but coins. Let me not trust, instead
Of Thee, their thin-worn image of Thy head.
From all my thoughts, even from my thoughts of
Thee,
O thou fair Silence, fall, and set me free.
Lord of the narrow gate and the needle’s eye,
Take from me all my trumpery lest I die.

FOOTNOTE TO ALL PRAYERS

He whom I bow to only knows to whom I bow
When I attempt the ineffable Name, murmuring *Thou*,
And dream of Pheidian fancies and embrace in heart
Symbols (I know) which cannot be the thing Thou art.
Thus always, taken at their word, all prayers blaspheme
Worshipping with frail images a folk-lore dream,
And all men in their praying, self-deceived, address
the coinage of their own unquiet thoughts, unless
thou in magnetic mercy to Thyself divert
Our arrows, aimed unskilfully, beyond desert;
And all men are idolators, crying unheard
To a deaf idol, if Thou take them at their word.

rake not, oh Lord, our literal sense. Lord, in Thy great,
Unbroken speech our limping metaphor translate.

AFTER PRAYERS, LIE COLD

Arise my body, my small body, we have striven
Enough, and He is merciful; we are forgiven.
Arise small body, puppet-like and pale, and go,
White as the bed-clothes into bed, and cold as snow,
Undress with small, cold fingers and put out the light,
And be alone, hush’d mortal, in the sacred night,
- A meadow whipt flat with the rain, a cup
Emptied and clean, a garment washed and folded up,
Faded in colour, thinned almost to raggedness
By dirt and by the washing of that dirtiness.
Be not too quickly warm again. Lie cold; consent
To weariness’ and pardon’s watery element.
Drink up the bitter water, breathe the chilly death;
Soon enough comes the riot of our blood and breath.

PART V. A FAREWELL TO SHADOW-LANDS

EPIGRAMS AND EPITAPHS

1

Lady, to this fair breast I know but one
Fair rival; to the heart beneath it, none.

2

Have you not seen that in our days
Of any whose story, song, or art
Delights us, our sincerest praise
Means, when all’s said, ‘You break my heart’?

3

I woke from a fool’s dream, to find all spent
Except one little sixpence, worn and bent.
The same day, in the nick of time, I found
The market where my sixpence buys a pound.
Sirs, tell me was the bargain good or bad?
The price was cheap. The price was all I had.

4

Strange that a trick of light and shade could look
So like a living form that, first, I gave
The shadow mind and meaning: then, mistook
His will for mine; and, last, became his slave. —

5

If we had remembered earlier our Father’s house
Where we grew together, and that old kindness,
You would not now be dying, oh my sister, my spouse,
Pierced with my sword in the battle’s heat and the blindness.

6

Save yourself. Run and leave me. I must go back.
Though we have escaped the sentry and are past the wall,
Though returning means mockery and the whip and the rack,
Yet their sending is too strong; I must turn at their call.
Save yourself. Leave me. I must go back.

7

.. Spirit? Who names her lies.
Who cares for a bodiless ghost without any eyes
Or feet to run with at all, or ear for the call
Of the rushing rain, and the crack of the opening skies?
But I'd have a body, a bird's fleet body that flies.

8

All things (e g a camel's journey through
A needle's eye) are possible, it's true.
But picture how the camel feels, squeezed out
In one long bloody thread from tail to snout.

9

Lady, a better sculptor far
Chiselled those curves you smudge and mar,
And God did more than lipstick can
To justify your mouth to man.

10

Erected by her sorrowing brothers
In memory of Martha Clay.
Here lies one who lived for others;
Now she has peace. And so have they.

11

She was beautifully, delicately made,
So small, so unafraid,
Till the bomb came.
Bombs are the same,
Beautifully, delicately made.

12

No; the world will not break,
Time will not stop.
Do not for the dregs mistake
The first bitter drop.
When first the collar galls
Tired horses know
Stable’s not near. Still falls
The whip. There’s far to go.

13

Here lies one kind of speech
That in the unerring hour when each
Idle syllable must be
Weighed upon the balance, she,
Though puzzled and ashamed, I think,
To watch the scales of thousands sink,
Will see with her old woodland air
(That startled, yet unflinching stare,
Half elf, half squirrel, all surprise)
Here quiver and demurely rise.

14

From end to end of the bright airy ward,
From end to end of each delirious day,
The wireless gibbered, hammered, squealed and roared;
That was the pain no drugs could drive away.
I asked for an hour of silence - half an hour
Ten minutes - to die sane. It wasn’t granted.

Why should one Prig, one High-brow, have the power
To stop what all those honest fellows wanted?
Therefore, oh God, if heaven, as they tell,
Is full of music, yet in mercy save
For me one nook of silence even in hell,
And therefore, stranger, tip-toe past this grave;
And let posterity know this of me I died both for, and of, democracy.

15

(Emendation for the end of Goethe's *Faust)*
Solids whose shadow lay
Across time, here
(All subterfuge dispelled)
Show hard and clear;
Fondled impossibles
Wither outside;
Within, the Wholly Masculine
Confronts His bride.

16

My grave my pillory, by this blabbing stone
Forbidden to sleep unknown,
I feel like fire my neighbours' eyes because
All here know what I was.
Think, stranger, of that moment when I too
First, and forever, knew.

17

Here lies the whole world after one
Peculiar mode; a buried sun,
Stars and immensities of sky
And cities here discarded lie.
The prince who owned them, having gone,
Left them as things not needed on
His journey; yet with hope that he,

purged by aeonian poverty
In lenten lands, hereafter can
Resume the robes he wore as man.

The Poems



St Giles', Oxford — in later life, Lewis corresponded with Joy Davidman Gresham, an American writer of Jewish background. She was separated from her alcoholic and abusive husband, novelist William L. Gresham, and came to England with her two sons, David and Douglas. Lewis at first regarded her as an agreeable intellectual companion and personal friend and he agreed to enter into a civil marriage contract with her so that she could continue to live in England. The civil marriage took place at the register office, 42 St Giles', Oxford, on 23 April 1956.

LIST OF POEMS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
PROLOGUE
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FRENCH NOCTURNE (MONCHY-LE-PREUX)
THE SATYR
VICTORY
IRISH NOCTURNE
SPOOKS
APOLOGY
ODE FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY
NIGHT
TO SLEEP
IN PRISON
DE PROFUNDIS
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"OUR DAILY BREAD"
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TU NE QUAESIERIS
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A CONFESSION
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THE MAGICIAN AND THE DRYAD
THE TRUE NATURE OF GNOMES
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PINDAR SANG
HERMIONE IN THE HOUSE OF PAULINA
YOUNG KING COLE
THE PRODIGALITY OF FIRDAUSI
LE ROI S'AMUSE
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THE DAY WITH A WHITE MARK
DONKEYS' DELIGHT
THE SMALL MAN ORDERS HIS WEDDING
THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND
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YOUNG KING COLE

Selected Non-Fiction

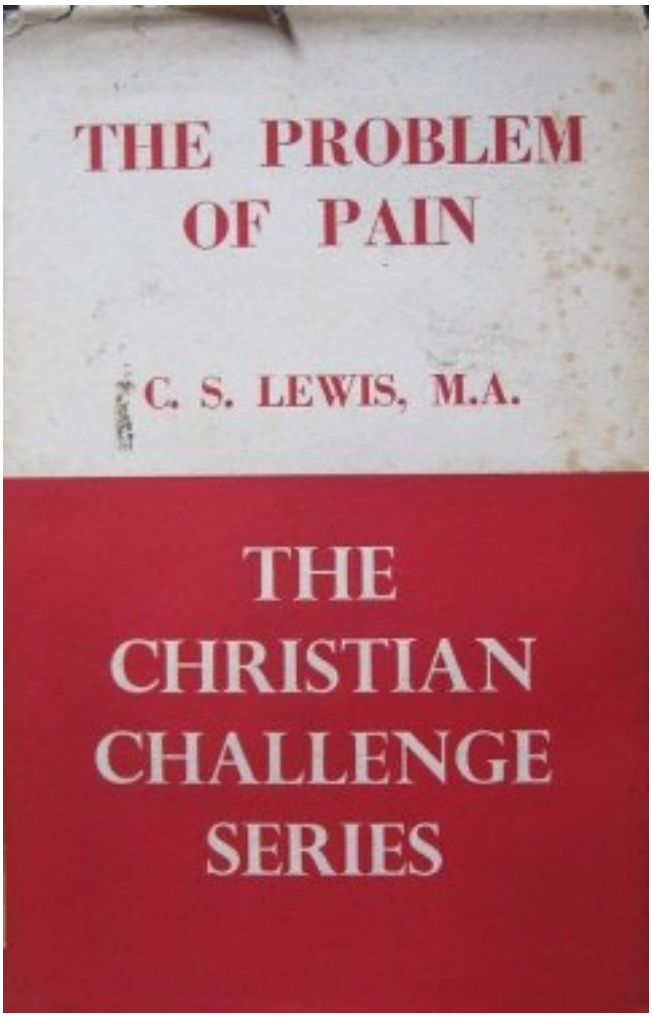


The Kilns, Lewis Close, Risinghurst, Oxford — Lewis' home from 1930 to 1963 and where he died

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN



Published in 1940, this non-fiction work concerns the problem of evil, in which Lewis argues that human pain, animal pain and hell are not sufficient reasons to reject belief in a good and powerful God. Lewis summarises the problem of evil as: “If God were good, He would make His creatures perfectly happy, and if He were almighty He would be able to do what he wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.” His partial theodicy addresses human suffering, animal suffering, the problem of hell, and reconciles these with the Christian belief in a just, loving and omnipotent God. Lewis’ philosophical approach bears some similarity to his later, more personal approach to the problem of evil in *A Grief Observed*, which serves as a reflection on his own experiences of grief and anguish at the death of his wife.



The first edition

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TO

THE INKLINGS

The Son of God suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His.

George Macdonald.

Unspoken Sermons. First Series.

PREFACE

When Mr. Ashley Sampson suggested to me the writing of this book, I asked leave to be allowed to write it anonymously, since, if I were to say what I really thought about pain, I should be forced to make statements of such apparent fortitude that they would become ridiculous if anyone knew who made them. Anonymity was rejected as inconsistent with the series; but Mr. Sampson pointed out that I could write a preface explaining that I did not live up to my own principles! This exhilarating programme I am now carrying out. Let me confess at once, in the words of good Walter Hilton, that throughout this book "I feel myself so far from true feeling of that I speak, that I can naught else but cry mercy and desire after it as I may". Yet for that very reason there is one criticism which cannot be brought against me. No one can say "He jests at scars who never felt a wound", for I have never for one moment been in a state of mind to which even the imagination of serious pain was less than intolerable. If any man is safe from the danger of under-estimating this adversary, I am that man. I must add, too, that the only purpose of the book is to solve the intellectual problem raised by suffering; for the far higher task of teaching fortitude and patience I was never fool enough to suppose myself qualified, nor have I anything to offer my readers except my conviction that when pain is to be borne, a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all.

If any real theologian reads these pages he will very easily see that they are the work of a layman and an amateur. Except in the last two chapters, parts of which are admittedly speculative, I have believed myself to be re-stating ancient and orthodox doctrines. If any parts of the book are "original", in the sense of being novel or unorthodox, they are so against my will and as a result of my ignorance. I write, of course, as a layman of the Church of England: but I have tried to assume nothing that is not professed by all baptised and communicating Christians.

As this is not a work of erudition I have taken little pains to trace ideas or quotations to their sources when they were not easily recoverable. Any theologian will see easily enough what, and how little, I have read.

C. S. LEWIS.

Magdalen College, Oxford.

1940.

I. INTRODUCTORY

I wonder at the hardihood with which such persons undertake to talk about God. In a treatise addressed to infidels they begin with a chapter proving the existence of God from the works of Nature . . . this only gives their readers grounds for thinking that the proofs of our religion are very weak. . . . It is a remarkable fact that no canonical writer has ever used Nature to prove God. Pascal. *Pensées*, IV, 242, 243.

Not many years ago when I was an atheist, if anyone had asked me, "Why do you not believe in God?" my reply would have run something like this: "Look at the universe we live in. By far the greatest part of it consists of empty space, completely dark and unimaginably cold. The bodies which move in this space are so few and so small in comparison with the space itself that even if every one of them were known to be crowded as full as it could hold with perfectly happy creatures, it would still be difficult to believe that life and happiness were more than a bye-product to the power that made the universe. As it is, however, the scientists think it likely that very few of the suns of space — perhaps none of them except our own — have any planets; and in our own system it is improbable that any planet except the Earth sustains life. And Earth herself existed without life for millions of years and may exist for millions more when life has left her. And what is it like while it lasts? It is so arranged that all the forms of it can live only by preying upon one another. In the lower forms this process entails only death, but in the higher there appears a new quality called consciousness which enables it to be attended with pain. The creatures cause pain by being born, and live by inflicting pain, and in pain they mostly die. In the most complex of all the creatures, Man, yet another quality appears, which we call reason, whereby he is enabled to foresee his own pain which henceforth is preceded with acute mental suffering, and to foresee his own death while keenly desiring permanence. It also enables men by a hundred ingenious contrivances to inflict a great deal more pain than they otherwise could have done on one another and on the irrational creatures. This power they have exploited to the full. Their history is largely a record of crime, war, disease, and terror, with just sufficient happiness interposed to give them, while it lasts, an agonised apprehension of losing it, and, when it is lost, the poignant misery of remembering. Every now and then they improve their condition a little and what we call a civilisation

appears. But all civilisations pass away and, even while they remain, inflict peculiar sufferings of their own probably sufficient to outweigh what alleviations they may have brought to the normal pains of man. That our own civilisation has done so, no one will dispute; that it will pass away like all its predecessors is surely probable. Even if it should not, what then? The race is doomed. Every race that comes into being in any part of the universe is doomed; for the universe, they tell us, is running down, and will sometime be a uniform infinity of homogeneous matter at a low temperature. All stories will come to nothing: all life will turn out in the end to have been a transitory and senseless contortion upon the idiotic face of infinite matter. If you ask me to believe that this is the work of a benevolent and omnipotent spirit, I reply that all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Either there is no spirit behind the universe, or else a spirit indifferent to good and evil, or else an evil spirit."

There was one question which I never dreamed of raising. I never noticed that the very strength and facility of the pessimists' case at once poses us a problem. If the universe is so bad, or even half so bad, how on earth did human beings ever come to attribute it to the activity of a wise and good Creator? Men are fools, perhaps; but hardly so foolish as that. The direct inference from black to white, from evil flower to virtuous root, from senseless work to a workman infinitely wise, staggers belief. The spectacle of the universe as revealed by experience can never have been the ground of religion: it must always have been something in spite of which religion, acquired from a different source, was held.

It would be an error to reply that our ancestors were ignorant and therefore entertained pleasing illusions about nature which the progress of science has since dispelled. For centuries, during which all men believed, the nightmare size and emptiness of the universe was already known. You will read in some books that the men of the Middle Ages thought the Earth flat and the stars near, but that is a lie. Ptolemy had told them that the Earth was a mathematical point without size in relation to the distance of the fixed stars — a distance which one mediæval popular text estimates as a hundred and seventeen million miles. And in times yet earlier, even from the beginnings, men must have got the same sense of hostile immensity from a more obvious source. To prehistoric man the neighbouring forest must have been infinite enough, and the utterly alien and infest which we have to fetch from the thought of cosmic rays and cooling suns, came snuffing and

howling nightly to his very doors. Certainly at all periods the pain and waste of human life was equally obvious. Our own religion begins among the Jews, a people squeezed between great warlike empires, continually defeated and led captive, familiar as Poland or Armenia with the tragic story of the conquered. It is mere nonsense to put pain among the discoveries of science. Lay down this book and reflect for five minutes on the fact that all the great religions were first preached, and long practised, in a world without chloroform.

At all times, then, an inference from the course of events in this world to the goodness and wisdom of the Creator would have been equally preposterous; and it was never made. Religion has a different origin. In what follows it must be understood that I am not *primarily* arguing the truth of Christianity but describing its origin — a task, in my view, necessary if we are to put the problem of pain in its right setting.

In all developed religion we find three strands or elements, and in Christianity one more. The first of these is what Professor Otto calls the experience of the *Numinous*. Those who have not met this term may be introduced to it by the following device. Suppose you were told there was a tiger in the next room: you would know that you were in danger and would probably feel fear. But if you were told "There is a ghost in the next room", and believed it, you would feel, indeed, what is often called fear, but of a different kind. It would not be based on the knowledge of danger, for no one is primarily afraid of what a ghost may do to him, but of the mere fact that it is a ghost. It is "uncanny" rather than dangerous, and the special kind of fear it excites may be called Dread. With the Uncanny one has reached the fringes of the Numinous. Now suppose that you were told simply "There is a mighty spirit in the room", and believed it. Your feelings would then be even less like the mere fear of danger: but the disturbance would be profound. You would feel wonder and a certain shrinking — a sense of inadequacy to cope with such a visitant and of prostration before it — an emotion which might be expressed in Shakespeare's words "Under it my genius is rebuked". This feeling may be described as awe, and the object which excites it as the *Numinous*.

Now nothing is more certain than that man, from a very early period, began to believe that the universe was haunted by spirits. Professor Otto perhaps assumes too easily that from the very first such spirits were regarded with numinous awe. This is impossible to prove for the very good

reason that utterances expressing awe of the Numinous and utterances expressing mere fear of danger may use identical language — as we can still say that we are “afraid” of a ghost or “afraid” of a rise in prices. It is therefore theoretically possible that there was a time when men regarded these spirits simply as dangerous and felt towards them just as they felt towards tigers. What is certain is that now, at any rate, the numinous experience exists and that if we start from ourselves we can trace it a long way back.

A modern example may be found (if we are not too proud to seek it there) in *The Wind in the Willows* where Rat and Mole approach Pan on the island.

“‘Rat,’ he found breath to whisper, shaking, ‘Are you afraid?’ ‘Afraid?’ murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. ‘Afraid? of Him? O, never, never. And yet — and yet — O Mole, I am afraid.’”

Going back about a century we find copious examples in Wordsworth — perhaps the finest being that passage in the first book of the *Prelude* where he describes his experience while rowing on the lake in the stolen boat. Going back further we get a very pure and strong example in Malory, when Galahad “began to tremble right hard when the deadly (= mortal) flesh began to behold the spiritual things”. At the beginning of our era it finds expression in the Apocalypse where the writer fell at the feet of the risen Christ “as one dead”. In Pagan literature we find Ovid’s picture of the dark grove on the Aventine of which you would say at a glance *numen inest* — the place is haunted, or there is a Presence here; and Virgil gives us the palace of Latinus “awful (*horrendum*) with woods and sanctity (*religione*) of elder days”. A Greek fragment attributed, but improbably, to Æschylus, tells us of earth, sea, and mountain shaking beneath the “dread eye of their Master”. And far further back Ezekiel tells us of the “rings” in his Theophany that “they were so high that they were dreadful”: and Jacob, rising from sleep, says “How dreadful is this place!”

We do not know how far back in human history this feeling goes. The earliest men almost certainly believed in things which would excite the feeling in us if *we* believed in them, and it seems therefore probable that numinous awe is as old as humanity itself. But our main concern is not with its dates. The important thing is that somehow or other it has come into existence, and is widespread, and does not disappear from the mind with the growth of knowledge and civilisation.

Now this awe is not the result of an inference from the visible universe. There is no possibility of arguing from mere danger to the uncanny, still less to the fully Numinous. You may say that it seems to you very natural that early man, being surrounded by real dangers, and therefore frightened, should invent the uncanny and the Numinous. In a sense it is, but let us understand what we mean. You feel it to be natural because, sharing human nature with your remote ancestors, you can imagine yourself reacting to perilous solitudes in the same way; and this reaction is indeed "natural" in the sense of being in accord with human nature. But it is not in the least "natural" in the sense that the idea of the uncanny or the Numinous is already contained in the idea of the dangerous, or that any perception of danger or any dislike of the wounds and death which it may entail could give the slightest conception of ghostly dread or numinous awe to an intelligence which did not already understand them. When man passes from physical fear to dread and awe, he makes a sheer jump, and apprehends something which could never be *given*, as danger is, by the physical facts and logical deductions from them. Most attempts to explain the Numinous presuppose the thing to be explained — as when anthropologists derive it from fear of the dead, without explaining why dead men (assuredly the least dangerous kind of men) should have attracted this peculiar feeling. Against all such attempts we must insist that dread and awe are in a different dimension from fear. They are in the nature of an interpretation man gives to the universe, or an impression he gets from it; and just as no enumeration of the physical qualities of a beautiful object could ever include its beauty, or give the faintest hint of what we mean by beauty to a creature without æsthetic experience, so no factual description of any human environment could include the uncanny and the Numinous or even hint at them. There seem, in fact, to be only two views we can hold about awe. Either it is a mere twist in the human mind, corresponding to nothing objective and serving no biological function, yet showing no tendency to disappear from that mind at its fullest development in poet, philosopher, or saint: or else it is a direct experience of the really supernatural, to which the name Revelation might properly be given.

The Numinous is not the same as the morally good, and a man overwhelmed with awe is likely, if left to himself, to think the numinous object "beyond good and evil." This brings us to the second strand or element in religion. All the human beings that history has heard of

acknowledge some kind of morality; that is, they feel towards certain proposed actions the experiences expressed by the words “I ought” or “I ought not”. These experiences resemble awe in one respect, namely that they cannot be logically deduced from the environment and physical experiences of the man who undergoes them. You can shuffle “I want” and “I am forced” and “I shall be well advised” and “I dare not” as long as you please without getting out of them the slightest hint of “ought” and “ought not”. And, once again, attempts to resolve the moral experience into something else always presuppose the very thing they are trying to explain — as when a famous psycho-analyst deduces it from prehistoric parricide. If the parricide produced a sense of guilt, that was because men felt that they ought not to have committed it: if they did not so feel, it could produce no sense of guilt. Morality, like numinous awe, is a jump; in it, man goes beyond anything that can be “given” in the facts of experience. And it has one characteristic too remarkable to be ignored. The moralities accepted among men may differ — though not, at bottom, so widely as is often claimed — but they all agree in prescribing a behaviour which their adherents fail to practise. All men alike stand condemned, not by alien codes of ethics, but by their own, and all men therefore are conscious of guilt. The second element in religion is the consciousness not merely of a moral law, but of a moral law at once approved and disobeyed. This consciousness is neither a logical, nor an illogical, inference from the facts of experience; if we did not bring it to our experience we could not find it there. It is either inexplicable illusion, or else revelation.

The moral experience and the numinous experience are so far from being the same that they may exist for quite long periods without establishing a mutual contact. In many forms of Paganism the worship of the gods and the ethical discussions of the philosophers have very little to do with each other. The third stage in religious development arises when men identify them — when the Numinous Power to which they feel awe is made the guardian of the morality to which they feel obligation. Once again, this may seem to you very “natural”. What can be more natural than for a savage haunted at once by awe and by guilt to think that the power which awes him is also the authority which condemns his guilt? And it is, indeed, natural to humanity. But it is not in the least obvious. The actual behaviour of that universe which the Numinous haunts bears no resemblance to the behaviour which morality demands of us. The one seems wasteful, ruthless, and unjust; the

other enjoins upon us the opposite qualities. Nor can the identification of the two be explained as a wish-fulfilment, for it fulfils no one's wishes. We desire nothing less than to see that Law whose naked authority is already unsupportable armed with the incalculable claims of the Numinous. Of all the jumps that humanity takes in its religious history this is certainty the most surprising. It is not unnatural that many sections of the human race refused it; non-moral religion, and non-religious morality, existed and still exist. Perhaps only a single people, as a people, took the new step with perfect decision — I mean the Jews: but great individuals in all times and places have taken it also, and only those who take it are safe from the obscenities and barbarities of unmoralised worship or the cold, sad self-righteousness of sheer moralism. Judged by its fruits, this step is a step towards increased health. And though logic does not compel us to take it, it is very hard to resist — even on Paganism and Pantheism morality is always breaking in, and even Stoicism finds itself willy-nilly bowing the knee to God. Once more, it may be madness — a madness congenital to man and oddly fortunate in its results — or it may be revelation. And if revelation, then it is most really and truly in Abraham that all peoples shall be blessed, for it was the Jews who fully and unambiguously identified the awful Presence haunting black mountain-tops and thunderclouds with "the *righteous* Lord" who "loveth righteousness".

The fourth strand or element is a historical event. There was a man born among these Jews who claimed to be, or to be the son of, or to be "one with", the Something which is at once the awful haunter of nature and the giver of the moral law. The claim is so shocking — a paradox, and even a horror, which we may easily be lulled into taking too lightly — that only two views of this man are possible. Either he was a raving lunatic of an unusually abominable type, or else He was, and is, precisely what He said. There is no middle way. If the records make the first hypothesis unacceptable, you must submit to the second. And if you do that, all else that is claimed by Christians becomes credible — that this Man, having been killed, was yet alive, and that His death, in some manner incomprehensible to human thought, has effected a real change in our relations to the "awful" and "righteous" Lord, and a change in our favour.

To ask whether the universe as we see it looks more like the work of a wise and good Creator or the work of chance, indifference, or malevolence, is to omit from the outset all the relevant factors in the religious problem.

Christianity is not the conclusion of a philosophical debate on the origins of the universe: it is a catastrophic historical event following on the long spiritual preparation of humanity which I have described. It is not a system into which we have to fit the awkward fact of pain: it is itself one of the awkward facts which have to be fitted into any system we make. In a sense, it creates, rather than solves, the problem of pain, for pain would be no problem unless, side by side with our daily experience of this painful world, we had received what we think a good assurance that ultimate reality is righteous and loving.

Why this assurance seems to me good, I have more or less indicated. It does not amount to logical compulsion. At every stage of religious development man may rebel, if not without violence to his own nature, yet without absurdity. He can close his spiritual eyes against the Numinous, if he is prepared to part company with half the great poets and prophets of his race, with his own childhood, with the richness and depth of uninhibited experience. He can regard the moral law as an illusion, and so cut himself off from the common ground of humanity. He can refuse to identify the Numinous with the righteous, and remain a barbarian, worshipping sexuality, or the dead, or the life-force, or the future. But the cost is heavy. And when we come to the last step of all, the historical Incarnation, the assurance is strongest of all. The story is strangely like many myths which have haunted religion from the first, and yet it is not like them. It is not transparent to the reason: we could not have invented it ourselves. It has not the suspicious *a priori* lucidity of Pantheism or of Newtonian physics. It has the seemingly arbitrary and idiosyncratic character which modern science is slowly teaching us to put up with in this wilful universe, where energy is made up in little parcels of a quantity no one could predict, where speed is not unlimited, where irreversible entropy gives time a real direction and the cosmos, no longer static or cyclic, moves like a drama from a real beginning to a real end. If any message from the core of reality ever were to reach us, we should expect to find in it just that unexpectedness, that wilful, dramatic anfractuosity which we find in the Christian faith. It has the master touch — the rough, male taste of reality, not made by us, or, indeed, for us, but hitting us in the face.

If, on such grounds, or on better ones, we follow the course on which humanity has been led, and become Christians, we then have the “problem” of pain.

II. DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE

Nothing which implies contradiction falls under the omnipotence of God. Thomas Aquinas. *Summ. Theol.*, I[a] Q XXV, Art. 4.

"If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both." This is the problem of pain, in its simplest form. The possibility of answering it depends on showing that the terms "good" and "almighty", and perhaps also the term "happy" are equivocal: for it must be admitted from the outset that if the popular meanings attached to these words are the best, or the only possible, meanings, then the argument is unanswerable. In this chapter I shall make some comments on the idea of Omnipotence, and, in the following, some on the idea of Goodness.

Omnipotence means "power to do all, or everything". And we are told in Scripture that "with God all things are possible". It is common enough, in argument with an unbeliever, to be told that God, if He existed and were good, would do this or that; and then, if we point out that the proposed action is impossible, to be met with the retort, "But I thought God was supposed to be able to do anything". This raises the whole question of impossibility.

In ordinary usage the word *impossible* generally implies a suppressed clause beginning with the word *unless*. Thus it is impossible for me to see the street from where I sit writing at this moment; that is, it is impossible to see the street *unless* I go up to the top floor where I shall be high enough to overlook the intervening building. If I had broken my leg I should say "But it is impossible to go up to the top floor" — meaning, however, that it is impossible *unless* some friends turn up who will carry me. Now let us advance to a different plane of impossibility, by saying "It is, at any rate, impossible to see the street *so long as* I remain where I am and the intervening building remains where it is". Someone might add "unless the nature of space, or of vision, were different from what it is". I do not know what the best philosophers and scientists would say to this, but I should have to reply "I don't know whether space and vision *could possibly* have been of such a nature as you suggest". Now it is clear that the words *could possibly* here refer to some absolute kind of possibility or impossibility

which is different from the relative possibilities and impossibilities we have been considering. I cannot say whether seeing round corners is, in this new sense, possible or not, because I do not know whether it is self-contradictory or not. But I know very well that if it is self-contradictory it is absolutely impossible. The absolutely impossible may also be called the intrinsically impossible because it carries its impossibility within itself, instead of borrowing it from other impossibilities which in their turn depend upon others. It has no *unless* clause attached to it. It is impossible under all conditions and in all worlds and for all agents.

"All agents" here includes God Himself. His Omnipotence means power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do the intrinsically impossible. You may attribute miracles to Him, but not nonsense. This is no limit to His power. If you choose to say "God can give a creature free-will and at the same time withhold free-will from it," you have not succeeded in saying *anything* about God: meaningless combinations of words do not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words "God can". It remains true that all *things* are possible with God: the intrinsic impossibilities are not things but nonentities. It is no more possible for God than for the weakest of His creatures to carry out both of two mutually exclusive alternatives; not because His power meets an obstacle, but because nonsense remains nonsense even when we talk it about God.

It should, however, be remembered that human reasoners often make mistakes, either by arguing from false data or by inadvertence in the argument itself. We may thus come to think things possible which are really impossible, and *vice versâ*. We ought, therefore, to use great caution in defining those intrinsic impossibilities which even Omnipotence cannot perform. What follows is to be regarded less as an assertion of what they are than a sample of what they might be like.

The inexorable "laws of Nature" which operate in defiance of human suffering or desert, which are not turned aside by prayer, seem, at first sight to furnish a strong argument against the goodness and power of God. I am going to submit that not even Omnipotence could create a society of free souls without at the same time creating a relatively independent and "inexorable" Nature.

There is no reason to suppose that self-consciousness, the recognition of a creature by itself as a "self", can exist except in contrast with an "other", a

something which is not the self. It is against an environment, and preferably a social environment, an environment of other selves, that the awareness of Myself stands out. This would raise a difficulty about the consciousness of God if we were mere theists: being Christians, we learn from the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity that something analogous to "society" exists within the Divine being from all eternity — that God is Love, not merely in the sense of being the Platonic form of love, but because, within Him, the concrete reciprocities of love exist before all worlds and are thence derived to the creatures.

Again, the freedom of a creature must mean freedom to choose: and choice implies the existence of things to choose between. A creature with no environment would have no choices to make: so that freedom, like self-consciousness (if they are not, indeed, the same thing) again demands the presence to the self of something other than the self.

The minimum condition of self-consciousness and freedom, then, would be that the creature should apprehend God and, therefore, itself as distinct from God. It is possible that such creatures exist, aware of God and themselves, but of no fellow-creatures. If so, their freedom is simply that of making a single naked choice — of loving God more than the self or the self more than God. But a life so reduced to essentials is not imaginable to us. As soon as we attempt to introduce the mutual knowledge of fellow-creatures we run up against the necessity of "Nature".

People often talk as if nothing were easier than for two naked minds to "meet" or become aware of each other. But I see no possibility of their doing so except in a common medium which forms their "external world" or environment. Even our vague attempt to imagine such a meeting between disembodied spirits usually slips in surreptitiously the idea of, at least, a common space and common time, to give the *co-* in *co-existence* a meaning: and space and time are already an environment. But more than this is required. If your thoughts and passions were directly present to me, like my own, without any mark of externality or otherness, how should I distinguish them from mine? And what thoughts or passions could we begin to have without objects to think and feel about? Nay, could I even begin to have the conception of "external" and "other" unless I had experience of an "external world"? You may reply, as a Christian, that God (and Satan) do, in fact, affect my consciousness in this direct way without signs of "externality". Yes: and the result is that most people remain ignorant of the

existence of both. We may therefore suppose that if human souls affected one another directly and immaterially, it would be a rare triumph of faith and insight for any one of them to believe in the existence of the others. It would be harder for me to know my neighbour under such conditions than it now is for me to know God: for in recognising the impact of God upon me I am now helped by things that reach me through the external world, such as the tradition of the Church, Holy Scripture, and the conversation of religious friends. What we need for human society is exactly what we have — a neutral something, neither you nor I, which we can both manipulate so as to make signs to each other. I can talk to you because we can both set up sound-waves in the common air between us. Matter, which keeps souls apart, also brings them together. It enables each of us to have an "outside" as well as an "inside", so that what are acts of will and thought for you are noises and glances for me; you are enabled not only to *be*, but to *appear*: and hence I have the pleasure of making your acquaintance.

Society, then, implies a common field or "world" in which its members meet. If there is an angelic society, as Christians have usually believed, then the angels also must have such a world or field; something which is to them as "matter" (in the modern, not the scholastic, sense) is to us.

But if matter is to serve as a neutral field it must have a fixed nature of its own. If a "world" or material system had only a single inhabitant it might conform at every moment to his wishes— "trees for his sake would crowd into a shade". But if you were introduced into a world which thus varied at my every whim, you would be quite unable to act in it and would thus lose the exercise of your free will. Nor is it clear that you could make your presence known to me — all the matter by which you attempted to make signs to me being already in my control and therefore not capable of being manipulated by you.

Again, if matter has a fixed nature and obeys constant laws, not all states of matter will be equally agreeable to the wishes of a given soul, nor all equally beneficial for that particular aggregate of matter which he calls his body. If fire comforts that body at a certain distance, it will destroy it when the distance is reduced. Hence, even in a perfect world, the necessity for those danger signals which the pain-fibres in our nerves are apparently designed to transmit. Does this mean an inevitable element of evil (in the form of pain) in any possible world? I think not: for while it may be true that the least sin is an incalculable evil, the evil of pain depends on degree,

and pains below a certain intensity are not feared or resented at all. No one minds the process “warm — beautifully hot — too hot — it stings” which warns him to withdraw his hand from exposure to the fire: and, if I may trust my own feeling, a slight aching in the legs as we climb into bed after a good day’s walking is, in fact, pleasurable.

Yet again, if the fixed nature of matter prevents it from being always, and in all its dispositions, equally agreeable even to a single soul, much less is it possible for the matter of the universe at any moment to be distributed so that it is equally convenient and pleasurable to each member of a society. If a man travelling in one direction is having a journey down hill, a man going in the opposite direction must be going up hill. If even a pebble lies where I want it to lie, it cannot, except by a coincidence, be where you want it to lie. And this is very far from being an evil: on the contrary, it furnishes occasion for all those acts of courtesy, respect, and unselfishness by which love and good humour and modesty express themselves. But it certainly leaves the way open to a great evil, that of competition and hostility. And if souls are free, they cannot be prevented from dealing with the problem by competition instead of by courtesy. And once they have advanced to actual hostility, they can then exploit the fixed nature of matter to hurt one another. The permanent nature of wood which enables us to use it as a beam also enables us to use it for hitting our neighbour on the head. The permanent nature of matter in general means that when human beings fight, the victory ordinarily goes to those who have superior weapons, skill, and numbers, even if their cause is unjust.

We can, perhaps, conceive of a world in which God corrected the results of this abuse of free-will by His creatures at every moment: so that a wooden beam became soft as grass when it was used as a weapon, and the air refused to obey me if I attempted to set up in it the sound waves that carry lies or insults. But such a world would be one in which wrong actions were impossible, and in which, therefore, freedom of the will would be void; nay, if the principle were carried out to its logical conclusion, evil thoughts would be impossible, for the cerebral matter which we use in thinking would refuse its task when we attempted to frame them. All matter in the neighbourhood of a wicked man would be liable to undergo unpredictable alterations. That God can and does, on occasions, modify the behaviour of matter and produce what we call miracles, is part of the Christian faith; but the very conception of a common, and therefore, stable,

world, demands that these occasions should be extremely rare. In a game of chess you can make certain arbitrary concessions to your opponent, which stand to the ordinary rules of the game as miracles stand to the laws of nature. You can deprive yourself of a castle, or allow the other man sometimes to take back a move made inadvertently. But if you conceded everything that at any moment happened to suit him — if all his moves were revocable and if all your pieces disappeared whenever their position on the board was not to his liking — then you could not have a game at all. So it is with the life of souls in a world: fixed laws, consequences unfolding by causal necessity, the whole natural order, are at once the limits within which their common life is confined and also the sole condition under which any such life is possible. Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free-wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself.

As I said before, this account of the intrinsic necessities of a world is meant merely as a specimen of what they might be. What they really are, only Omniscience has the data and the wisdom to see: but they are not likely to be *less* complicated than I have suggested. Needless to say, "complicated" here refers solely to the human understanding of them; we are not to think of God arguing, as we do, from an end (co-existence of free spirits) to the conditions involved in it, but rather of a single, utterly self-consistent act of creation which to us appears, at first sight, as the creation of many independent things, and then, as the creation of things mutually necessary. Even we can rise a little beyond the conception of mutual necessities as I have outlined it — can reduce matter as that which separates souls and matter as that which brings them together under the single concept of Plurality, whereof "separation" and "togetherness" are only two aspects. With every advance in our thought the unity of the creative act, and the impossibility of tinkering with the creation as though this or that element of it could have been removed, will become more apparent. Perhaps this is not the "best of all possible" universes, but the only possible one. Possible worlds can mean only "worlds that God could have made, but didn't". The idea of that which God "could have" done involves a too anthropomorphic conception of God's freedom. Whatever human freedom means, Divine freedom cannot mean indeterminacy between alternatives and choice of one of them. Perfect goodness can never debate about the end to be attained, and perfect wisdom cannot debate about the means most

suited to achieve it. The freedom of God consists in the fact that no cause other than Himself produces His acts and no external obstacle impedes them — that His own goodness is the root from which they all grow and His own omnipotence the air in which they all flower.

And that brings us to our next subject — the Divine goodness. Nothing so far has been said of this, and no answer attempted to the objection that if the universe must, from the outset, admit the possibility of suffering, then absolute goodness would have left the universe uncreated. And I must warn the reader that I shall not attempt to prove that to create was better than not to create: I am aware of no human scales in which such a portentous question can be weighed. Some comparison between one state of being and another can be made, but the attempt to compare being and not being ends in mere words. “It would be better for me not to exist” — in what sense “for me”? How should I, if I did not exist, profit by not existing? Our design is a less formidable one: it is only to discover how, perceiving a suffering world, and being assured, on quite different grounds, that God is good, we are to conceive that goodness and that suffering without contradiction.

III. DIVINE GOODNESS

Love can forbear, and Love can forgive . . . but Love can never be reconciled to an unlovely object. . . . He can never therefore be reconciled to your sin, because sin itself is incapable of being altered; but He may be reconciled to your person, because that may be restored. Traherne. *Centuries of Meditation*, II, 30.

Any consideration of the goodness of God at once threatens us with the following dilemma.

On the one hand, if God is wiser than we His judgement must differ from ours on many things, and not least on good and evil. What seems to us good may therefore not be good in His eyes, and what seems to us evil may not be evil.

On the other hand, if God's moral judgement differs from ours so that our "black" may be His "white", we can mean nothing by calling Him good; for to say "God is good," while asserting that His goodness is wholly other than ours, is really only to say "God is we know not what". And an utterly unknown quality in God cannot give us moral grounds for loving or obeying Him. If He is not (in our sense) "good" we shall obey, if at all, only through fear — and should be equally ready to obey an omnipotent Fiend. The doctrine of Total Depravity — when the consequence is drawn that, since we are totally depraved, our idea of good is worth simply nothing — may thus turn Christianity into a form of devil-worship.

The escape from this dilemma depends on observing what happens, in human relations, when the man of inferior moral standards enters the society of those who are better and wiser than he and gradually learns to accept *their* standards — a process which, as it happens, I can describe fairly accurately, since I have undergone it. When I came first to the University I was as nearly without a moral conscience as a boy could be. Some faint distaste for cruelty and for meanness about money was my utmost reach — of chastity, truthfulness, and self sacrifice I thought as a baboon thinks of classical music. By the mercy of God I fell among a set of young men (none of them, by the way, Christians) who were sufficiently close to me in intellect and imagination to secure immediate intimacy, but who knew, and tried to obey, the moral law. Thus their judgement of good

and evil was very different from mine. Now what happens in such a case is not in the least like being asked to treat as “white” what was hitherto called black. The new moral judgements never enter the mind as mere reversals (though they do reverse them) of previous judgements but “as lords that are certainly expected”. You can have no doubt in which direction you are moving: they are more like good than the little shreds of good you already had, but are, in a sense, continuous with them. But the great test is that the recognition of the new standards is accompanied with the sense of shame and guilt: one is conscious of having blundered into society that one is unfit for. It is in the light of such experiences that we must consider the goodness of God. Beyond all doubt, His idea of “goodness” differs from ours; but you need have no fear that, as you approach it, you will be asked simply to reverse your moral standards. When the relevant difference between the Divine ethics and your own appears to you, you will not, in fact, be in any doubt that the change demanded of you is in the direction you already call “better”. The Divine “goodness” differs from ours, but it is not sheerly different: it differs from ours not as white from black but as a perfect circle from a child’s first attempt to draw a wheel. But when the child has learned to draw, it will know that the circle it then makes is what it was trying to make from the very beginning.

This doctrine is presupposed in Scripture. Christ calls men to repent — a call which would be meaningless if God’s standard were sheerly different from that which they already knew and failed to practise. He appeals to our existing moral judgement— “Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” God in the Old Testament expostulates with men on the basis of their own conceptions of gratitude, fidelity, and fair play: and puts Himself, as it were, at the bar before His own creatures— “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?”

After these preliminaries it will, I hope, be safe to suggest that some conceptions of the Divine goodness which tend to dominate our thought, though seldom expressed in so many words, are open to criticism.

By the goodness of God we mean nowadays almost exclusively His lovingness; and in this we may be right. And by Love, in this context, most of us mean kindness — the desire to see others than the self happy; not happy in this way or in that, but just happy. What would really satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, “What does it matter so long as they are contented?” We want, in fact, not so much

a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven — a senile benevolence who, as they say, “liked to see young people enjoying themselves” and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, “a good time was had by all”. Not many people, I admit, would formulate a theology in precisely those terms: but a conception not very different lurks at the back of many minds. I do not claim to be an exception: I should very much like to live in a universe which was governed on such lines. But since it is abundantly clear that I don’t, and since I have reason to believe, nevertheless, that God is Love, I conclude that my conception of love needs correction.

I might, indeed, have learned, even from the poets, that Love is something more stem and splendid than mere kindness: that even the love between the sexes is, as in Dante, “a lord of terrible aspect”. There is kindness in Love: but Love and kindness are not coterminous, and when kindness (in the sense given above) is separated from the other elements of Love, it involves a certain fundamental indifference to its object, and even something like contempt of it. Kindness consents very readily to the removal of its object — we have all met people whose kindness to animals is constantly leading them to kill animals lest they should suffer. Kindness, merely as such, cares not whether its object becomes good or bad, provided only that it escapes suffering. As Scripture points out, it is bastards who are spoiled: the legitimate sons, who are to carry on the family tradition, are punished. It is for people whom we care nothing about that we demand happiness on any terms: with our friends, our lovers, our children, we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptible and estranging modes. If God is Love, He is, by definition, something more than mere kindness. And it appears, from all the records, that though He has often rebuked us and condemned us, He has never regarded us with contempt. He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense.

The relation between Creator and creature is, of course, unique, and cannot be paralleled by any relations between one creature and another. God is both further from us, and nearer to us, than any other being. He is further from us because the sheer difference between that which has Its principle of being in Itself and that to which being is communicated, is one compared with which the difference between an archangel and a worm is quite insignificant. He makes, we are made: He is original, we derivative. But at

the same time, and for the same reason, the intimacy between God and even the meanest creature is closer than any that creatures can attain with one another. Our life is, at every moment, supplied by Him: our tiny, miraculous power of free will only operates on bodies which His continual energy keeps in existence — our very power to think is His power communicated to us. Such a unique relation can be apprehended only by analogies: from the various types of love known among creatures we reach an inadequate, but useful, conception of God's love for man.

The lowest type, and one which is "love" at all only by an extension of the word, is that which an artist feels for an artefact. God's relation to man is pictured thus in Jeremiah's vision of the potter and the clay, or when St. Peter speaks of the whole Church as a building on which God is at work, and of the individual members as stones. The limitation of such an analogy is, of course, that in the symbol the patient is not sentient, and that certain questions of justice and mercy which arise when the "stones" are really "living" therefore remain unrepresented. But it is an important analogy so far as it goes. We are, not metaphorically but in very truth, a Divine work of art, something that God is making, and therefore something with which He will not be satisfied until it has a certain character. Here again we come up against what I have called the "intolerable compliment". Over a sketch made idly to amuse a child, an artist may not take much trouble: he may be content to let it go even though it is not exactly as he meant it to be. But over the great picture of his life — the work which he loves, though in a different fashion, as intensely as a man loves a woman or a mother a child — he will take endless trouble — and would, doubtless, thereby *give* endless trouble to the picture if it were sentient. One can imagine a sentient picture, after being rubbed and scraped and re-commenced for the tenth time, wishing that it were only a thumb-nail sketch whose making was over in a minute. In the same way, it is natural for us to wish that God had designed for us a less glorious and less arduous destiny; but then we are wishing not for more love but for less.

Another type is the love of a man for a beast — a relation constantly used in Scripture to symbolise the relation between God and men; "we are his people and the sheep of his pasture". This is in some ways a better analogy than the preceding, because the inferior party is sentient, and yet unmistakably inferior: but it is less good in so far as man has not made the beast and does not fully understand it. Its great merit lies in the fact that the

association of (say) man and dog is primarily for the man's sake: he tames the dog primarily that he may love it, not that it may love him, and that it may serve him, not that he may serve it. Yet at the same time, the dog's interests are not sacrificed to the man's. The one end (that he may love it) cannot be fully attained unless it also, in its fashion, loves him, nor can it serve him unless he, in a different fashion, serves it. Now just because the dog is by human standards one of the "best" of irrational creatures, and a proper object for a man to love — of course, with that degree and kind of love which is proper to such an object, and not with silly anthropomorphic exaggerations — man interferes with the dog and makes it more lovable than it was in mere nature. In its state of nature it has a smell, and habits, which frustrate man's love: he washes it, house-trains it, teaches it not to steal, and is so enabled to love it completely. To the puppy the whole proceeding would seem, if it were a theologian, to cast grave doubts on the "goodness" of man: but the full-grown and full-trained dog, larger, healthier, and longer-lived than the wild dog, and admitted, as it were by Grace, to a whole world of affections, loyalties, interests, and comforts entirely beyond its animal destiny, would have no such doubts. It will be noted that the man (I am speaking throughout of the good man) takes all these pains with the dog, and gives all these pains to the dog, only because it is an animal high in the scale — because it is so nearly lovable that it is worth his while to make it fully lovable. He does not house-train the earwig or give baths to centipedes. We may wish, indeed, that we were of so little account to God that He left us alone to follow our natural impulses — that He would give over trying to train us into something so unlike our natural selves: but once again, we are asking not for more Love, but for less.

A nobler analogy, sanctioned by the constant tenor of Our Lord's teaching, is that between God's love for man and a father's love for a son. Whenever this is used, however (that is, whenever we pray the Lord's Prayer), it must be remembered that the Saviour used it in a time and place where paternal authority stood much higher than it does in modern England. A father half apologetic for having brought his son into the world, afraid to restrain him lest he should create inhibitions or even to instruct him lest he should interfere with his independence of mind, is a most misleading symbol of the Divine Fatherhood. I am not here discussing whether the authority of fathers, in its ancient extent, was a good thing or a bad thing: I am only explaining what the conception of Fatherhood would have meant to

Our Lord's first hearers, and indeed to their successors for many centuries. And it will become even plainer if we consider how Our Lord (though, in our belief, one with His Father and co-eternal with Him as no earthly son is with an earthly father) regards His own Sonship, surrendering His will wholly to the paternal will and not even allowing Himself to be called "good" because Good is the name of the Father. Love between father and son, in this symbol, means essentially authoritative love on the one side, and obedient love on the other. The father uses his authority to make the son into the sort of human being he, rightly, and in his superior wisdom, wants him to be. Even in our own days, though a man might say, he could mean nothing by saying, "I love my son but don't care how great a blackguard he is provided he has a good time."

Finally we come to an analogy full of danger, and of much more limited application, which happens, nevertheless, to be the most useful for our special purpose at the moment — I mean, the analogy between God's love for man and a man's love for a woman. It is freely used in Scripture. Israel is a false wife, but Her heavenly Husband cannot forget the happier days; "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness." Israel is the pauper bride, the waif whom Her lover found abandoned by the wayside, and clothed and adorned and made lovely and yet she betrayed Him. "Adulteresses" St. James calls us, because we turn aside to the "friendship of the world", while God "Jealously longs for the spirit He has implanted in us". The Church is the Lord's bride whom He so loves that in her no spot or wrinkle is endurable. For the truth which this analogy serves to emphasise is that Love, in its own nature, demands the perfecting of the beloved; that the mere "kindness" which tolerates anything except suffering in its object is, in that respect, at the opposite pole from Love. When we fall in love with a woman, do we cease to care whether she is clean or dirty, fair or foul? Do we not rather then first begin to care? Does any woman regard it as a sign of love in a man that he neither knows nor cares how she is looking? Love may, indeed, love the beloved when her beauty is lost: but not because it is lost. Love may forgive all infirmities and love still in spite of them: but Love cannot cease to will their removal. Love is more sensitive than hatred itself to every blemish in the beloved; his "feeling is more soft and sensible than are the tender horns of cockled snails". Of all powers he forgives most, but he condones least: he is pleased with little, but demands all.

When Christianity says that God loves man, it means that God *loves* man: not that He has some "disinterested", because really indifferent, concern for our welfare, but that, in awful and surprising truth, we are the objects of His love. You asked for a loving God: you have one. The great spirit you so lightly invoked, the "lord of terrible aspect", is present: not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate, nor the care of a host who feels responsible for the comfort of his guests, but the consuming fire Himself, the Love that made the worlds, persistent as the artist's love for his work and despotic as a man's love for a dog, provident and venerable as a father's love for a child, jealous, inexorable, exacting as love between the sexes. How this should be, I do not know: it passes reason to explain why any creatures, not to say creatures such as we, should have a value so prodigious in their Creator's eyes. It is certainly a burden of glory not only beyond our deserts but also, except in rare moments of grace, beyond our desiring; we are inclined, like the maidens in the old play, to deprecate the love of Zeus. But the fact seems unquestionable. The Impassible speaks as if it suffered passion, and that which contains in Itself the cause of its own and all other bliss talks as though it could be in want and yearning. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him." "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I abandon thee, Israel? Mine heart is turned within me." "Oh Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves, is only insoluble so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word "love", and look on things as if man were the centre of them. Man is not the centre. God does not exist for the sake of man. Man does not exist for his own sake. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." We were made not primarily that we may love God (though we were made for that too) but that God may love us, that we may become objects in which the Divine love may rest "well pleased". To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God: because He is what He is, His love must, in the nature of things, be impeded and repelled, by certain stains in our present character, and because He already loves us He must labour to make us

lovable. We cannot even wish, in our better moments, that He could reconcile Himself to our present impurities — no more than the beggar maid could wish that King Cophetua should be content with her rags and dirt, or a dog, once having learned to love man, could wish that man were such as to tolerate in his house the snapping, verminous, polluting creature of the wild pack. What we would here and now call our "happiness" is not the end God chiefly has in view: but when we are such as He can love without impediment, we shall in fact be happy.

I plainly foresee that the course of my argument may provoke a protest. I had promised that in coming to understand the Divine goodness we should not be asked to accept a mere reversal of our own ethics. But it may be objected that a reversal is precisely what we have been asked to accept. The kind of love which I attribute to God, it may be said, is just the kind which in human beings we describe as "selfish" or "possessive", and contrast unfavourably with another kind which seeks first the happiness of the beloved and not the contentment of the lover. I am not sure that this is quite how I feel even about human love. I do not think I should value much the love of a friend who cared only for my happiness and did not object to my becoming dishonest. Nevertheless, the protest is welcome, and the answer to it will put the subject in a new light, and correct what has been one-sided in our discussion.

The truth is that this antithesis between egoistic and altruistic love cannot be unambiguously applied to the love of God for His creatures. Clashes of interest, and therefore opportunities either of selfishness or unselfishness, occur only between beings inhabiting a common world: God can no more be in competition with a creature than Shakespeare can be in competition with Viola. When God becomes a Man and lives as a creature among His own creatures in Palestine, then indeed His life is one of supreme self-sacrifice and leads to Calvary. A modern pantheistic philosopher has said, "When the Absolute falls into the sea it becomes a fish"; in the same way, we Christians can point to the Incarnation and say that when God empties Himself of His glory and submits to those conditions under which alone egoism and altruism have a clear meaning, He is seen to be wholly altruistic. But God in His transcendence — God as the unconditioned ground of all conditions — cannot easily be thought of in the same way. We call human love selfish when it satisfies its own needs at the expense of the object's needs — as when a father keeps at home, because he cannot bear to

relinquish their society, children who ought, in their own interests, to be put out into the world. The situation implies a need or passion on the part of the lover, an incompatible need on the part of the beloved, and the lover's disregard or culpable ignorance of the beloved's need. None of these conditions is present in the relation of God to man. God has no needs. Human love, as Plato teaches us, is the child of Poverty — of a want or lack; it is caused by a real or supposed good in its beloved which the lover needs and desires. But God's love, far from being caused by goodness in the object, causes all the goodness which the object has, loving it first into existence and then into real, though derivative, loveability. God is Goodness. He can give good, but cannot need or get it. In that sense all His love is, as it were, bottomlessly selfless by very definition; it has everything to give and nothing to receive. Hence, if God sometimes speaks as though the Impassible could suffer passion and eternal fullness could be in want, and in want of those beings on whom it bestows all from their bare existence upwards, this can mean only, if it means anything intelligible by us, that God of mere miracle has made Himself able so to hunger and created in Himself that which we can satisfy. If He requires us, the requirement is of His own choosing. If the immutable heart can be grieved by the puppets of its own making, it is Divine Omnipotence, no other, that has so subjected it, freely, and in a humility that passes understanding. If the world exists not chiefly that we may love God but that God may love us, yet that very fact, on a deeper level, is so for our sakes. If He who in Himself can lack nothing chooses to need us, it is because we need to be needed. Before and behind all the relations of God to man, as we now learn them from Christianity, yawns the abyss of a Divine act of pure giving — the election of man, from nonentity, to be the beloved of God, and therefore (in some sense) the needed and desired of God, who but for that act needs and desires nothing, since He eternally has, and is, all goodness. And that act is for our sakes. It is good for us to know love; and best for us to know the love of the best object, God. But to know it as a love in which we were primarily the wooers and God the wooed, in which we sought and He was found, in which His conformity to our needs, not ours to His, came first, would be to know it in a form false to the very nature of things. For We are only creatures: our *rôle* must always be that of patient to agent, female to male, mirror to light, echo to voice. Our highest activity must be response, not initiative. To experience the love of God in a true, and not an illusory

form, is therefore to experience it as our surrender to His demand, our conformity to His desire: to experience it in the opposite way is, as it were, a solecism against the grammar of being. I do not deny, of course, that on a certain level we may rightly speak of the soul's search for God, and of God as receptive of the soul's love: but in the long run the soul's search for God can only be a mode, or appearance (*Erscheinung*) of His search for her, since all comes from Him, since the very possibility of our loving is His gift to us, and since our freedom is only a freedom of better or worse response. Hence I think that nothing marks off Pagan theism from Christianity so sharply as Aristotle's doctrine that God moves the universe, Himself unmoving, as the Beloved moves a lover. But for Christendom "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us".

The first condition, then, of what is called a selfish love among men is lacking with God. He has no natural necessities, no passion, to compete with His wish for the beloved's welfare: or if there is in Him something which we have to imagine after the analogy of a passion, a want, it is there by His own will and for our sakes. And the second condition is lacking too. The real interests of a child may differ from that which his father's affection instinctively demands, because the child is a separate being from the father with a nature which has its own needs and does not exist solely for the father nor find its whole perfection in being loved by him, and which the father does not fully understand. But creatures are not thus separate from their Creator, nor can He misunderstand them. The place for which He designs them in His scheme of things is the place they are made for. When they reach it their nature is fulfilled and their happiness attained: a broken bone in the universe has been set, the anguish is over. When we want to be something other than the thing God wants us to be, we must be wanting what, in fact, will not make us happy. Those Divine demands which sound to our natural ears most like those of a despot and least like those of a lover, in fact marshall us where we should want to go if we knew what we wanted. He demands our worship, our obedience, our prostration. Do we suppose that they can do Him any good, or fear, like the chorus in Milton, that human irreverence can bring about "His glory's diminution"? A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word "darkness" on the walls of his cell. But God wills our good, and our good is to love Him (with that responsive love proper to creatures) and to love Him we must know Him: and if we

know Him, we shall in fact fall on our faces. If we do not, that only shows that what we are trying to love is not yet God — though it may be the nearest approximation to God which our thought and fantasy can attain. Yet the call is not only to prostration and awe; it is to a reflection of the Divine life, a creaturely participation in the Divine attributes which is far beyond our present desires. We are bidden to “put on Christ”, to become like God. That is, whether we like it or not, God intends to give us what we need, not what we now think we want. Once more, we are embarrassed by the intolerable compliment, by too much love, not too little.

Yet perhaps even this view falls short of the truth. It is not simply that God has arbitrarily made us such that He is our only good. Rather God is the only good of all creatures: and by necessity, each must find its good in that kind and degree of the fruition of God which is proper to its nature. The kind and degree may vary with the creature’s nature: but that there ever could be any other good, is an atheistic dream. George Macdonald, in a passage I cannot now find, represents God as saying to men “You must be strong with my strength and blessed with my blessedness, *for I have no other to give you*.” That is the conclusion of the whole matter. God gives what He has, not what He has not: He gives the happiness that there is, not the happiness that is not. To be God — to be like God and to share His goodness in creaturely response — to be miserable — these are the only three alternatives. If we will not learn to eat the only food that the universe grows — the only food that any possible universe ever can grow — then we must starve eternally.

IV. HUMAN WICKEDNESS

You can have no greater sign of a confirmed pride than when you think you are humble enough. Law. *Serious Call*, cap. XVI.

The examples given in the last chapter went to show that love may cause pain to its object, but only on the supposition that that object needs alteration to become fully lovable. Now why do we men need so much alteration? The Christian answer — that we have used our free will to become very bad — is so well known that it hardly needs to be stated. But to bring this doctrine into real life in the minds of modern men, and even of modern Christians, is very hard. When the apostles preached, they could assume even in their Pagan hearers a real consciousness of deserving the Divine anger. The Pagan mysteries existed to allay this consciousness, and the Epicurean philosophy claimed to deliver men from the fear of eternal punishment. It was against this background that the Gospel appeared as good news. It brought news of possible healing to men who knew that they were mortally ill. But all this has changed. Christianity now has to preach the diagnosis — in itself very bad news — before it can win a hearing for the cure.

There are two principal causes. One is the fact that for about a hundred years we have so concentrated on one of the virtues— "kindness" or mercy — that most of us do not feel anything except kindness to be really good or anything but cruelty to be really bad. Such lopsided ethical developments are not uncommon, and other ages too have had their pet virtues and curious insensibilities. And if one virtue must be cultivated at the expense of all the rest, none has a higher claim than mercy — for every Christian must reject with detestation that covert propaganda for cruelty which tries to drive mercy out of the world by calling it names such as "Humanitarianism" and "Sentimentality". The real trouble is that "kindness" is a quality fatally easy to attribute to ourselves on quite inadequate grounds. Everyone *feels* benevolent if nothing happens to be annoying him at the moment. Thus a man easily comes to console himself for all his other vices by a conviction that "his heart's in the right place" and "he wouldn't hurt a fly", though in fact he has never made the slightest sacrifice for a fellow creature. We think we are kind when we are only happy: it is not so easy, on the same grounds, to imagine oneself temperate, chaste, or humble.

The second cause is the effect of Psycho-analysis on the public mind, and, in particular, the doctrine of repressions and inhibitions. Whatever these doctrines really mean, the impression they have actually left on most people is that the sense of Shame is a dangerous and mischievous thing. We have laboured to overcome that sense of shrinking, that desire to conceal, which either Nature herself or the tradition of almost all mankind has attached to cowardice, unchastity, falsehood, and envy. We are told to "get things out into the open", not for the sake of self-humiliation, but on the ground that these "things" are very natural and we need not be ashamed of them. But unless Christianity is wholly false, the perception of ourselves which we have in moments of shame must be the only true one; and even Pagan society has usually recognised "shamelessness" as the nadir of the soul. In trying to extirpate Shame we have broken down one of the ramparts of the human spirit, madly exulting in the work as the Trojans exulted when they broke their walls and pulled the Horse into Troy. I do not know that there is anything to be done but to set about the rebuilding as soon as we can. It is mad work to remove hypocrisy by removing the *temptation* to hypocrisy: the "frankness" of people sunk below shame is a very cheap frankness.

A recovery of the old sense of sin is essential to Christianity. Christ takes it for granted that men are bad. Until we really feel this assumption of His to be true, though we are part of the world He came to save, we are not part of the audience to whom His words are addressed. We lack the first condition for understanding what He is talking about. And when men attempt to be Christians without this preliminary consciousness of sin, the result is almost bound to be a certain resentment against God as to one who is always making impossible demands and always inexplicably angry. Most of us have at times felt a secret sympathy with the dying farmer who replied to the Vicar's dissertation on repentance by asking "What harm have I ever done *Him*?" There is the real rub. The worst we have done to God is to leave Him alone — why can't He return the compliment? Why not live and let live? What call has He, of all beings, to be "angry"? It's easy for Him to be good!

Now at the moment whan a man feels real guilt — moments too rare in our lives — all these blasphemies vanish away. Much, we may feel, can be excused to human infirmities: but not *this* — this incredibly mean and ugly action which none of our friends would have done, which even such a

thorough-going little rotter as X would have been ashamed of, which we would not for the world allow to be published. At such a moment we really do know that our character, as revealed in this action, is, and ought to be, hateful to all good men, and, if there are powers above man, to them. A God who did not regard this with unappeasable distaste would not be a good being. We cannot even wish for such a God — it is like wishing that every nose in the universe were abolished, that smell of hay or roses or the sea should never again delight any creature, because our own breath happens to stink.

When we merely *say* that we are bad, the "wrath" of God seems a barbarous doctrine; as soon as we *perceive* our badness, it appears inevitable, a mere corollary from God's goodness. To keep ever before us the insight derived from such a moment as I have been describing, to learn to detect the same real inexcusable corruption under more and more of its complex disguises, is therefore indispensable to a real understanding of the Christian faith. This is not, of course, a new doctrine. I am attempting nothing very splendid in this chapter. I am merely trying to get my reader (and, still more, myself) over a *pons asinorum* — to take the first step out of fools' paradise and utter illusion. But the illusion has grown, in modern times, so strong, that I must add a few considerations tending to make the reality less incredible.

1. We are deceived by looking on the outside of things. We suppose ourselves to be roughly not much worse than Y, whom all acknowledge for a decent sort of person, and certainly (though we should not claim it out loud) better than the abominable X. Even on the superficial level we are probably deceived about this. Don't be too sure that your friends think you as good as Y. The very fact that you selected him for the comparison is suspicious: he is probably head and shoulders above you and your circle. But let us suppose that Y and yourself both appear "not bad". How far Y's appearance is deceptive, is between Y and God. His may not be deceptive: you know that yours is. Does this seem to you a mere trick, because I could say the same to Y and so to every man in turn? But that is just the point. Every man, not very holy or very arrogant, has to "live up to" the outward appearance of other men: he knows there is that within him which falls far below even his most careless public behaviour, even his loosest talk. In an instant of time — while your friend hesitates for a word — what things pass through your mind? We have never told the whole truth. We may confess

ugly *facts* — the meanest cowardice or the shabbiest and most prosaic impurity — but the *tone* is false. The very act of confessing — an infinitesimally hypocritical glance — a dash of humour — all this contrives to dissociate the facts from your very self. No one could guess how familiar and, in a sense, congenial to your soul these things were, how much of a piece with all the rest: down there, in the dreaming inner warmth, they struck no such discordant note, were not nearly so odd and detachable from the rest of you, as they seem when they are turned into words. We imply, and often believe, that habitual vices are exceptional single acts, and make the opposite mistake about our virtues — like the bad tennis player who calls his normal form his "bad days" and mistakes his rare successes for his normal. I do not think it is our fault that we cannot tell the real truth about ourselves; the persistent, life-long, inner murmur of spite, jealousy, prurience, greed and self-complacence, simply will not go into words. But the important thing is that we should not mistake our inevitably limited utterances for a full account of the worst that is inside.

2. A reaction — in itself wholesome — is now going on against purely private or domestic conceptions of morality, a re-awakening of the *social* conscience. We feel ourselves to be involved in an iniquitous social system and to share a corporate guilt. This is very true: but the enemy can exploit even truths to our deception. Beware lest you are making use of the idea of corporate guilt to distract your attention from those hum-drum, old fashioned guilts of your own which have nothing to do with "the system" and which can be dealt with without waiting for the millennium. For corporate guilt perhaps cannot be, and certainly is not, felt with the same force as personal guilt. For most of us, as we now are, this conception is a mere excuse for evading the real issue. When we have really learned to know our individual corruption, then indeed we can go on to think of the corporate guilt and can hardly think of it too much. But we must learn to walk before we run.

3. We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. I have heard others, and I have heard myself, recounting cruelties and falsehoods committed in boyhood as if they were no concern of the present speaker's, and even with laughter. But mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin. The guilt is washed out not by time but by repentance and the blood of Christ: if we have repented these early sins we should remember the price of our forgiveness and be humble. As for the fact of a

sin, is it probable that anything cancels it? All times are eternally present to God. Is it not at least possible that along some one line of His multi-dimensional eternity He sees you forever in the nursery pulling the wings off a fly, forever toadying, lying, and lusting as a schoolboy, forever in that moment of cowardice or insolence as a subaltern? It may be that salvation consists not in the cancelling of these eternal moments but in the perfected humility that bears the shame forever, rejoicing in the occasion which it furnished to God's compassion and glad that it should be common knowledge to the universe. Perhaps in that eternal moment St. Peter — he will forgive me if I am wrong — forever denies his Master. If so, it would indeed be true that the joys of Heaven are for most of us, in our present condition, "an acquired taste" — and certain ways of life may render the taste impossible of acquisition. Perhaps the lost are those who dare not go to such a *public* place. Of course I do not know that this is true; but I think the possibility is worth keeping in mind.

4. We must guard against the feeling that there is "safety in numbers". It is natural to feel that if *all* men are as bad as the Christians say, then badness must be very excusable. If all the boys plough in the examination, surely the papers must have been too hard? And so the masters at that school feel till they learn that there are other schools where ninety per cent. of the boys passed on the same papers. Then they begin to suspect that the fault did not lie with the examiners. Again, many of us have had the experience of living in some local pocket of human society — some particular school, college, regiment or profession where the tone was bad. And inside that pocket certain actions were regarded as merely normal ("Everyone does it") and certain others as impracticably virtuous and Quixotic. But when we emerged from that bad society we made the horrible discovery that in the outer world our "normal" was the kind of thing that no decent person ever dreamed of doing, and our "Quixotic" was taken for granted as the minimum standard of decency. What had seemed to us morbid and fantastic scruples so long as we were in the "pocket" now turned out to be the only moments of sanity we there enjoyed. It is wise to face the possibility that the whole human race (being a small thing in the universe) is, in fact, just such a local pocket of evil — an isolated bad school or regiment inside which minimum decency passes for heroic virtue and utter corruption for pardonable imperfection. But is there any evidence — except Christian doctrine itself — that this is so? I am afraid there is. In

the first place, there are those odd people among us who do not accept the local standard, who demonstrate the alarming truth that a quite different behaviour is, in fact, possible. Worse still, there is the fact that these people, even when separated widely in space and time, have a suspicious knack of agreeing with one another in the main — almost as if they were in touch with some larger public opinion outside the pocket. What is common to Zarathustra, Jeremiah, Socrates, Gotama, Christ and Marcus Aurelius, is something pretty substantial. Thirdly, we find in ourselves even now a theoretical approval of this behaviour which no one practises. Even inside the pocket we do not say that justice, mercy, fortitude, and temperance are of *no* value, but only that the local custom is as just, brave, temperate and merciful as can reasonably be expected. It begins to look as if the neglected school rules even inside this bad school were connected with some larger world — and that when the term ends we might find ourselves facing the public opinion of that larger world. But the worst of all is this; we cannot help seeing that only the degree of virtue which we now regard as impracticable can possibly save our race from disaster even on this planet. The standard which seems to have come into the "pocket" from outside, turns out to be terribly relevant to conditions inside the pocket — so relevant that a consistent practice of virtue by the human race even for ten years would fill the earth from pole to pole with peace, plenty, health, merriment, and heartsease, and that nothing else will. It may be the custom, down here, to treat the regimental rules as a dead letter or a counsel of perfection: but even now, everyone who stops to think can see that when we meet the enemy this neglect is going to cost every man of us his life. It is then that we shall envy the "morbid" person, the "pedant" or "enthusiast" who really *has* taught his company to shoot and dig in and spare their water bottles.

5. The larger society to which I here contrast the human "pocket" may not exist according to some people, and at any rate we have no experience of it. We do not meet angels, or unfallen races. But we can get some inkling of the truth even inside our own race. Different ages and cultures can be regarded as "pockets" in relation to one another. I said, a few pages back, that different ages excelled in different virtues. If, then, you are ever tempted to think that we modern Western Europeans cannot really be so very bad because we are, comparatively speaking, humane — if, in other words, you think God might be content with us on that ground — ask

yourself whether you think God ought to have been content with the cruelty of cruel ages because they excelled in courage or chastity. You will see at once that this is an impossibility. From considering how the cruelty of our ancestors looks to us, you may get some inkling how our softness, worldliness, and timidity would have looked to them, and hence how both must look to God.

6. Perhaps my harping on the word “kindness” has already aroused a protest in some readers’ minds. Are we not really an increasingly cruel age? Perhaps we are: but I think we have become so in the attempt to reduce all virtues to kindness. For Plato rightly taught that virtue is one. You cannot be kind unless you have all the other virtues. If, being cowardly, conceited and slothful, you have never yet done a fellow creature great mischief, that is only because your neighbour’s welfare has not yet happened to conflict with your safety, self-approval, or ease. Every vice leads to cruelty. Even a good emotion, pity, if not controlled by charity and justice, leads through anger to cruelty. Most atrocities are stimulated by accounts of the enemy’s atrocities; and pity for the oppressed classes, when separated from the moral law as a whole, leads by a very natural process to the unremitting brutalities of a reign of terror.

7. Some modern theologians have, quite rightly, protested against an excessively moralistic interpretation of Christianity. The Holiness of God is something more and other than moral perfection: His claim upon us is something more and other than the claim of moral duty. I do not deny it: but this conception, like that of corporate guilt, is very easily used as an evasion of the real issue. God may be more than moral goodness: He is not less. The road to the promised land runs past Sinai. The moral law may exist to be transcended: but there is no transcending it for those who have not first admitted its claims upon them, and then tried with all their strength to meet that claim, and fairly and squarely faced the fact of their failure.

8. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.” Many schools of thought encourage us to shift the responsibility for our behaviour from our own shoulders to some inherent necessity in the nature of human life, and thus, indirectly, to the Creator. Popular forms of this view are the evolutionary doctrine that what we call badness is an unavoidable legacy from our animal ancestors, or the idealistic doctrine that it is merely a result of our being finite. Now Christianity, if I have understood the Pauline epistles, does admit that perfect obedience to the moral law, which we find

written in our hearts and perceive to be necessary even on the biological level, is not in fact possible to men. This would raise a real difficulty about our responsibility if perfect obedience had any practical relation at all to the lives of most of us. Some degree of obedience which you and I have failed to attain in the last twenty-four hours is certainly possible. The ultimate problem must not be used as one more means of evasion. Most of us are less urgently concerned with the Pauline question than with William Law's simple statement: "if you will here stop and ask yourselves why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it."

This chapter will have been misunderstood if anyone describes it as a reinstatement of the doctrine of Total Depravity. I disbelieve that doctrine, partly on the logical ground that if our depravity were total we should not know ourselves to be depraved, and partly because experience shows us much goodness in human nature. Nor am I recommending universal gloom. The emotion of shame has been valued not as an emotion but because of the insight to which it leads. I think that insight should be permanent in each man's mind: but whether the painful emotions that attend it should also be encouraged, is a technical problem of spiritual direction on which, as a layman, I have little call to speak. My own idea, for what it is worth, is that all sadness which is not either arising from the repentance of a concrete sin and hastening towards concrete amendment or restitution, or else arising from pity and hastening to active assistance, is simply bad; and I think we all sin by needlessly disobeying the apostolic injunction to "rejoice" as much as by anything else. Humility, after the first shock, is a cheerful virtue: it is the high-minded unbeliever, desperately trying in the teeth of repeated disillusions to retain his "faith in human nature" who is really sad. I have been aiming at an intellectual, not an emotional, effect: I have been trying to make the reader believe that we actually are, at present, creatures whose character must be, in some respects, a horror to God, as it is, when we really see it, a horror to ourselves. This I believe to be a fact: and I notice that the holier a man is, the more fully he is aware of that fact. Perhaps you have imagined that this humility in the saints is a pious illusion at which God smiles. That is a most dangerous error. It is theoretically dangerous, because it makes you identify a virtue (*i.e.*, a perfection) with an illusion (*i.e.*, an imperfection), which must be nonsense. It is practically

dangerous because it encourages a man to mistake his first insights into his own corruption for the first beginnings of a halo round his own silly head. No; depend upon it, when the saints say that they — even they — are vile, they are recording truth with scientific accuracy.

How did this state of affairs come about? In the next chapter I shall give as much as I can understand of the Christian answer to that question.

V. THE FALL OF MAN

To obey is the proper office of a rational soul. *Montaigne* II, xii.

The Christian answer to the question proposed in the last chapter is contained in the doctrine of the Fall. According to that doctrine, man is now a horror to God and to himself and a creature ill-adapted to the universe not because God made him so but because he has made himself so by the abuse of his free will. To my mind this is the sole function of the doctrine. It exists to guard against two sub-Christian theories of the origin of evil — Monism, according to which God Himself, being "above good and evil", produces impartially the effects to which we give those two names, and Dualism, according to which God produces good, while some equal and independent Power produces evil. Against both these views Christianity asserts that God is good; that He made all things good and for the sake of their goodness; that one of the good things He made, namely, the free will of rational creatures, by its very nature included the possibility of evil; and that creatures, availing themselves of this possibility, have become evil. Now this function — which is the only one I allow to the doctrine of the Fall — must be distinguished from two other functions which it is sometimes, perhaps, represented as performing, but which I reject. In the first place, I do not think the doctrine answers the question "Was it better for God to create than not to create?" That is a question I have already declined. Since I believe God to be good, I am sure that, if the question has a meaning, the answer must be Yes. But I doubt whether the question has any meaning: and even if it has, I am sure that the answer cannot be attained by the sort of value-judgements which men can significantly make. In the second place, I do not think the doctrine of the Fall can be used to show that it is "just", in terms of retributive justice, to punish individuals for the faults of their remote ancestors. Some forms of the doctrine seem to involve this; but I question whether any of them, as understood by its exponents, really meant it. The Fathers may sometimes say that we are punished for Adam's sin: but they much more often say that *we* sinned "in Adam". It may be impossible to find out what they meant by this, or we may decide that what they meant was erroneous. But I do not think we can dismiss their way of talking as a mere "idiom". Wisely, or foolishly, they believed that we were *really* — and not simply by legal fiction — involved in Adam's action. The attempt to

formulate this belief by saying that we were “in” Adam in a physical sense — Adam being the first vehicle of the “immortal germ plasm” — may be unacceptable: but it is, of course, a further question whether the belief itself is merely a confusion or a real insight into spiritual realities beyond our normal grasp. At the moment, however, this question does not arise; for, as I have said I have no intention of arguing that the descent to modern man of inabilities contracted by his remote ancestors is a specimen of retributive justice. For me it is rather a specimen of those things necessarily involved in the creation of a stable world which we considered in Chapter II. It would, no doubt, have been possible for God to remove by miracle the results of the first sin ever committed by a human being; but this would not have been much good unless He was prepared to remove the results of the second sin, and of the third, and so on forever. If the miracles ceased, then sooner or later we might have reached our present lamentable situation: if they did not, then a world, thus continually underpropped and corrected by Divine interference, would have been a world in which nothing important ever depended on human choice, and in which choice itself would soon cease from the certainty that one of the apparent alternatives before you would lead to no results and was therefore not really an alternative. As we saw, the chess player’s freedom to play chess depends on the rigidity of the squares and the moves.

Having isolated what I conceive to be the true import of the doctrine that Man is fallen, let us now consider the doctrine in itself. The story in Genesis is a story (full of the deepest suggestion) about a magic apple of knowledge; but in the developed doctrine the inherent magic of the apple has quite dropped out of sight, and the story is simply one of disobedience. I have the deepest respect even for Pagan myths, still more for myths in Holy Scripture. I therefore do not doubt that the version which emphasises the magic apple, and brings together the trees of life and knowledge, contains a deeper and subtler truth than the version which makes the apple simply and solely a pledge of obedience. But I assume that the Holy Spirit would not have allowed the latter to grow up in the Church and win the assent of great doctors unless it also was true and useful as far as it went. It is this version which I am going to discuss, because, though I suspect the primitive version to be far more profound, I know that I, at any rate, cannot penetrate its profundities. I am to give my readers not the best absolutely but the best I have.

In the developed doctrine, then, it is claimed that Man, as God made him, was completely good and completely happy, but that he disobeyed God and became what we now see. Many people think that this proposition has been proved false by modern science. “We now know”, it is said, “that so far from having fallen out of a primeval state of virtue and happiness, men have slowly risen from brutality and savagery.” There seems to me to be a complete confusion here. *Brute* and *savage* both belong to that unfortunate class of words which are sometimes used rhetorically, as terms of reproach, and sometimes scientifically, as terms of description; and the pseudo-scientific argument against the Fall depends on a confusion between the usages. If by saying that man rose from brutality you mean simply that man is physically descended from animals, I have no objection. But it does not follow that the further back you go the more *brutal* — in the sense of wicked or wretched — you will find man to be. No animal has moral virtue: but it is not true that all animal behaviour is of the kind one should call “wicked” if it were practised by men. On the contrary, not all animals treat other creatures of their own species as badly as men treat men. Not all are as gluttonous or lecherous as we, and no animal is ambitious. Similarly if you say that the first men were “savages”, meaning by this that their artefacts were few and clumsy like those of modern “savages”, you may well be right; but if you mean that they were “savage” in the sense of being lewd, ferocious, cruel, and treacherous, you will be going beyond your evidence, and that for two reasons. In the first place, modern anthropologists and missionaries are less inclined than their fathers to endorse your unfavourable picture even of the modern savage. In the second place you cannot argue from the artefacts of the earliest men that they were in all respects like the contemporary peoples who make similar artefacts. We must be on our guard here against an illusion which the study of prehistoric man seems naturally to beget. Prehistoric man, because he is prehistoric, is known to us only by the material things he made — or rather by a chance selection from among the more durable things he made. It is not the fault of archæologists that they have no better evidence: but this penury constitutes a continual temptation to infer more than we have any right to infer, to assume that the community which made the superior artefacts was superior in all respects. Everyone can see that the assumption is false; it would lead to the conclusion that the leisured classes of our own time were in all respects superior to those of the Victorian age. Clearly the

prehistoric men who made the worst pottery might have made the best poetry and we should never know it. And the assumption becomes even more absurd when we are comparing prehistoric men with modern savages. The equal crudity of artefacts here tells you nothing about the intelligence or virtue of the makers. What is learned by trial and error must begin by being crude, whatever the character of the beginner. The very same pot which would prove its maker a genius if it were the first pot ever made in the world, would prove its maker a dunce if it came after millenniums of pot-making. The whole modern estimate of primitive man is based upon that idolatry of artefacts which is a great corporate sin of our own civilisation. We forget that our prehistoric ancestors made all the most useful discoveries, except that of chloroform, which have ever been made. To them we owe language, the family, clothing, the use of fire, the domestication of animals, the wheel, the ship, poetry and agriculture.

Science, then, has nothing to say either for or against the doctrine of the Fall. A more philosophical difficulty has been raised by the modern theologian to whom all students of the subject are most indebted. This writer points out that the idea of sin presupposes a law to sin against: and since it would take centuries for the "herd-instinct" to crystallise into custom and for custom to harden into law, the first man — if there ever was a being who could be so described — could not commit the first sin. This argument assumes that virtue and the herd-instinct commonly coincide, and that the "first sin" was essentially a *social* sin. But the traditional doctrine points to a sin against God, an act of disobedience, not a sin against the neighbour. And certainly, if we are to hold the doctrine of the Fall in any real sense, we must look for the great sin on a deeper and more timeless level than that of social morality.

This sin has been described by Saint Augustine as the result of Pride, of the movement whereby a creature (that is, an essentially dependent being whose principle of existence lies not in itself but in another) tries to set up on its own, to exist for itself. Such a sin requires no complex social conditions, no extended experience, no great intellectual development. From the moment a creature becomes aware of God as God and of itself as self, the terrible alternative of choosing God or self for the centre is opened to it. This sin is committed daily by young children and ignorant peasants as well as by sophisticated persons, by solitaries no less than by those who live in society: it is the fall in every individual life, and in each day of each

individual life, the basic sin behind all particular sins: at this very moment you and I are either committing it, or about to commit it, or repenting it. We try, when we wake, to lay the new day at God's feet; before we have finished shaving, it becomes *our* day and God's share in it is felt as a tribute which we must pay out of "our own" pocket, a deduction from the time which ought, we feel, to be "our own". A man starts a new job with a sense of vocation and, perhaps, for the first week still keeps the discharge of the vocation as his end, taking the pleasures and pains from God's hand, as they come, as "accidents". But in the second week he is beginning to "know the ropes": by the third, he has quarried out of the total job his own plan for himself within that job, and when he can pursue this he feels that he is getting no more than his rights, and, when he cannot, that he is being interfered with. A lover, in obedience to a quite uncalculating impulse, which may be full of good will as well as of desire and need not be forgetful of God, embraces his beloved, and then, quite innocently, experiences a thrill of sexual pleasure; but the second embrace may have that pleasure in view, may be a means to an end, may be the first downward step towards the state of regarding a fellow creature as a thing, as a machine to be used for his pleasure. Thus the bloom of innocence, the element of obedience and the readiness to take what comes is rubbed off every activity. Thoughts undertaken for God's sake — like that on which we are engaged at the moment — are continued as if they were an end in themselves, and then as if our pleasure in thinking were the end, and finally as if our pride or celebrity were the end. Thus all day long, and all the days of our life, we are sliding, slipping, falling away — as if God were, to our present consciousness, a smooth inclined plane on which there is no resting. And indeed we are now of such a nature that we must slip off, and the sin, because it is unavoidable, may be venial. But God cannot have made us so. The gravitation away from God, "the journey homeward to habitual self", must, we think, be a product of the Fall. What exactly happened when Man fell, we do not know; but if it is legitimate to guess, I offer the following picture — a "myth" in the Socratic sense, a not unlikely tale.

For long centuries God perfected the animal form which was to become the vehicle of humanity and the image of Himself. He gave it hands whose thumb could be applied to each of the fingers, and jaws and teeth and throat capable of articulation, and a brain sufficiently complex to execute all the

material motions whereby rational thought is incarnated. The creature may have existed for ages in this state before it became man: it may even have been clever enough to make things which a modern archæologist would accept as proof of its humanity. But it was only an animal because all its physical and psychical processes were directed to purely material and natural ends. Then, in the fullness of time, God caused to descend upon this organism, both on its psychology and physiology, a new kind of consciousness which could say “I” and “me”, which could look upon itself as an object, which knew God, which could make judgements of truth, beauty, and goodness, and which was so far above time that it could perceive time flowing past. This new consciousness ruled and illuminated the whole organism, flooding every part of it with light, and was not, like ours, limited to a selection of the movements going on in one part of the organism, namely the brain. Man was then all consciousness. The modern Yogi claims — whether falsely or truly — to have under control those functions which to us are almost part of the external world, such as digestion and circulation. This power the first man had in eminence. His organic processes obeyed the law of his own will, not the law of nature. His organs sent up appetites to the judgement seat of will not because they had to, but because he chose. Sleep meant to him not the stupor which we undergo, but willed and conscious repose — he remained awake to enjoy the pleasure and duty of sleep. Since the processes of decay and repair in his tissues were similarly conscious and obedient, it may not be fanciful to suppose that the length of his life was largely at his own discretion. Wholly commanding himself, he commanded all lower lives with which he came into contact. Even now we meet rare individuals who have a mysterious power of taming beasts. This power the Paradisal man enjoyed in eminence. The old picture of the brutes sporting before Adam and fawning upon him may not be wholly symbolical. Even now more animals than you might expect are ready to adore man if they are given a reasonable opportunity: for man was made to be the priest and even, in one sense, the Christ, of the animals — the mediator through whom they apprehend so much of the Divine splendour as their irrational nature allows. And God was to such a man no slippery, inclined plane. The new consciousness had been made to repose on its Creator, and repose it did. However rich and varied man’s experience of his fellows (or fellow) in charity and friendship and sexual love, or of the beasts, or of the surrounding world then first recognised as

beautiful and awful, God came first in his love and in his thought, and that without painful effort. In perfect cyclic movement, being, power and joy descended from God to man in the form of gift and returned from man to God in the form of obedient love and ecstatic adoration: and in this sense, though not in all, man was then truly the son of God, the prototype of Christ, perfectly enacting in joy and ease of all the faculties and all the senses that filial self-surrender which Our Lord enacted in the agonies of the crucifixion.

Judged by his artefacts, or perhaps even by his language, this blessed creature was, no doubt, a savage. All that experience and practice can teach he had still to learn: if he chipped flints, he doubtless chipped them clumsily enough. He may have been utterly incapable of expressing in conceptual form his paradisal experience. All that is quite irrelevant. From our own childhood we remember that before our elders thought us capable of "understanding" anything, we already had spiritual experiences as pure and as momentous as any we have undergone since, though not, of course, as rich in factual context. From Christianity itself we learn that there is a level — in the long run the only level of importance — on which the learned and the adult have no advantage at all over the simple and the child. I do not doubt that if the Paradisal man could now appear among us, we should regard him as an utter savage, a creature to be exploited or, at best, patronised. Only one or two, and those the holiest among us, would glance a second time at the naked, shaggy-bearded, slow-spoken creature: but they, after a few minutes, would fall at his feet.

We do not know how many of these creatures God made, nor how long they continued in the Paradisal state. But sooner or later they fell. Someone or something whispered that they could become as gods — that they could cease directing their lives to their Creator and taking all their delights as uncovenanted mercies, as "accidents" (in the logical sense) which arose in the course of a life directed not to those delights but to the adoration of God. As a young man wants a regular allowance from his father which he can count on as his own, within which he makes his own plans (and rightly, for his father is after all a fellow creature) so they desired to be on their own, to take care for their own future, to plan for pleasure and for security, to have a *meum* from which, no doubt, they would pay some reasonable tribute to God in the way of time, attention, and love, but which nevertheless, was theirs not His. They wanted, as we say, to "call their souls

their own". But that means to live a lie, for our souls are not, in fact, our own. They wanted some corner in the universe of which they could say to God, "This is our business, not yours." But there is no such corner. They wanted to be nouns, but they were, and eternally must be, mere adjectives. We have no idea in what particular act, or series of acts, the self-contradictory, impossible wish found expression. For all I can see, it might have concerned the literal eating of a fruit, but the question is of no consequence.

This act of self-will on the part of the creature, which constitutes an utter falseness to its true creaturely position, is the only sin that can be conceived as the Fall. For the difficulty about the first sin is that it must be very heinous, or its consequences would not be so terrible, and yet it must be something which a being free from the temptations of fallen man could conceivably have committed. The turning from God to self fulfills both conditions. It is a sin possible even to Paradisal man, because the mere existence of a self — the mere fact that we call it "me" — includes, from the first, the danger of self-idolatry. Since I am I, I must make an act of self-surrender, however small or however easy, in living to God rather than to myself. This is, if you like, the "weak spot" in the very nature of creation, the risk which God apparently thinks worth taking. But the sin was very heinous, because the self which Paradisal man had to surrender contained no natural recalcitrancy to being surrendered. His *data*, so to speak, were a psycho-physical organism wholly subject to the will and a will wholly disposed, though not compelled, to turn to God. The self-surrender which he practised before the Fall meant no struggle but only the delicious overcoming of an infinitesimal self-adherence which delighted to be overcome — of which we see a dim analogy in the rapturous mutual self-surrenders of lovers even now. He had, therefore, no *temptation* (in our sense) to choose the self — no passion or inclination obstinately inclining that way — nothing but the bare fact that the self was *him*self.

Up to that moment the human spirit had been in full control of the human organism. It doubtless expected that it would retain this control when it had ceased to obey God. But its authority over the organism was a delegated authority which it lost when it ceased to be God's delegate. Having cut itself off, as far as it could, from the source of its being, it had cut itself off from the source of power. For when we say of created things that A rules B this must mean that God rules B through A. I doubt whether

it would have been intrinsically possible for God to continue to rule the organism *through* the human spirit when the human spirit was in revolt against Him. At any rate He did not. He began to rule the organism in a more external way, not by the laws of spirit, but by those of nature. Thus the organs, no longer governed by man's will, fell under the control of ordinary biochemical laws and suffered whatever the inter-workings of those laws might bring about in the way of pain, senility and death. And desires began to come up into the mind of man, not as his reason chose, but just as the biochemical and environmental facts happened to cause them. And the mind itself fell under the psychological laws of association and the like which God had made to rule the psychology of the higher anthropoids. And the will, caught in the tidal wave of mere nature, had no resource but to force back some of the new thoughts and desires by main strength, and these uneasy rebels became the subconscious as we now know it. The process was not, I conceive, comparable to mere deterioration as it may now occur in a human individual; it was a loss of status as a *species*. What man lost by the Fall was his original specific nature. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The total organism which had been taken up into his spiritual life was allowed to fall back into the merely natural condition from which, at his making, it had been raised — just as, far earlier in the story of creation, God had raised vegetable life to become the vehicle of animality, and chemical process to be the vehicle of vegetation, and physical process to be the vehicle of chemical. Thus human spirit from being the master of human nature became a mere lodger in its own house, or even a prisoner; rational consciousness became what it now is — a fitful spot-light resting on a small part of the cerebral motions. But this limitation of the spirit's powers was a lesser evil than the corruption of the spirit itself. It had turned from God and become its own idol, so that though it could still turn back to God, it could do so only by painful effort, and its inclination was self-ward. Hence pride and ambition, the desire to be lovely in its own eyes and to depress and humiliate all rivals, envy, and restless search for more, and still more, security, were now the attitudes that came easiest to it. It was not only a weak king over its own nature, but a bad one: it sent down into the psycho-physical organism desires far worse than the organism sent up in to it. This condition was transmitted by heredity to all later generations, for it was not simply what biologists call an acquired variation; it was the emergence of a new kind of man — a new species, never made by

God, had sinned itself into existence. The change which man had undergone was not parallel to the development of a new organ or a new habit; it was a radical alteration of his constitution, a disturbance of the relation between his component parts, and an internal perversion of one of them.

God might have arrested this process by miracle: but this — to speak in somewhat irreverent metaphor — would have been to decline the problem which God had set Himself when He created the world, the problem of expressing His goodness through the total drama of a world containing free agents, in spite of, and by means of, their rebellion against Him. The symbol of a drama, a symphony, or a dance, is here useful to correct a certain absurdity which may arise if we talk too much of God planning and creating the world process for good and of that good being frustrated by the free will of the creatures. This may raise the ridiculous idea that the Fall took God by surprise and upset His plan, or else — more ridiculously still — that God planned the whole thing for conditions which, He well knew, were never going to be realised. In fact, of course, God saw the crucifixion in the act of creating the first nebula. The world is a dance in which good, descending from God, is disturbed by evil arising from the creatures, and the resulting conflict is resolved by God's own assumption of the suffering nature which evil produces. The doctrine of the free Fall asserts that the evil which thus makes the fuel or raw material for the second and more complex kind of good is not God's contribution but man's. This does not mean that if man had remained innocent God could not then have contrived an equally splendid symphonic whole — supposing that we insist on asking such questions. But it must always be remembered that when we talk of what might have happened, of contingencies outside the whole actuality, we do not really know what we are talking about. There are no times or places outside the existing universe in which all this "could happen" or "could have happened". I think the most significant way of stating the real freedom of man is to say that if there are other rational species than man, existing in some other part of the actual universe, then it is not necessary to suppose that they also have fallen.

Our present condition, then, is explained by the fact that we are members of a spoiled species. I do not mean that our sufferings are a punishment for being what we cannot now help being nor that we are morally responsible for the rebellion of a remote ancestor. If, none the less, I call our present condition one of original Sin, and not merely one of original misfortune,

that is because our actual religious experience does not allow us to regard it in any other way. Theoretically, I suppose, we might say "Yes: we behave like vermin, but then that is because we *are* vermin. And that, at any rate, is not our fault." But the fact that we are vermin, so far from being felt as an excuse, is a greater shame and grief to us than any of the particular acts which it leads us to commit. The situation is not nearly so hard to understand as some people make out. It arises among human beings whenever a very badly brought up boy is introduced into a decent family. They rightly remind themselves that it is "not his own fault" that he is a bully, a coward, a tale-bearer and a liar. But none the less, however it came there, his present character is detestable. They not only hate it, but ought to hate it. They cannot love him for what he is, they can only try to turn him into what he is not. In the meantime, though the boy is most unfortunate in having been so brought up, you cannot quite call his character a "misfortune" as if he were one thing and his character another. It is he — he himself — who bullies and sneaks and likes doing it. And if he begins to mend he will inevitably feel shame and guilt at what he is just beginning to cease to be.

With this I have said all that can be said on the level at which alone I feel able to treat the subject of the Fall. But I warn my readers once more that this level is a shallow one. We have said nothing about the trees of life and of knowledge which doubtless conceal some great mystery: and we have said nothing about the Pauline statement that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive". It is this passage which lies behind the Patristic doctrine of our physical presence in Adam's loins and Anselm's doctrine of our inclusion, by legal fiction, in the suffering Christ. These theories may have done good in their day but they do no good to me, and I am not going to invent others. We have recently been told by the scientists that we have no right to expect that the real universe should be picturable, and that if we make mental pictures to illustrate quantum physics we are moving further away from reality, not nearer to it. We have clearly even less right to demand that the highest spiritual realities should be picturable, or even explicable in terms of our abstract thought. I observe that the difficulty of the Pauline formula turns on the word *in*, and that this word, again and again in the New Testament, is used in senses we cannot fully understand. That we can die "in" Adam and live "in" Christ seems to me to imply that man, as he really is, differs a good deal from man as our categories of

thought and our three dimensional imaginations represent him; that the separateness — modified only by causal relations — which we discern between individuals, is balanced, in absolute reality, by some kind of "inter-inanimation" of which we have no conception at all. It may be that the acts and sufferings of great archetypal individuals such as Adam and Christ are ours, not by legal fiction, metaphor, or causality, but in some much deeper fashion. There is no question, of course, of individuals melting down into a kind of spiritual continuum such as Pantheistic systems believe in; that is excluded by the whole tenor of our faith. But there may be a tension between individuality and some other principle. We believe that the Holy Spirit can be really present and operative in the human spirit, but we do not, like Pantheists, take this to mean that we are "parts" or "modifications" or "appearances" of God. We may have to suppose, in the long run, that something of the same kind is true, in its appropriate degree, even of created spirits, that each, though distinct, is really present in all, or in some, others — just as we may have to admit "action at a distance" into our conception of matter. Everyone will have noticed how the Old Testament seems at times to ignore our conception of the individual. When God promises Jacob that "He will go down with him into Egypt and will also surely bring him up again", this is fulfilled either by the burial of Jacob's body in Palestine or by the exodus of Jacob's descendants from Egypt. It is quite right to connect this notion with the social structure of early communities in which the individual is constantly overlooked in favour of the tribe or family: but we ought to express this connection by two propositions of equal importance — firstly that their social experience blinded the ancients to some truths which we perceive, and secondly that it made them sensible of some truths to which we are blind. Legal fiction, adoption, and transference or imputation of merit and guilt, could never have played the part they did play in theology if they had always been felt to be so artificial as we now feel them to be.

I have thought it right to allow this one glance at what is for me an impenetrable curtain, but, as I have said, it makes no part of my present argument. Clearly it would be futile to attempt to solve the problem of pain by producing another problem. The thesis of this chapter is simply that man, as a species, spoiled himself, and that good, to us in our present state, must therefore mean primarily remedial or corrective good. What part pain actually plays in such remedy or correction, is now to be considered.

VI. HUMAN PAIN

Since the life of Christ is every way most bitter to nature and the Self and the Me (for in the true life of Christ, the Self and the Me and nature must be forsaken and lost and die altogether), therefore in each of us, nature hath a horror of it. *Theologia Germanica*, XX.

I have tried to show in a previous chapter that the possibility of pain is inherent in the very existence of a world where souls can meet. When souls become wicked they will certainly use this possibility to hurt one another; and this, perhaps, accounts for four-fifths of the sufferings of men. It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs; it is by human avarice or human stupidity, not by the churlishness of nature, that we have poverty and overwork. But there remains, none the less, much suffering which cannot thus be traced to ourselves. Even if all suffering were man-made, we should like to know the reason for the enormous permission to torture their fellows which God gives to the worst of men. To say, as was said in the last chapter, that good, for such creatures as we now are, means primarily corrective or remedial good, is an incomplete answer. Not all medicine tastes nasty: or if it did, that is itself one of the unpleasant facts for which we should like to know the reason.

Before proceeding I must pick up a point made in Chapter II. I there said that pain, below a certain level of intensity, was not resented and might even be rather liked. Perhaps you then wanted to reply “In that case I should not call it Pain”, and you may have been right. But the truth is that the word Pain has two senses which must now be distinguished. **A.** A particular kind of sensation, probably conveyed by specialised nerve fibres, and recognisable by the patient as that kind of sensation whether he dislikes it or not (*e.g.*, the faint ache in my limbs would be recognised as an ache even if I didn’t object to it). **B.** Any experience, whether physical or mental, which the patient dislikes. It will be noticed that all Pains in sense A become Pains in sense B if they are raised above a certain very low level of intensity, but that Pains in the B sense need not be Pains in the A sense. Pain in the B sense, in fact, is synonymous with “suffering”, “anguish”, “tribulation”, “adversity”, or “trouble”, and it is about it that the problem of pain arises.

For the rest of this book Pain will be used in the B sense and will include all types of suffering: with the A sense we have no further concern.

Now the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator — to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature. When it does so, it is good and happy. Lest we should think this a hardship, this kind of good begins on a level far above the creatures, for God Himself, as Son, from all eternity renders back to God as Father by filial obedience the being which the Father by paternal love eternally generates in the Son. This is the pattern which man was made to imitate — which Paradisal man did imitate — and wherever the will conferred by the Creator is thus perfectly offered back in delighted and delighting obedience by the creature, there, most undoubtedly, is Heaven, and there the Holy Ghost proceeds. In the world as we now know it, the problem is how to recover this self-surrender. We are not merely imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are, as Newman said, rebels who must lay down our arms. The first answer, then, to the question why our cure should be painful, is that to render back the will which we have so long claimed for our own, is in itself, wherever and however it is done, a grievous pain. Even in Paradise I have supposed a minimal self-adherence to be overcome, though the overcoming, and the yielding, would there be rapturous. But to surrender a self-will inflamed and swollen with years of usurpation is a kind of death. We all remember this self-will as it was in childhood the bitter, prolonged rage at every thwarting, the burst of passionate tears, the black, Satanic wish to kill or die rather than to give in. Hence the older type of nurse or parent was quite right in thinking that the first step in education is “to break the child’s will”. Their methods were often wrong: but not to see the necessity is, I think, to cut oneself off from all understanding of spiritual laws. And if, now that we are grown up, we do not howl and stamp quite so much, that is partly because our elders began the process of breaking or killing our self-will in the nursery, and partly because the same passions now take more subtle forms and have grown clever at avoiding death by various “compensations”. Hence the necessity to die daily: however often we think we have broken the rebellious self we shall still find it alive. That this process cannot be without pain is sufficiently witnessed by the very history of the word “Mortification”.

But this intrinsic pain, or death, in mortifying the usurped self, is not the whole story. Paradoxically, mortification, though itself a pain, is made easier by the presence of pain in its context. This happens, I think, principally in three ways.

The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it. Now error and sin both have this property, that the deeper they are the less their victim suspects their existence; they are masked evil. Pain is unmasked, unmistakable evil; every man knows that something is wrong when he is being hurt. The Masochist is no real exception. Sadism and Masochism respectively isolate, and then exaggerate, a "moment" or "aspect" in normal sexual passion. Sadism exaggerates the aspect of capture and domination to a point at which only ill-treatment of the beloved will satisfy the pervert — as though he said, "I am so much master that I even torment you." Masochism exaggerates the complementary and opposite aspect, and says "I am so enthralled that I welcome even pain at your hands". Unless the pain were felt as evil — as an outrage underlining the complete mastery of the other party — it would cease, for the Masochist, to be an erotic stimulus. And pain is not only immediately recognisable evil, but evil impossible to ignore. We can rest contentedly in our sins and in our stupidities; and anyone who has watched gluttons shovelling down the most exquisite foods as if they did not know what they were eating, will admit that we can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. A bad man, happy, is a man without the least inkling that his actions do not "answer", that they are not in accord with the laws of the universe.

A perception of this truth lies at the back of the universal human feeling that bad men ought to suffer. It is no use turning up our noses at this feeling, as if it were wholly base. On its mildest level it appeals to everyone's sense of justice. Once when my brother and I, as very small boys, were drawing pictures at the same table, I jerked his elbow and caused him to make an irrelevant line across the middle of his work; the matter was amicably settled by my allowing him to draw a line of equal length across mine. That is, I was "put in his place", made to see my negligence from the other end. On a sterner level the same idea appears as "retributive punishment", or "giving a man what he deserves". Some enlightened people would like to

banish all conceptions of retribution or desert from their theory of punishment and place its value wholly in the deterrence of others or the reform of the criminal himself. They do not see that by so doing they render all punishment unjust. What can be more immoral than to inflict suffering on me for the sake of deterring others if I do not *deserve* it? And if I do deserve it, you are admitting the claims of "retribution". And what can be more outrageous than to catch me and submit me to a disagreeable process of moral improvement without my consent, unless (once more) I *deserve* it? On yet a third level we get vindictive passion — the thirst for revenge. This, of course, is evil and expressly forbidden to Christians. But it has perhaps appeared already from our discussion of Sadism and Masochism that the ugliest things in human nature are perversions of good or innocent things. The good thing of which vindictive passion is the perversion comes out with startling clarity in Hobbes's definition of Revengefulness; "desire by doing hurt to another to make him condemn some fact of his own". Revenge loses sight of the end in the means, but its end is not wholly bad — it wants the evil of the bad man to be to him what it is to everyone else. This is proved by the fact that the avenger wants the guilty party not merely to suffer, but to suffer at his hands, and to know it, and to know why. Hence the impulse to taunt the guilty man with his crime at the moment of taking vengeance: hence, too, such natural expressions as "I wonder how he'd like it if the same thing were done to him" or "I'll teach him". For the same reason when we are going to abuse a man in words we say we are going to "let him know what we think of him".

When our ancestors referred to pains and sorrows as God's "vengeance" upon sin they were not necessarily attributing evil passions to God; they may have been recognising the good element in the idea of retribution. Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he knows that he is in some way or other "up against" the real universe: he either rebels (with the possibility of a clearer issue and deeper repentance at some later stage) or else makes some attempt at an adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to religion. It is true that neither effect is so certain now as it was in ages when the existence of God (or even of the Gods) was more widely known, but even in our own days we see it operating. Even atheists rebel and express, like Hardy and Housman, their rage against God

although (or because) He does not, on their view, exist: and other atheists, like Mr. Huxley, are driven by suffering to raise the whole problem of existence and to find some way of coming to terms with it which, if not Christian, is almost infinitely superior to fatuous contentment with a profane life. No doubt Pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul.

If the first and lowest operation of pain shatters the illusion that all is well, the second shatters the illusion that what we have, whether good or bad in itself, is our own and enough for us. Everyone has noticed how hard it is to turn our thoughts to God when everything is going well with us. We "have all we want" is a terrible saying when "all" does not include God. We find God an interruption. As St. Augustine says somewhere "God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full — there's nowhere for Him to put it." Or as a friend of mine said "we regard God as an airman regards his parachute; it's there for emergencies but he hopes he'll never have to use it." Now God, who has made us, knows what we are and that our happiness lies in Him. Yet we will not seek it in Him as long as He leaves us any other resort where it can even plausibly be looked for. While what we call "our own life" remains agreeable we will not surrender it to Him. What then can God do in our interests but make "our own life" less agreeable to us, and take away the plausible sources of false happiness? It is just here, where God's providence seems at first to be most cruel, that the Divine humility, the stooping down of the Highest, most deserves praise. We are perplexed to see misfortune falling upon decent, inoffensive, worthy people — on capable, hard-working mothers of families or diligent, thrifty, little trades-people, on those who have worked so hard, and so honestly, for their modest stock of happiness and now seem to be entering on the enjoyment of it with the fullest right. How can I say with sufficient tenderness what here needs to be said? It does not matter that I know I must become, in the eyes of every hostile reader, as it were personally responsible for all the sufferings I try to explain — just as, to this day, everyone talks as if St. Augustine *wanted* unbaptised infants to go to Hell. But it matters enormously if I alienate anyone from the truth. Let me implore the reader to try to believe, if only for the moment, that God, who made these deserving people, may really be right when He thinks that their

modest prosperity and the happiness of their children are not enough to make them blessed: that all this must fall from them in the end, and that if they have not learned to know Him they will be wretched. And therefore He troubles them, warning them in advance of an insufficiency that one day they will have to discover. The life to themselves and their families stands between them and the recognition of their need; He makes that life less sweet to them. I call this a Divine humility because it is a poor thing to strike our colours to God when the ship is going down under us; a poor thing to come to Him as a last resort, to offer up "our own" when it is no longer worth keeping. If God were proud He would hardly have us on such terms: but He is not proud, He stoops to conquer, He will have us even though we have shown that we prefer everything else to Him, and come to Him because there is "nothing better" now to be had. The same humility is shown by all those Divine appeals to our fears which trouble high-minded readers of scripture. It is hardly complimentary to God that we should choose Him as an alternative to Hell: yet even this He accepts. The creature's illusion of self-sufficiency must, for the creature's sake, be shattered; and by trouble or fear of trouble on earth, by crude fear of the eternal flames, God shatters it "unmindful of His glory's diminution". Those who would like the God of scripture to be more purely ethical, do not know what they ask. If God were a Kantian, who would not have us till we came to Him from the purest and best motives, who could be saved? And this illusion of self-sufficiency may be at its strongest in some very honest, kindly, and temperate people, and on such people, therefore, misfortune must fall.

The dangers of apparent self-sufficiency explain why Our Lord regards the vices of the feckless and dissipated so much more leniently than the vices that lead to worldly success. Prostitutes are in no danger of finding their present life so satisfactory that they cannot turn to God: the proud, the avaricious, the self-righteous, are in that danger.

The third operation of suffering is a little harder to grasp. Everyone will admit that choice is essentially conscious; to choose involves knowing that you choose. Now Paradisal man always chose to follow God's will. In following it he also gratified his own desire, both because all the actions demanded of him were, in fact, agreeable to his blameless inclination, and also because the service of God was itself his keenest pleasure, without which as their razor edge all joys would have been insipid to him. The

question “Am I doing this for God’s sake or only because I happen to like it?” did not then arise, since doing things for God’s sake was what he chiefly “happened to like”. His God-ward will rode his happiness like a well-managed horse, whereas our will, when we are happy, is carried away in the happiness as in a ship racing down a swift stream. Pleasure was then an acceptable offering to God because offering was a pleasure. But we inherit a whole system of desires which do not necessarily contradict God’s will but which, after centuries of usurped autonomy, steadfastly ignore it. If the thing we like doing is, in fact, the thing God wants us to do, yet that is not our reason for doing it; it remains a mere happy coincidence. We cannot therefore know that we are acting at all, or primarily, for God’s sake, unless the material of the action is contrary to our inclinations, or (in other words) painful, and what we cannot know that we are choosing, we cannot choose. The full acting out of the self’s surrender to God therefore demands pain: this action, to be perfect, must be done from the pure will to obey, in the absence, or in the teeth, of inclination. How impossible it is to enact the surrender of the self by doing what we like, I know very well from my own experience at the moment. When I undertook to write this book I hoped that the will to obey what might be a “leading” had at least some place in my motives. But now that I am thoroughly immersed in it, it has become a temptation rather than a duty. I may still hope that the writing of the book is, in fact, in conformity with God’s will: but to contend that I am learning to surrender myself by doing what is so attractive to me would be ridiculous.

Here we tread on very difficult ground. Kant thought that no action had moral value unless it were done out of pure reverence for the moral law, that is, without inclination, and he has been accused of a “morbid frame of mind” which measures the value of an act by its unpleasantness. All popular opinion is, indeed, on Kant’s side. The people never admire a man for doing something he likes: the very words “But he *likes* it” imply the corollary “And therefore it has no merit”. Yet against Kant stands the obvious truth, noted by Aristotle, that the more virtuous a man becomes the more he enjoys virtuous actions. What an atheist ought to do about this conflict between the ethics of duty and the ethics of virtue, I do not know: but as a Christian I suggest the following solution.

It has sometimes been asked whether God commands certain things because they are right, or whether certain things are right because God

commands them. With Hooker, and against Dr. Johnson, I emphatically embrace the first alternative. The second might lead to the abominable conclusion (reached, I think, by Paley) that charity is good only because God arbitrarily commanded it — that He might equally well have commanded us to hate Him and one another and that hatred would then have been right. I believe, on the contrary, that "they err who think that of the will of God to do this or that there is no reason besides His will". God's will is determined by His wisdom which always perceives, and His goodness which always embraces, the intrinsically good. But when we have said that God commands things only because they are good, we must add that one of the things intrinsically good is that rational creatures should freely surrender themselves to their Creator in obedience. The content of our obedience — the thing we are commanded to do — will always be something intrinsically good, something we ought to do even if (by an impossible supposition) God had not commanded it. But in addition to the content, the mere obeying is also intrinsically good, for, in obeying, a rational creature consciously enacts its creaturely *rôle*, reverses the act by which we fell, treads Adam's dance backward, and returns.

We therefore agree with Aristotle that what is intrinsically right may well be agreeable, and that the better a man is the more he will like it; but we agree with Kant so far as to say that there is one right act — that of self surrender — which cannot be willed to the height by fallen creatures unless it is unpleasant. And we must add that this one right act includes all other righteousness, and that the supreme cancelling of Adam's fall, the movement "full speed astern" by which we retrace our long journey from Paradise, the untying of the old, hard knot, must be when the creature, with no desire to aid it, stripped naked to the bare willing of obedience, embraces what is contrary to its nature, and does that for which only one motive is possible. Such an act may be described as a "test" of the creature's return to God: hence our fathers said that troubles were "sent to try us". A familiar example is Abraham's "trial" when he was ordered to sacrifice Isaac. With the historicity or the morality of that story I am not now concerned, but with the obvious question "If God is omniscient He must have known what Abraham would do, without any experiment; why, then, this needless torture?" But as St. Augustine points out, whatever God knew, Abraham at any rate did not know that his obedience could endure such a command until the event taught him: and the obedience which he did not know that he

would choose, he cannot be said to have chosen. The reality of Abraham's obedience was the act itself; and what God knew in knowing that Abraham "would obey" was Abraham's actual obedience on that mountain top at that moment. To say that God "need not have tried the experiment" is to say that because God knows, the thing known by God need not exist.

If pain sometimes shatters the creature's false self-sufficiency, yet in supreme "Trial" or "Sacrifice" it teaches him the self-sufficiency which really ought to be his — the "strength, which, if Heaven gave it, may be called his own": for then, in the absence of all merely natural motives and supports, he acts in that strength, and that alone, which God confers upon him through his subjected will. Human will becomes truly creative and truly our own when it is wholly God's, and this is one of the many senses in which he that loses his soul shall find it. In all other acts our will is fed through nature, that is, through created things other than the self — through the desires which our physical organism and our heredity supply to us. When we act from ourselves alone — that is, from God *in* ourselves — we are collaborators in, or live instruments of, creation: and that is why such an act undoes with "backward mutters of dissevering power" the uncreative spell which Adam laid upon his species. Hence as suicide is the typical expression of the stoic spirit, and battle of the warrior spirit, martyrdom always remains the supreme enacting and perfection of Christianity. This great action has been initiated for us, done on our behalf, exemplified for our imitation, and inconceivably communicated to all believers, by Christ on Calvary. There the degree of accepted Death reaches the utmost bounds of the imaginable and perhaps goes beyond them; not only all natural supports, but the presence of the very Father to whom the sacrifice is made deserts the victim, and surrender to God does not falter though God "forsakes" it.

The doctrine of death which I describe is not peculiar to Christianity. Nature herself has written it large across the world in the repeated drama of the buried seed and the re-arising corn. From nature, perhaps, the oldest agricultural communities learned it and with animal, or human, sacrifices showed forth for centuries the truth that "without shedding of blood is no remission"; and though at first such conceptions may have concerned only the crops and offspring of the tribe they came later, in the Mysteries, to concern the spiritual death and resurrection of the individual. The Indian ascetic, mortifying his body on a bed of spikes, preaches the same lesson;

the Greek philosopher tells us that the life of wisdom is “a practice of death”. The sensitive and noble heathen of modern times makes his imagined gods “die into life”. Mr. Huxley expounds “non-attachment”. We cannot escape the doctrine by ceasing to be Christians. It is an “eternal gospel” revealed to men wherever men have sought, or endured, the truth: it is the very nerve of redemption, which anatomising wisdom at all times and in all places lays bare; the unescapable knowledge which the Light that lighteneth every man presses down upon the minds of all who seriously question what the universe is “about”. The peculiarity of the Christian faith is not to teach this doctrine but to render it, in various ways, more tolerable. Christianity teaches us that the terrible task has already in some sense been accomplished for us — that a master’s hand is holding ours as we attempt to trace the difficult letters and that our script need only be a “copy”, not an original. Again, where other systems expose our total nature to death (as in Buddhist renunciation) Christianity demands only that we set right a *misdirection* of our nature, and has no quarrel, like Plato, with the body as such, nor with the psychical elements in our make-up. And sacrifice in its supreme realisation is not exacted of all. Confessors as well as martyrs are saved, and some old people whose state of grace we can hardly doubt seem to have got through their seventy years surprisingly easily. The sacrifice of Christ is repeated, or re-echoed, among His followers in very varying degrees, from the cruellest martyrdom down to a self-submission of intention whose outward signs have nothing to distinguish them from the ordinary fruits of temperance and “sweet reasonableness”. The causes of this distribution I do not know; but from our present point of view it ought to be clear that the real problem is not why some humble, pious, believing people suffer, but why some do *not*. Our Lord Himself, it will be remembered, explained the salvation of those who are fortunate in this world only by referring to the unsearchable omnipotence of God.

All arguments in justification of suffering provoke bitter resentment against the author. You would like to know how I behave when I am experiencing pain, not writing books about it. You need not guess, for I will tell you; I am a great coward. But what is that to the purpose? When I think of pain — of anxiety that gnaws like fire and loneliness that spreads out like a desert, and the heartbreaking routine of monotonous misery, or again of dull aches that blacken our whole landscape or sudden nauseating pains that

knock a man's heart out at one blow, of pains that seem already intolerable and then are suddenly increased, of infuriating scorpion-stinging pains that startle into maniacal movement a man who seemed half dead with his previous tortures — it "quite o'ercrows my spirit". If I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it. But what is the good of telling you about my feelings? You know them already: they are the same as yours. I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made "perfect through suffering" is not incredible. To prove it palatable is beyond my design.

In estimating the credibility of the doctrine two principles ought to be observed. In the first place we must remember that the actual moment of present pain is only the centre of what may be called the whole tribulational system which extends itself by fear and pity. Whatever good effects these experiences have are dependent upon the centre; so that even if pain itself was of no spiritual value, yet, if fear and pity were, pain would have to exist in order that there should be something to be feared and pitied. And that fear and pity help us in our return to obedience and charity is not to be doubted. Everyone has experienced the effect of pity in making it easier for us to love the unlovely — that is, to love men not because they are in any way naturally agreeable to us but because they are our brethren. The beneficence of fear most of us have learned during the period of "crises" that led up to the present war. My own experience is something like this. I am progressing along the path of life in my ordinary contentedly fallen and godless condition, absorbed in a merry meeting with my friends for the morrow or a bit of work that tickles my vanity to-day, a holiday or a new book, when suddenly a stab of abdominal pain that threatens serious disease, or a headline in the newspapers that threatens us all with destruction, sends this whole pack of cards tumbling down. At first I am overwhelmed, and all my little happinesses look like broken toys. Then, slowly and reluctantly, bit by bit, I try to bring myself into the frame of mind that I should be in at all times. I remind myself that all these toys were never intended to possess my heart, that my true good is in another world and my only real treasure is Christ. And perhaps, by God's grace, I succeed, and for a day or two become a creature consciously dependent on God and drawing its strength from the right sources. But the moment the threat is withdrawn, my whole nature leaps back to the toys: I am even anxious, God

forgive me, to banish from my mind the only thing that supported me under the threat because it is now associated with the misery of those few days. Thus the terrible necessity of tribulation is only too clear. God has had me for but forty-eight hours and then only by dint of taking everything else away from me. Let Him but sheathe that sword for a moment and I behave like a puppy when the hated bath is over — I shake myself as dry as I can and race off to reacquire my comfortable dirtiness, if not in the nearest manure heap, at least in the nearest flower bed. And that is why tribulations cannot cease until God either sees us remade or sees that our remaking is now hopeless.

In the second place, when we are considering pain itself — the centre of the whole tribulational system — we must be careful to attend to what we know and not to what we imagine. That is one of the reasons why the whole central part of this book is devoted to human pain, and animal pain is relegated to a special chapter. About human pain we know, about animal pain we only speculate. But even within the human race we must draw our evidence from instances that have come under our own observation. The tendency of this or that novelist or poet may represent suffering as wholly bad in its effects, as producing, and justifying, every kind of malice and brutality in the sufferer. And, of course, pain, like pleasure, can be so received: all that is given to a creature with free will must be two-edged, not by the nature of the giver or of the gift, but by the nature of the recipient. And, again, the evil results of pain can be multiplied if sufferers are persistently taught by the bystanders that such results are the proper and manly results for them to exhibit. Indignation at other's sufferings, though a generous passion, needs to be well managed lest it steal away patience and humility from those who suffer and plant anger and cynicism in their stead. But I am not convinced that suffering, if spared such officious vicarious indignation, has any natural tendency to produce such evils. I did not find the front-line trenches or the C.C.S. more full than any other place of hatred, selfishness, rebellion, and dishonesty. I have seen great beauty of spirit in some who were great sufferers. I have seen men, for the most part, grow better not worse with advancing years, and I have seen the last illness produce treasures of fortitude and meekness from most unpromising subjects. I see in loved and revered historical figures, such as Johnson and Cowper, traits which might scarcely have been tolerable if the men had been happier. If the world is indeed a "vale of soul making" it seems on the

whole to be doing its work. Of poverty — the affliction which actually or potentially includes all other afflictions — I would not dare to speak as from myself; and those who reject Christianity will not be moved by Christ's statement that poverty is blessed. But here a rather remarkable fact comes to my aid. Those who would most scornfully repudiate Christianity as a mere "opiate of the people" have a contempt for the rich, that is, for all mankind *except* the poor. They regard the poor as the only people worth preserving from "liquidation", and place in them the only hope of the human race. But this is not compatible with a belief that the effects of poverty on those who suffer it are wholly evil; it even implies that they are good. The Marxist thus finds himself in real agreement with the Christian in those two beliefs which Christianity paradoxically demands — that poverty is blessed and yet ought to be removed.

VII. HUMAN PAIN, continued

All things which are as they ought to be are conformed unto *this second law eternal*; and even those things which to this eternal law are not conformable are notwithstanding in some sort ordered by *the first eternal law*. Hooker. *Laws of Eccles. Pol.*, I, iii, 1.

In this chapter I advance six propositions necessary to complete our account of human suffering which do not arise out of one another and must therefore be given in an arbitrary order.

1. There is a paradox about tribulation in Christianity. Blessed are the poor, but by "judgement" (*i.e.*, social justice) and alms we are to remove poverty wherever possible. Blessed are we when persecuted, but we may avoid persecution by flying from city to city, and may pray to be spared it, as Our Lord prayed in Gethsemane. But if suffering is good, ought it not to be pursued rather than avoided? I answer that suffering is not good in itself. What is good in any painful experience is, for the sufferer, his submission to the will of God, and, for the spectators, the compassion aroused and the acts of mercy to which it leads. In the fallen and partially redeemed universe we may distinguish (1) The simple good descending from God, (2) The simple evil produced by rebellious creatures, and (3) the exploitation of that evil by God for His redemptive purpose, which produces (4) the complex good to which accepted suffering and repented sin contribute. Now the fact that God can make complex good out of simple evil does not excuse — though by mercy it may save — those who do the simple evil. And this distinction is central. Offences must come, but woe to those by whom they come; sins *do* cause grace to abound, but we must not make that an excuse for continuing to sin. The crucifixion itself is the best, as well as the worst, of all historical events, but the *rôle* of Judas remains simply evil. We may apply this first to the problem of other people's suffering. A merciful man aims at his neighbour's good and so does "God's will", consciously co-operating with "the simple good". A cruel man oppresses his neighbour, and so does simple evil. But in doing such evil, he is used by God, without his own knowledge or consent, to produce the complex good — so that the first man serves God as a son, and the second as a tool. For you will certainly carry out God's purpose, however you act, but it makes a difference to you whether you serve like Judas or like John. The whole system is, so to speak,

calculated for the clash between good men and bad men, and the good fruits of fortitude, patience, pity and forgiveness for which the cruel man is permitted to be cruel, presuppose that the good man ordinarily continues to seek simple good. I say "ordinarily" because a man is sometimes entitled to hurt (or even, in my opinion, to kill) his fellow, but only where the necessity is urgent and the good to be attained obvious, and usually (though not always) when he who inflicts the pain has a definite authority to do so — a parent's authority derived from nature, a magistrate's or soldier's derived from civil society, or a surgeon's derived, most often, from the patient. To turn this into a general charter for afflicting humanity "because affliction is good for them" (as Marlowe's lunatic Tamberlaine boasted himself the "scourge of God") is not indeed to break the divine scheme but to volunteer for the post of Satan within that scheme. If you do his work, you must be prepared for his wages.

The problem about avoiding our own pain admits a similar solution. Some ascetics have used self-torture. As a layman, I offer no opinion on the prudence of such a regimen; but I insist that, whatever its merits, self-torture is quite a different thing from tribulation sent by God. Everyone knows that fasting is a different experience from missing your dinner by accident or through poverty. Fasting asserts the will against the appetite — the reward being self-mastery and the danger pride: involuntary hunger subjects appetites and will together to the Divine will, furnishing an occasion for submission and exposing us to the danger of rebellion. But the redemptive effect of suffering lies chiefly in its tendency to reduce the rebel will. Ascetic practices, which in themselves strengthen the will, are only useful in so far as they enable the will to put its own house (the passions) in order, as a preparation for offering the whole man to God. They are necessary as a means; as an end, they would be abominable, for in substituting will for appetite and there stopping, they would merely exchange the animal self for the diabolical self. It was, therefore, truly said that "only God can mortify". Tribulation does its work in a world where human beings are ordinarily seeking, by lawful means, to avoid their own natural evil and to attain their natural good, and presupposes such a world. In order to submit the will to God, we must have a will and that will must have objects. Christian renunciation does not mean stoic "Apathy", but a readiness to prefer God to inferior ends which are in themselves lawful. Hence the Perfect Man brought to Gethsemane a will, and a strong will, to

escape suffering and death if such escape were compatible with the Father's will, combined with a perfect readiness for obedience if it were not. Some of the saints recommend a "total renunciation" at the very threshold of our discipleship; but I think this can mean only a total readiness for every particular renunciation that may be demanded, for it would not be possible to live from moment to moment willing nothing but submission to God as such. What would be the *material* for the submission? It would seem self-contradictory to say "What I will is to subject what I will to God's will", for the second *what* has no content. Doubtless we all spend too much care in the avoidance of our own pain: but a duly subordinated intention to avoid it, using lawful means, is in accordance with "nature" — that is, with the whole working system of creaturely life for which the redemptive work of tribulation is calculated.

It would be quite false, therefore, to suppose that the Christian view of suffering is incompatible with the strongest emphasis on our duty to leave the world, even in a temporal sense, "better" than we found it. In the fullest parabolic picture which He gave of the Judgement, Our Lord seems to reduce all virtue to active beneficence: and though it would be misleading to take that one picture in isolation from the Gospel as a whole, it is sufficient to place beyond doubt the basic principles of the social ethics of Christianity.

2. If tribulation is a necessary element in redemption, we must anticipate that it will never cease till God sees the world to be either redeemed or no further redeemable. A Christian cannot, therefore, believe any of those who promise that if only some reform in our economic, political, or hygienic system were made, a heaven on earth would follow. This might seem to have a discouraging effect on the social worker, but it is not found in practice to discourage him. On the contrary, a strong sense of our common miseries, simply as men, is at least as good a spur to the removal of all the miseries we can, as any of those wild hopes which tempt men to seek their realisation by breaking the moral law and prove such dust and ashes when they are realised. If applied to individual life, the doctrine that an imagined heaven on earth is necessary for vigorous attempts to remove present evil, would at once reveal its absurdity. Hungry men seek food and sick men healing none the less because they know that after the meal or the cure the ordinary ups and downs of life still await them. I am not, of course, discussing whether very drastic changes in our social system are, or are not,

desirable; I am only reminding the reader that a particular medicine is not to be mistaken for the elixir of life.

3. Since political issues have here crossed our path, I must make it clear that the Christian doctrine of self-surrender and obedience is a purely theological, and not in the least a political, doctrine. Of forms of government, of civil authority and civil obedience, I have nothing to say. The kind and degree of obedience which a creature owes to its Creator is unique because the relation between creature and Creator is unique: no inference can be drawn from it to any political proposition whatsoever.

4. The Christian doctrine of suffering explains, I believe, a very curious fact about the world we live in. The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world: but joy, pleasure, and merriment, He has scattered broadcast. We are never safe, but we have plenty of fun, and some ecstasy. It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God: a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bathe or a football match, have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.

5. We must never make the problem of pain worse than it is by vague talk about the "unimaginable sum of human misery". Suppose that I have a toothache of intensity x: and suppose that you, who are seated beside me, also begin to have a toothache of intensity x. You may, if you choose, say that the total amount of pain in the room is now $2x$. But you must remember that no one is suffering $2x$: search all time and all space and you will not find that composite pain in anyone's consciousness. There is no such thing as a sum of suffering, for no one suffers it. When we have reached the maximum that a single person can suffer, we have, no doubt, reached something very horrible, but we have reached all the suffering there ever can be in the universe. The addition of a million fellow-sufferers adds no more pain.

6. Of all evils, pain only is sterilised or disinfected evil. Intellectual evil, or error, may recur because the cause of the first error (such as fatigue or bad handwriting) continues to operate: but quite apart from that, error in its own right breeds error — if the first step in an argument is wrong, everything that follows will be wrong. Sin may recur because the original temptation continues; but quite apart from that, sin of its very nature breeds

sin by strengthening sinful habit and weakening the conscience. Now pain, like the other evils, may of course recur because the cause of the first pain (disease, or an enemy) is still operative: but pain has no tendency, in its own right, to proliferate. When it is over, it is over, and the natural sequel is joy. This distinction may be put the other way round. After an error you need not only to remove the causes (the fatigue or bad writing) but also to correct the error itself: after a sin you must not only, if possible, remove the temptation, you must also go back and repent the sin itself. In each case an "undoing" is required. Pain requires no such undoing. You may need to heal the disease which caused it, but the pain, once over, is sterile — whereas every uncorrected error and unrepented sin is, in its own right, a fountain of fresh error and fresh sin flowing on to the end of time. Again, when I err, my error infects every one who believes me. When I sin publicly, every spectator either condones it, thus sharing my guilt, or condemns it with imminent danger to his charity and humility. But suffering naturally produces in the spectators (unless they are unusually depraved) no bad effect, but a good one — pity. Thus that evil which God chiefly uses to produce the "complex good" is most markedly disinfected, or deprived of that proliferous tendency which is the worst characteristic of evil in general.

VIII. HELL

What is the world, O soldiers?
It is I:
I, this incessant snow,
This northern sky;
Soldiers, this solitude
Through which we go
Is I.
W. de la Mare. *Napoleon.*
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
Shakespeare.

In an earlier chapter it was admitted that the pain which alone could rouse the bad man to a knowledge that all was not well, might also lead to a final and unrepented rebellion. And it has been admitted throughout that man has free will and that all gifts to him are therefore two edged. From these premises it follows directly that the Divine labour to redeem the world cannot be certain of succeeding as regards every individual soul. Some will not be redeemed. There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord's own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason. If a game is played, it must be possible to lose it. If the happiness of a creature lies in self-surrender, no one can make that surrender but himself (though many can help him to make it) and he may refuse. I would pay any price to be able to say truthfully "All will be saved". But my reason retorts, "Without their will, or with it?" If I say "Without their will" I at once perceive a contradiction; how can the supreme voluntary act of self-surrender be involuntary? If I say "With their will", my reason replies "How if they *will not* give in?"

The Dominical utterances about Hell, like all Dominical sayings, are addressed to the conscience and the will, not to our intellectual curiosity. When they have roused us into action by convincing us of a terrible possibility, they have done, probably, all they were intended to do; and if all the world were convinced Christians it would be unnecessary to say a word more on the subject. As things are, however, this doctrine is one of the chief

grounds on which Christianity is attacked as barbarous, and the goodness of God impugned. We are told that it is a detestable doctrine — and indeed, I too detest it from the bottom of my heart — and are reminded of the tragedies in human life which have come from believing it. Of the other tragedies which come from not believing it we are told less. For these reasons, and these alone, it becomes necessary to discuss the matter.

The problem is not simply that of a God who consigns some of His creatures to final ruin. That would be the problem if we were Mahometans. Christianity, true, as always, to the complexity of the real, presents us with something knottier and more ambiguous — a God so full of mercy that He becomes man and dies by torture to avert that final ruin from His creatures, and who yet, where that heroic remedy fails, seems unwilling, or even unable, to arrest the ruin by an act of mere power. I said glibly a moment ago that I would pay "any price" to remove this *doctrine*. I lied. I could not pay one-thousandth part of the price that God has already paid to remove the *fact*. And here is the real problem: so much mercy, yet still there is Hell.

I am not going to try to prove the doctrine tolerable. Let us make no mistake; it is *not* tolerable. But I think the doctrine can be shown to be moral, by a critique of the objections ordinarily made, or felt, against it.

First, there is an objection, in many minds, to the idea of retributive punishment as such. This has been partly dealt with in a previous chapter. It was there maintained that all punishment became unjust if the ideas of ill-desert and retribution were removed from it; and a core of righteousness was discovered within the vindictive passion itself, in the demand that the evil man must not be left perfectly satisfied with his own evil, that it must be made to appear to him what it rightly appears to others — evil. I said that Pain plants the flag of truth within a rebel fortress. We were then discussing pain which might still lead to repentance. How if it does not — if no further conquest than the planting of the flag ever takes place? Let us try to be honest with ourselves. Picture to yourself a man who has risen to wealth or power by a continued course of treachery and cruelty, by exploiting for purely selfish ends the noble motions of his victims, laughing the while at their simplicity; who, having thus attained success, uses it for the gratification of lust and hatred and finally parts with the last rag of honour among thieves by betraying his own accomplices and jeering at their last moments of bewildered disillusionment. Suppose, further, that he does all this, not (as we like to imagine) tormented by remorse or even misgiving,

but eating like a schoolboy and sleeping like a healthy infant — a jolly, ruddy-cheeked man, without a care in the world, unshakably confident to the very end that he alone has found the answer to the riddle of life, that God and man are fools whom he has got the better of, that his way of life is utterly successful, satisfactory, unassailable. We must be careful at this point. The least indulgence of the passion for revenge is very deadly sin. Christian charity counsels us to make every effort for the conversion of such a man: to prefer his conversion, at the peril of our own lives, perhaps of our own souls, to his punishment; to prefer it infinitely. But that is not the question. Supposing he *will* not be converted, what destiny in the eternal world can you regard as proper for him? Can you really desire that such a man, *remaining what he is* (and he must be able to do that if he has free will) should be confirmed forever in his present happiness — should continue, for all eternity, to be perfectly convinced that the laugh is on his side? And if you cannot regard this as tolerable, is it only your wickedness — only spite — that prevents you from doing so? Or do you find that conflict between Justice and Mercy, which has sometimes seemed to you such an outmoded piece of theology, now actually at work in your own mind, and feeling very much as if it came to you from above, not from below? You are moved not by a desire for the wretched creature's pain as such, but by a truly ethical demand that, soon or late, the right should be asserted, the flag planted in this horribly rebellious soul, even if no fuller and better conquest is to follow. In a sense, it is better for the creature itself, even if it never becomes good, that it should know itself a failure, a mistake. Even mercy can hardly wish to such a man his eternal, contented continuance in such ghastly illusion. Thomas Aquinas said of suffering, as Aristotle had said of shame, that it was a thing not good in itself, but a thing which might have a certain goodness in particular circumstances. That is to say, if evil is present, pain at recognition of the evil, being a kind of knowledge, is relatively good; for the alternative is that the soul should be ignorant of the evil, or ignorant that the evil is contrary to its nature, "either of which", says the philosopher, "is *manifestly* bad". And I think, though we tremble, we agree.

The demand that God should forgive such a man while he remains what he is, is based on a confusion between condoning and forgiving. To condone an evil is simply to ignore it, to treat it as if it were good. But

forgiveness needs to be accepted as well as offered if it is to be complete: and a man who admits no guilt can accept no forgiveness.

I have begun with the conception of Hell as a positive retributive punishment inflicted by God because that is the form in which the doctrine is most repellent, and I wished to tackle the strongest objection. But, of course, though Our Lord often speaks of Hell as a sentence inflicted by a tribunal, He also says elsewhere that the judgement consists in the very fact that men prefer darkness to light, and that not He, but His "word", judges men. We are therefore at liberty — since the two conceptions, in the long run, mean the same thing — to think of this bad man's perdition not as a sentence imposed on him but as the mere fact of being what he is. The characteristic of lost souls is "their rejection of everything that is not simply themselves". Our imaginary egoist has tried to turn everything he meets into a province or appendage of the self. The taste for the *other*, that is, the very capacity for enjoying good, is quenched in him except in so far as his body still draws him into some rudimentary contact with an outer world. Death removes this last contact. He has his wish — to live wholly in the self and to make the best of what he finds there. And what he finds there is Hell.

Another objection turns on the apparent disproportion between eternal damnation and transitory sin. And if we think of eternity as a mere prolongation of time, it is disproportionate. But many would reject this idea of eternity. If we think of time as a line — which is a good image, because the parts of time are successive and no two of them can co-exist; *i.e.*, there is no *width* in time, only length — we probably ought to think of eternity as a plane or even a solid. Thus the whole reality of a human being would be represented by a solid figure. That solid would be mainly the work of God, acting through grace and nature, but human free will would have contributed the base-line which we call earthly life; and if you draw your base line askew, the whole solid will be in the wrong place. The fact that life is short, or, in the symbol, that we contribute only one little line to the whole complex figure, might be regarded as a Divine mercy. For if even the drawing of that little line, left to our free will, is sometimes so badly done as to spoil the whole, how much worse a mess might we have made of the figure if more had been entrusted to us? A simpler form of the same objection consists in saying that death ought not to be final, that there ought to be a second chance. I believe that if a million chances were likely to do good, they would be given. But a master often knows, when boys and

parents do not, that it is really useless to send a boy in for a certain examination again. Finality must come some time, and it does not require a very robust faith to believe that omniscience knows when.

A third objection turns on the frightful intensity of the pains of Hell as suggested by mediæval art and, indeed, by certain passages in Scripture. Von Hügel here warns us not to confuse the doctrine itself with the *imagery* by which it may be conveyed. Our Lord speaks of Hell under three symbols: first, that of punishment ("everlasting punishment," Matt. xxv, 46); second, that of destruction ("fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell," Matt. x, 28); and thirdly, that of privation, exclusion, or banishment into "the darkness outside", as in the parables of the man without a wedding garment or of the wise and foolish virgins. The prevalent image of fire is significant because it combines the ideas of torment and destruction. Now it is quite certain that all these expressions are intended to suggest something unspeakably horrible, and any interpretation which does not face that fact is, I am afraid, out of court from the beginning. But it is not necessary to concentrate on the images of torture to the exclusion of those suggesting destruction and privation. What can that be whereof all three images are equally proper symbols? Destruction, we should naturally assume, means the unmaking, or cessation, of the destroyed. And people often talk as if the "annihilation" of a soul were intrinsically possible. In all our experience, however, the destruction of one thing means the emergence of something else. Burn a log, and you have gases, heat and ash. To *have been* a log means now being those three things. If soul can be destroyed, must there not be a state of *having been* a human soul? And is not that, perhaps, the state which is equally well described as torment, destruction, and privation? You will remember that in the parable, the saved go to a place prepared for *them*, while the damned go to a place never made for men at all. To enter heaven is to become more human than you ever succeeded in being in earth; to enter hell, is to be banished from humanity. What is cast (or casts itself) into hell is not a man: it is "remains". To be a complete man means to have the passions obedient to the will and the will offered to God: to *have been* a man — to be an ex-man or "damned ghost" — would presumably mean to consist of a will utterly centred in its self and passions utterly uncontrolled by the will. It is, of course, impossible to imagine what the consciousness of such a creature — already a loose congeries of mutually antagonistic sins rather than a sinner — would be

like. There may be a truth in the saying that “hell is hell, not from its own point of view, but from the heavenly point of view”. I do not think this belies the severity of Our Lord’s words. It is only to the damned that their fate could ever seem less than unendurable. And it must be admitted that as, in these last chapters, we think of eternity, the categories of pain and pleasure, which have engaged us so long, begin to recede, as vaster good and evil looms in sight. Neither pain nor pleasure as such has the last word. Even if it were possible that the experience (if it can be called experience) of the lost contained no pain and much pleasure, still, that black pleasure would be such as to send any soul, not already damned, flying to its prayers in nightmare terror: even if there were pains in heaven, all who understand would desire them.

A fourth objection is that no charitable man could himself be blessed in heaven while he knew that even one human soul was still in hell; and if so, are we more merciful than God? At the back of this objection lies a mental picture of heaven and hell co-existing in unilinear time as the histories of England and America co-exist: so that at each moment the blessed could say “The miseries of hell are *now* going on”. But I notice that Our Lord, while stressing the terror of hell with unsparing severity usually emphasises the idea not of duration but of *finality*. Consignment to the destroying fire is usually treated as the end of the story — not as the beginning of a new story. That the lost soul is eternally fixed in its diabolical attitude we cannot doubt: but whether this eternal fixity implies endless duration — or duration at all — we cannot say. Dr. Edwyn Bevan has some interesting speculations on this point. We know much more about heaven than hell, for heaven is the home of humanity and therefore contains all that is implied in a glorified human life: but hell was not made for men. It is in no sense *parallel* to heaven: it is “the darkness outside”, the outer rim where being fades away into nonentity.

Finally, it is objected that the ultimate loss of a single soul means the defeat of omnipotence. And so it does. In creating beings with free will, omnipotence from the outset submits to the possibility of such defeat. What you call defeat, I call miracle: for to make things which are not Itself, and thus to become, in a sense, capable of being resisted by its own handiwork, is the most astonishing and unimaginable of all the feats we attribute to the Deity. I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the *inside*. I do not

mean that the ghosts may not *wish* to come out of hell, in the vague fashion wherein an envious man "wishes" to be happy: but they certainly do not will even the first preliminary stages of that self-abandonment through which alone the soul can reach any good. They enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved: just as the blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.

In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell, is itself a question: "What are you asking God to do?" To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does.

One caution, and I have done. In order to rouse modern minds to an understanding of the issues, I ventured to introduce in this chapter a picture of the sort of bad man whom we most easily perceive to be truly bad. But when the picture has done that work, the sooner it is forgotten the better. In all discussions of Hell we should keep steadily before our eyes the possible damnation, not of our enemies nor our friends (since both these disturb the reason) but of ourselves. This chapter is not about your wife or son, nor about Nero or Judas Iscariot; it is about you and me.

IX. ANIMAL PAIN

And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. Genesis ii, 19.

To find out what is natural, we must study specimens which retain their nature and not those which have been corrupted. Aristotle. *Politics*, I, v, 5.

Thus far of human suffering; but all this time "a plaint of guiltless hurt doth pierce the sky". The problem of animal suffering is appalling; not because the animals are so numerous (for, as we have seen, no more pain is felt when a million suffer than when one suffers) but because the Christian explanation of human pain cannot be extended to animal pain. So far as we know beasts are incapable either of sin or virtue: therefore they can neither deserve pain nor be improved by it. At the same time we must never allow the problem of animal suffering to become the centre of the problem of pain; not because it is unimportant — whatever furnishes plausible grounds for questioning the goodness of God is very important indeed — but because it is outside the range of our knowledge. God has given us data which enable us, in some degree, to understand our own suffering: He has given us no such data about beasts. We know neither why they were made nor what they are, and everything we say about them is speculative. From the doctrine that God is good we may confidently deduce that the *appearance* of reckless divine cruelty in the animal kingdom is an illusion — and the fact that the only suffering we know at first hand (our own) turns out not to be a cruelty will make it easier to believe this. After that, everything is guesswork.

We may begin by ruling out some of the pessimistic bluff put up in the first chapter. The fact that vegetable lives "prey upon" one another and are in a state of "ruthless" competition is of no moral importance at all. "Life" in the biological sense has nothing to do with good and evil until sentience appears. The very words "prey" and "ruthless" are mere metaphors. Wordsworth believed that every flower "enjoyed the air it breathes", but there is no reason to suppose he was right. No doubt, living plants react to injuries differently from inorganic matter; but an anæsthetised human body reacts more differently still and such reactions do not prove sentience. We are, of course, justified in speaking of the death or thwarting of a plant as if it were a tragedy, provided that we know we are using a metaphor. To

furnish symbols for spiritual experiences may be one of the functions of the mineral and vegetable worlds. But we must not become the victims of our metaphor. A forest in which half the trees are killing the other half may be a perfectly "good" forest: for its goodness consists in its utility and beauty and it does not feel.

When we turn to the beasts, three questions arise. There is, first, the question of fact; what do animals suffer? There is, secondly, the question of origin; how did disease and pain enter the animal world? And, thirdly, there is the question of justice; how can animal suffering be reconciled with the justice of God?

1. In the long run the answer to the first question is, We don't know; but some speculations may be worth setting down. We must begin by distinguishing among animals: for if the ape could understand us he would take it very ill to be lumped along with the oyster and the earth-worm in a single class of "animals" and contrasted to men. Clearly in some ways the ape and man are much more like each other than either is like the worm. At the lower end of the animal realm we need not assume anything we could recognise as sentience. Biologists in distinguishing animal from vegetable do not make use of sentience or locomotion or other such characteristics as a layman would naturally fix upon. At some point, however (though where, we cannot say), sentience almost certainly comes in, for the higher animals have nervous systems very like our own. But at this level we must still distinguish sentience from consciousness. If you happen never to have heard of this distinction before, I am afraid you will find it rather startling, but it has great authority and you would be ill-advised to dismiss it out of hand. Suppose that three sensations follow one another — first A, then B, then C. When this happens to you, you have the experience of passing through the process ABC. But note what this implies. It implies that there is something in you which stands sufficiently outside A to notice A passing away, and sufficiently outside B to notice B now beginning and coming to fill the place which A has vacated; and something which recognises itself as the same through the transition from A to B and B to C, so that it can say "I have had the experience ABC." Now this something is what I call Consciousness or Soul and the process I have just described is one of the proofs that the soul, though experiencing time, is not itself completely "timeful". The simplest experience of ABC as a succession demands a soul which is not itself a mere succession of states, but rather a permanent bed

along which these different portions of the stream of sensation roll, and which recognises itself as the same beneath them all. Now it is almost certain that the nervous system of one of the higher animals presents it with successive sensations. It does not follow that it has any “soul”, anything which recognises itself as having had A, and now having B, and now marking how B glides away to make room for C. If it had no such “soul”, what we call the experience ABC would never occur. There would, in philosophic language, be “a succession of perceptions”; that is, the sensations would, in fact, occur in that order, and God would know that they were so occurring, but the animal would not know. There would not be “a perception of succession”. This would mean that if you give such a creature two blows with a whip, there are, indeed, two pains: but there is no co-ordinating self which can recognise that “I have had two pains”. Even in the single pain, there is no self to say “I am in pain” — for if it could distinguish itself from the sensation — the bed from the stream — sufficiently to say “I am in pain” it would also be able to connect the two sensations as *its* experience. The correct description would be “Pain is taking place in this animal”; not, as we commonly say, “This animal feels pain”, for the words “this” and “feels” really smuggle in the assumption that it is a “self” or “soul” or “consciousness” standing above the sensations and organising them into an “experience” as we do. Such sentience without consciousness, I admit, we cannot imagine: not because it never occurs in us, but because, when it does, we describe ourselves as being “unconscious”. And rightly. The fact that animals react to pain much as we do is, of course, no proof that they are conscious; for we may also so react under chloroform, and even answer questions while asleep.

How far up the scale such unconscious sentience may extend, I will not even guess. It is certainly difficult to suppose that the apes, the elephant, and the higher domestic animals, have not, in some degree, a self or soul which connects experiences and gives rise to rudimentary individuality. But at least a great deal of what appears to be animal suffering need not be suffering in any real sense. It may be we who have invented the “sufferers” by the “pathetic fallacy” of reading into the beast a self for which there is no real evidence.

2. The origin of animal suffering could be traced, by earlier generations, to the Fall of man — the whole world was infected by the uncreating rebellion of Adam. This is now impossible, for we have good reason to

believe that animals existed long before men. Carnivorousness, with all that it entails, is older than humanity. Now it is impossible at this point not to remember a certain sacred story which, though never included in the creeds, has been widely believed in the Church and seems to be implied in several Dominical, Pauline, and Johannine utterances — I mean the story that man was not the first creature to rebel against the Creator, but that some older and mightier being long since became apostate and is now the emperor of darkness and (significantly) the Lord of this world. Some people would like to reject all such elements from Our Lord's teaching: and it might be argued that when He emptied Himself of His glory He also humbled Himself to share, as man, the current superstitions of His time. And I certainly think that Christ, in the flesh, was not omniscient — if only because a human brain could not, presumably, be the vehicle of omniscient consciousness, and to say that Our Lord's thinking was not really conditioned by the size and shape of His brain might be to deny the real incarnation and become a Docetist. Thus, if Our Lord had committed Himself to any scientific or historical statement which we knew to be untrue, this would not disturb my faith in His deity. But the doctrine of Satan's existence and fall is not among the things we know to be untrue: it contradicts not the facts discovered by scientists but the mere, vague "climate of opinion" that we happen to be living in. Now I take a very low view of "climates of opinion". In his own subject every man knows that all discoveries are made and all errors corrected by those who ignore the "climate of opinion".

It seems to me, therefore, a reasonable supposition, that some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on the material universe, or the solar system, or, at least, the planet Earth, before ever man came on the scene: and that when man fell, someone had, indeed, tempted him. This hypothesis is not introduced as a general "explanation of evil": it only gives a wider application to the principle that evil comes from the abuse of free-will. If there is such a power, as I myself believe, it may well have corrupted the animal creation before man appeared. The intrinsic evil of the animal world lies in the fact that animals, or some animals, live by destroying each other. That plants do the same I will not admit to be an evil. The Satanic corruption of the beasts would therefore be analogous, in one respect, with the Satanic corruption of man. For one result of man's fall was that his animality fell back from the humanity into which it had been taken up but which could no longer rule it. In the same way, animality may have

been encouraged to slip back into behaviour proper to vegetables. It is, of course, true that the immense mortality occasioned by the fact that many beasts live on beasts is balanced, in nature, by an immense birth-rate, and it might seem, that if all animals had been herbivorous and healthy, they would mostly starve as a result of their own multiplication. But I take the fecundity and the death-rate to be correlative phenomena. There was, perhaps, no necessity for such an excess of the sexual impulse: the Lord of this world thought of it as a response to carnivorousness — a double scheme for securing the maximum amount of torture. If it offends less, you may say that the "life-force" is corrupted, where I say that living creatures were corrupted by an evil angelic being. We mean the same thing: but I find it easier to believe in a myth of gods and demons than in one of hypostatised abstract nouns. And after all, our mythology may be much nearer to literal truth than we suppose. Let us not forget that Our Lord, on one occasion, attributes human disease not to God's wrath, nor to nature, but quite explicitly to Satan.

If this hypothesis is worth considering, it is also worth considering whether man, at his first coming into the world, had not already a redemptive function to perform. Man, even now, can do wonders to animals: my cat and dog live together in my house and seem to like it. It may have been one of man's functions to restore peace to the animal world, and if he had not joined the enemy he might have succeeded in doing so to an extent now hardly imaginable.

3. Finally, there is the question of justice. We have seen reason to believe that not all animals suffer as we think they do: but some, at least, look as if they had selves, and what shall be done for these innocents? And we have seen that it is possible to believe that animal pain is not God's handiwork but begun by Satan's malice and perpetuated by man's desertion of his post: still, if God has not caused it, He has permitted it, and, once again, what shall be done for these innocents? I have been warned not even to raise the question of animal immortality, lest I find myself "in company with all the old maids". I have no objection to the company. I do not think either virginity or old age contemptible, and some of the shrewdest minds I have met inhabited the bodies of old maids. Nor am I greatly moved by jocular enquiries such as "Where will you put all the mosquitoes?" — a question to be answered on its own level by pointing out that, if the worst came to the worst, a heaven for mosquitoes and a hell for men could very conveniently

be combined. The complete silence of Scripture and Christian tradition on animal immortality is a more serious objection; but it would be fatal only if Christian revelation showed any signs of being intended as a *système de la nature* answering all questions. But it is nothing of the sort: the curtain has been rent at one point, and at one point only, to reveal our immediate practical necessities and not to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. If animals were, in fact, immortal, it is unlikely, from what we discern of God's method in the revelation, that He would have revealed this truth. Even our own immortality is a doctrine that comes late in the history of Judaism. The argument from silence is therefore very weak.

The real difficulty about supposing most animals to be immortal is that immortality has almost no meaning for a creature which is not "conscious" in the sense explained above. If the life of a newt is merely a succession of sensations, what should we mean by saying that God may recall to life the newt that died to-day? It would not recognise itself as the same newt; the pleasant sensations of any other newt that lived after its death would be just as much, or just as little, a recompense for its earthly sufferings (if any) as those of its resurrected — I was going to say "self", but the whole point is that the newt probably has no self. The thing we have to try to say, on this hypothesis, will not even be said. There is, therefore, I take it, no question of immortality for creatures that are merely sentient. Nor do justice and mercy demand that there should be, for such creatures have no painful experience. Their nervous system delivers all the *letters* A, P, N, I, but since they cannot read they never build it up into the word PAIN. And all animals *may* be in that condition.

If, nevertheless, the strong conviction which we have of a real, though doubtless rudimentary, selfhood in the higher animals, and specially in those we tame, is not an illusion, their destiny demands a somewhat deeper consideration. The error we must avoid is that of considering them in themselves. Man is to be understood only in his relation to God. The beasts are to be understood only in their relation to man and, through man, to God. Let us here guard against one of those untransmuted lumps of atheistical thought which often survive in the minds of modern believers. Atheists naturally regard the co-existence of man and the other animals as a mere contingent result of interacting biological facts; and the taming of an animal by a man as a purely arbitrary interference of one species with another. The "real" or "natural" animal to them is the wild one, and the tame animal is an

artificial or unnatural thing. But a Christian must not think so. Man was appointed by God to have dominion over the beasts, and everything a man does to an animal is either a lawful exercise, or a sacrilegious abuse, of an authority by divine right. The tame animal is therefore, in the deepest sense, the only "natural" animal — the only one we see occupying the place it was made to occupy, and it is on the tame animal that we must base all our doctrine of beasts. Now it will be seen that, in so far as the tame animal has a real self or personality, it owes this almost entirely to its master. If a good sheepdog seems "almost human" that is because a good shepherd has made it so. I have already noted the mysterious force of the word "in". I do not take all the senses of it in the New Testament to be identical, so that man is *in* Christ and Christ *in* God and the Holy Spirit *in* the Church and also *in* the individual believer in exactly the same sense. They may be senses that rhyme or correspond rather than a single sense. I am now going to suggest — though with great readiness to be set right by real theologians — that there may be a sense, corresponding, though not identical, with these, in which those beasts that attain a real self are *in* their masters. That is to say, you must not think of a beast by itself, and call that a personality and then inquire whether God will raise and bless *that*. You must take the whole context *in* which the beast acquires its selfhood — namely "The-goodman-and-the-goodwife-ruling-their-children-and-their-beasts-in-the-good-homestead". That whole context may be regarded as a "body" in the Pauline (or a closely sub-Pauline) sense; and how much of that "body" may be raised along with the goodman and the goodwife, who can predict? So much, presumably, as is necessary not only for the glory of God and the beatitude of the human pair, but for that particular glory and that particular beatitude which is eternally coloured by that particular terrestrial experience. And in this way it seems to me possible that certain animals may have an immortality, not in themselves, but in the immortality of their masters. And the difficulty about personal identity in a creature barely personal disappears when the creature is thus kept in its proper context. If you ask, concerning an animal thus raised as a member of the whole Body of the homestead, where its personal identity resides, I answer "Where its identity always did reside even in the earthly life — in its relation to the Body and, specially, to the master who is the head of that Body". In other words, the man will know his dog: the dog will know its master and, in knowing him, will *be* itself. To ask that it should, in any other way, *know*

itself, is probably to ask for what has no meaning. Animals aren't like that, and don't want to be.

My picture of the good sheepdog in the good homestead does not, of course, cover wild animals nor (a matter even more urgent) ill-treated domestic animals. But it is intended only as an illustration drawn from one privileged instance — which is, also, on my view the only normal and unperverted instance — of the general principles to be observed in framing a theory of animal resurrection. I think Christians may justly hesitate to suppose any beasts immortal, for two reasons. Firstly, because they fear, by attributing to beasts a "soul" in the full sense, to obscure that difference between beast and man which is as sharp in the spiritual dimension as it is hazy and problematical in the biological. And secondly, a future happiness connected with the beast's present life simply as a compensation for suffering — so many millenniums in the happy pastures paid down as "damages" for so many years of pulling carts — seems a clumsy assertion of Divine goodness. We, because we are fallible, often hurt a child or an animal unintentionally, and then the best we can do is to "make up for it" by some caress or tit-bit. But it is hardly pious to imagine omniscience acting in that way — as though God trod on the animals' tails in the dark and then did the best He could about it! In such a botched adjustment I cannot recognise the master-touch; whatever the answer is, it must be something better than that. The theory I am suggesting tries to avoid both objections. It makes God the centre of the universe and man the subordinate centre of terrestrial nature: the beasts are not co-ordinate with man, but subordinate to him, and their destiny is through and through related to his. And the derivative immortality suggested for them is not a mere *amende* or compensation: it is part and parcel of the new heaven and new earth, organically related to the whole suffering process of the world's fall and redemption.

Supposing, as I do, that the personality of the tame animals is largely the gift of man — that their mere sentience is reborn to soulhood in us as our mere soulhood is reborn to spirituality in Christ — I naturally suppose that very few animals indeed, in their wild state, attain to a "self" or *ego*. But if any do, and if it is agreeable to the goodness of God that they should live again, their immortality would also be related to man — not, this time, to individual masters, but to humanity. That is to say, if in any instance the quasi-spiritual and emotional value which human tradition attributes to a

beast (such as the “innocence” of the lamb or the heraldic royalty of the lion) has a real ground in the beast’s nature, and is not merely arbitrary or accidental, then it is in *that* capacity, or principally in that, that the beast may be expected to attend on risen man and make part of his “train”. Or if the traditional character is quite erroneous, then the beast’s heavenly life would be in virtue of the real, but unknown, effect it has actually had on man during his whole history: for if Christian cosmology is in *any* sense (I do not say, in a literal sense) true, then all that exists on our planet is related to man, and even the creatures that were extinct before men existed are then only seen in their true light when they are seen as the unconscious harbingers of man.

When we are speaking of creatures so remote from us as wild beasts, and prehistoric beasts, we hardly know what we are talking about. It may well be that they have no selves and no sufferings. It may even be that each species has a corporate self — that Lionhood, not lions, has shared in the travail of creation and will enter into the restoration of all things. And if we cannot imagine even our own eternal life, much less can we imagine the life the beasts may have as our “members”. If the earthly lion could read the prophecy of that day when he shall eat hay like an ox, he would regard it as a description not of heaven, but of hell. And if there is nothing in the lion but carnivorous sentience, then he is unconscious and his “survival” would have no meaning. But if there is a rudimentary Leonine self, to that also God can give a “body” as it pleases Him — a body no longer living by the destruction of the lamb, yet richly Leonine in the sense that it also expresses whatever energy and splendour and exulting power dwelled within the visible lion on this earth. I think, under correction, that the prophet used an eastern hyperbole when he spoke of the lion and the lamb *lying down* together. That would be rather impertinent of the lamb. To have lions and lambs that so consorted (except on some rare celestial Saturnalia of topsy-turvydom) would be the same as having neither lambs nor lions. I think the lion, when he has ceased to be dangerous, will still be awful: indeed, that we shall then first see that of which the present fangs and claws are a clumsy, and satanically perverted, imitation. There will still be something like the shaking of a golden mane: and often the good Duke will say, “Let him roar again”.

X. HEAVEN

It is required
You do awake your faith. Then all stand still;
On; those that think it is unlawful business
I am about, let them depart.
Shakespeare. *Winter's Tale.*
Plunged in thy depth of mercy let me die
The death that every soul that lives desires.
Cowper out of *Madame Guion*.

"I reckon", said St. Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." If this is so, a book on suffering which says nothing of heaven, is leaving out almost the whole of one side of the account. Scripture and tradition habitually put the joys of heaven into the scale against the sufferings of earth, and no solution of the problem of pain which does not do so can be called a Christian one. We are very shy nowadays of even mentioning heaven. We are afraid of the jeer about "pie in the sky", and of being told that we are trying to "escape" from the duty of making a happy world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere. But either there is "pie in the sky" or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no. Again, we are afraid that heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. There are rewards that do not sully motives. A man's love for a woman is not mercenary because he wants to marry her, nor his love for poetry mercenary because he wants to read it, nor his love of exercise less disinterested because he wants to run and leap and walk. Love, by definition, seeks to enjoy its object.

You may think that there is another reason for our silence about heaven — namely, that we do not really desire it. But that may be an illusion. What I am now going to say is merely an opinion of my own without the slightest authority, which I submit to the judgement of better Christians and better scholars than myself. There have been times when I think we do not desire

heaven; but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else. You may have noticed that the books you really love are bound together by a secret thread. You know very well what is the common quality that makes you love them, though you cannot put it into words: but most of your friends do not see it at all, and often wonder why, liking this, you should also like that. Again, you have stood before some landscape, which seems to embody what you have been looking for all your life; and then turned to the friend at your side who appears to be seeing what you saw — but at the first words a gulf yawns between you, and you realise that this landscape means something totally different to him, that he is pursuing an alien vision and cares nothing for the ineffable suggestion by which you are transported. Even in your hobbies, has there not always been some secret attraction which the others are curiously ignorant of — something, not to be identified with, but always on the verge of breaking through, the smell of cut wood in the workshop or the clap-clap of water against the boat's side? Are not all lifelong friendships born at the moment when at last you meet another human being who has some inkling (but faint and uncertain even in the best) of that something which you were born desiring, and which, beneath the flux of other desires and in all the momentary silences between the louder passions, night and day, year by year, from childhood to old age, you are looking for, watching for, listening for? You have never *had* it. All the things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it — tantalising glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. But if it should really become manifest — if there ever came an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself — you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say "Here at last is the thing I was made for". We cannot tell each other about it. It is the secret signature of each soul, the incommunicable and unappeasable want, the thing we desired before we met our wives or made our friends or chose our work, and which we shall still desire on our deathbeds, when the mind no longer knows wife or friend or work. While we are, this is. If we lose this, we lose all.

This signature on each soul may be a product of heredity and environment, but that only means that heredity and environment are among the instruments whereby God creates a soul. I am considering not how, but why, He makes each soul unique. If He had no use for all these differences,

I do not see why He should have created more souls than one. Be sure that the ins and outs of your individuality are no mystery to Him; and one day they will no longer be a mystery to you. The mould in which a key is made would be a strange thing, if you had never seen a key: and the key itself a strange thing if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. For it is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you — you, the individual reader, John Stubbs or Janet Smith. Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him and not another's. All that you are, sins apart, is destined, if you will let God have His good way, to utter satisfaction. The Brocken spectre "looked to every man like his first love", because she was a cheat. But God will look to every soul like its first love because He is its first love. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it — made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.

It is from this point of view that we can understand Hell in its aspect of privation. All your life an unattainable ecstasy has hovered just beyond the grasp of your consciousness. The day is coming when you will wake to find, beyond all hope, that you have attained it, or else, that it was within your reach and you have lost it forever.

This may seem a perilously private and subjective notion of the pearl of great price, but it is not. The thing I am speaking of is not an experience. You have experienced only the *want* of it. The thing itself has never actually been embodied in any thought, or image, or emotion. Always it has summoned you out of yourself. And if you will not go out of yourself to follow it, if you sit down to brood on the desire and attempt to cherish it, the desire itself will evade you. "The door into life generally opens behind us" and "the only wisdom" for one "haunted with the scent of unseen roses, is work." This secret fire goes out when you use the bellows: bank it down with what seems unlikely fuel of dogma and ethics, turn your back on it and attend to your duties, and then it will blaze. The world is like a picture with a golden background, and we the figures in that picture. Until you step off the plane of the picture into the large dimensions of death you cannot see the gold. But we have reminders of it. To change our metaphor, the black-out is not quite complete. There are chinks. At times the daily scene looks big with its secret.

Such is my opinion; and it may be erroneous. Perhaps this secret desire also is part of the Old Man and must be crucified before the end. But this opinion has a curious trick of evading denial. The desire — much more the satisfaction — has always refused to be fully present in any experience. Whatever you try to identify with it, turns out to be not it but something else: so that hardly any degree of crucifixion or transformation could go beyond what the desire itself leads us to anticipate. Again, if this opinion is not true, something better is. But "something better" — not this or that experience, but beyond it — is almost the definition of the thing I am trying to describe.

The thing you long for summons you away from the self. Even the desire for the thing lives only if you abandon it. This is the ultimate law — the seed dies to live, the bread must be cast upon the waters, he that loses his soul will save it. But the life of the seed, the finding of the bread, the recovery of the soul, are as real as the preliminary sacrifice. Hence it is truly said of heaven "in heaven there is no ownership. If any there took upon him to call anything his own, he would straightway be thrust out into hell and become an evil spirit." But it is also said "To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it". What can be more a man's own than this new name which even in eternity remains a secret between God and him? And what shall we take this secrecy to mean? Surely, that each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes, and St. Paul that a body is a unity of different members. Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others — fresh and ever fresh news of the "My God" whom each finds in Him whom all praise as "Our God". For doubtless the continually successful, yet never completed, attempt by each soul to communicate its

unique vision to all others (and that by means whereof earthly art and philosophy are but clumsy imitations) is also among the ends for which the individual was created.

For union exists only between distincts; and, perhaps, from this point of view, we catch a momentary glimpse of the meaning of all things. Pantheism is a creed not so much false as hopelessly behind the times. Once, before creation, it would have been true to say that everything was God. But God created: He caused things to be other than Himself that, being distinct, they might learn to love Him, and achieve union instead of mere sameness. Thus He also cast His bread upon the waters. Even within the creation we might say that inanimate matter, which has no will, is one with God in a sense in which men are not. But it is not God's purpose that we should go back into that old identity (as, perhaps, some Pagan mystics would have us do) but that we should go on to the maximum distinctness there to be re-united with Him in a higher fashion. Even within the Holy One Himself, it is not sufficient that the Word should *be* God, it must also be *with* God. The Father eternally begets the Son and the Holy Ghost proceeds: deity introduces distinction within itself so that the union of reciprocal loves may transcend mere arithmetical unity or self identity.

But the eternal distinctness of each soul — the secret which makes of the union between each soul and God a species in itself — will never abrogate the law that forbids ownership in heaven. As to its fellow-creatures, each soul, we suppose, will be eternally engaged in giving away to all the rest that which it receives. And as to God, we must remember that the soul is but a hollow which God fills. Its union with God is, almost by definition, a continual self-abandonment — an opening, an unveiling, a surrender, of itself. A blessed spirit is a mould ever more and more patient of the bright metal poured into it, a body ever more completely uncovered to the meridian blaze of the spiritual sun. We need not suppose that the necessity for something analogous to self-conquest will ever be ended, or that eternal life will not also be eternal dying. It is in this sense that, as there may be pleasures in hell (God shield us from them), there may be something not all unlike pains in heaven (God grant us soon to taste them).

For in self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives Himself in sacrifice; and that not only on Calvary. For when He was crucified He "did that in the wild weather of His outlying provinces which He had done at

home in glory and gladness". From before the foundation of the world He surrenders begotten Deity back to begetting Deity in obedience. And as the Son glorifies the Father, so also the Father glorifies the Son. And, with submission, as becomes a layman, I think it was truly said "God loveth not Himself as Himself but as Goodness; and if there were aught better than God, He would love that and not Himself". From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self, to be thereupon yet the more abdicated, and so forever. This is not a heavenly law which we can escape by remaining earthly, nor an earthly law which we can escape by being saved. What is outside the system of self-giving is not earth, nor nature, nor "ordinary life", but simply and solely Hell. Yet even Hell derives from this law such reality as it has. That fierce imprisonment in the self is but the obverse of the self-giving which is absolute reality; the negative shape which the outer darkness takes by surrounding and defining the shape of the real, or which the real imposes on the darkness by having a shape and positive nature of its own.

The golden apple of selfhood, thrown among the false gods, became an apple of discord because they scrambled for it. They did not know the first rule of the holy game, which is that every player must by all means touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. To be found with it in your hands is a fault: to cling to it, death. But when it flies to and fro among the players too swift for eye to follow, and the great master Himself leads the revelry, giving Himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance "makes heaven drowsy with the harmony". All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movements of that dance: but the dance itself is strictly incomparable with the sufferings of this present time. As we draw nearer to its uncreated rhythm, pain and pleasure sink almost out of sight. There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of joy. It does not even exist for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and therefore happy. It does not exist for us, but we for it. The size and emptiness of the universe which frightened us at the outset of this book, should awe us still, for though they may be no more than a subjective bye-product of our three dimensional imagining, yet they symbolise great truth. As our Earth is to all the stars, so doubtless are we men and our concerns to all creation; as all the stars are to space itself, so are all creatures, all thrones and powers and mightiest of the created gods,

to the abyss of the self-existing Being, who is to us Father and Redeemer and indwelling Comforter, but of whom no man nor angel can say nor conceive what He is in and for Himself, or what is the work that he “maketh from the beginning to the end”. For they are all derived and unsubstantial things. Their vision fails them and they cover their eyes from the intolerable light of utter actuality, which was and is and shall be, which never could have been otherwise, which has no opposite.

APPENDIX

(This note on the observed effects of pain has been kindly supplied by R. Havard, M.D., from clinical experience.)

Pain is a common and definite event which can easily be recognised: but the observation of character or behaviour is less easy, less complete, and less exact, especially in the transient, if intimate, relation of doctor and patient. In spite of this difficulty certain impressions gradually take form in the course of medical practice which are confirmed as experience grows. A short attack of severe physical pain is overwhelming while it lasts. The sufferer is not usually loud in his complaints. He will beg for relief but does not waste his breath on elaborating his troubles. It is unusual for him to lose self-control and to become wild and irrational. It is rare for the severest physical pain to become in this sense unbearable. When short, severe, physical pain passes it leaves no obvious alteration in behaviour. Long-continued pain has more noticeable effects. It is often accepted with little or no complaint and great strength and resignation are developed. Pride is humbled or, at times, results in a determination to conceal suffering. Women with rheumatoid arthritis show a cheerfulness which is so characteristic that it can be compared to the *spes phthisica* of the consumptive: and is perhaps due more to a slight intoxication of the patient by the infection than to an increased strength of character. Some victims of chronic pain deteriorate. They become querulous and exploit their privileged position as invalids to practise domestic tyranny. But the wonder is that the failures are so few and the heroes so many; there is a challenge in physical pain which most can recognise and answer. On the other hand, a long illness, even without pain, exhausts the mind as well as the body. The invalid gives up the struggle and drifts helplessly and plaintively into a self-pitying despair. Even so, some, in a similar physical state, will preserve their serenity and selflessness to the end. To see it is a rare but moving experience.

Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: it is easier to say “My tooth is aching” than to say “My heart is broken”. Yet if the cause is accepted and faced, the conflict will strengthen and purify the character and in time the pain will usually

pass. Sometimes, however, it persists and the effect is devastating; if the cause is not faced or not recognised, it produces the dreary state of the chronic neurotic. But some by heroism overcome even chronic mental pain. They often produce brilliant work and strengthen, harden, and sharpen their characters till they become like tempered steel.

In actual insanity the picture is darker. In the whole realm of medicine there is nothing so terrible to contemplate as a man with chronic melancholia. But most of the insane are not unhappy or, indeed, conscious of their condition. In either case, if they recover, they are surprisingly little changed. Often they remember nothing of their illness.

Pain provides an opportunity for heroism; the opportunity is seized with surprising frequency.

ON STORIES



AN ESSAY

It is astonishing how little attention critics have paid to Story considered in itself. Granted the story, the style in which it should be told, the order in which it should be disposed, and (above all) the delineation of the characters, have been abundantly discussed. But the Story itself, the series of imagined events, is nearly always passed over in silence, or else treated exclusively as affording opportunities for the delineation of character. There are indeed three notable exceptions. Aristotle in the *Poetics* constructed a theory of Greek tragedy which puts Story in the centre and relegates character to a strictly subordinate place. In the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, Boccaccio and others developed an allegorical theory of Story to explain the ancient myths. And in our own time Jung and his followers have produced their doctrine of Archtypes. Apart from these three attempts the subject has been left almost untouched, and this has had a curious result. Those forms of literature in which Story exists merely as a means to something else — for example, the novel of manners where the story is there for the sake of the characters, or the criticism of social conditions — have had full justice done to them; but those forms in which everything else is there for the sake of the story have been given little serious attention. Not only have they been despised, as if they were fit only for children, but even the kind of pleasure they give has, in my opinion, been misunderstood. It is the second injustice which I am most anxious to remedy. Perhaps the pleasure of Story comes as low in the scale as modern criticism puts it. I do not think so myself, but on that point we may agree to differ. Let us, however, try to see clearly what kind of pleasure it is: or rather, what different kinds of pleasure it may be. For I suspect that a very hasty assumption has been made on this subject. I think that books which are read merely ‘for the story’ may be enjoyed in two very different ways. It is partly a division of books (some stories can be read only in the one spirit and some only in the other) and partly a division of readers (the same story can be read in different ways).

What finally convinced me of this distinction was a conversation which I had a few years ago with an intelligent American pupil. We were talking about the books which had delighted our boyhood. His favourite had been Fenimore Cooper whom (as it happens) I have never read. My friend described one particular scene in which the hero was half-sleeping by his bivouac fire in the woods while a Redskin with a tomahawk was silently creeping on him from behind. He remembered the breathless excitement with which he had read the passage, the agonized suspense with which he wondered whether the hero would wake up in time or not. But I, remembering the great moments in my own early reading, felt quite sure that my friend was misrepresenting his experience, and indeed leaving out the real point. Surely, surely, I thought, the sheer excitement, the suspense, was not what had kept him going back and back to Fenimore Cooper. If that were what he wanted any other 'boy's blood' would have done as well. I tried to put my thought into words. I asked him whether he were sure that he was not over-emphasizing and falsely isolating the importance of the danger simply as danger. For though I had never read Fenimore Cooper I had enjoyed other books about 'Red Indians'. And I knew that what I wanted from them was not simply 'excitement'. Dangers, of course, there must be: how else can you keep a story going? But they must (in the mood which led one to such a book) be Redskin dangers. The 'Redskinnery' was what really mattered. In such a scene as my friend had described, take away the feathers, the high cheek-bones, the whiskered trousers, substitute a pistol for a tomahawk, and what would be left? For I wanted not the momentary suspense but that whole world to which it belonged — the snow and the snow-shoes, beavers and canoes, war-paths and wigwams, and Hiawatha names. Thus I; and then came the shock. My pupil is a very clear-headed man and he saw at once what I meant and also saw how totally his imaginative life as a boy had differed from mine. He replied that he was perfectly certain that 'all that' had made no part of his pleasure. He had never cared one brass farthing for it. Indeed — and this really made me feel as if I were talking to a visitor from another planet — in so far as he had been dimly aware of 'all that', he had resented it as a distraction from the main issue. He would, if anything, have preferred to the Redskin some more ordinary danger such as a crook with a revolver.

To those whose literary experiences are at all like my own the distinction which I am trying to make between two kinds of pleasure will probably be

clear enough from this one example. But to make it doubly clear I will add another. I was once taken to see a film version of *King Solomon's Mines*. Of its many sins — not least the introduction of a totally irrelevant young woman in shorts who accompanied the three adventurers wherever they went — only one here concerns us. At the end of Haggard's book, as everyone remembers, the heroes are awaiting death entombed in a rock chamber and surrounded by the mummified kings of that land. The maker of the film version, however, apparently thought this tame. He substituted a subterranean volcanic eruption, and then went one better by adding an earthquake. Perhaps we should not blame him. Perhaps the scene in the original was not 'cinematic' and the man was right, by the canons of his own art, in altering it. But it would have been better not to have chosen in the first place a story which could be adapted to the screen only by being ruined. Ruined, at least, for me. No doubt if sheer excitement is all you want from a story, and if increase of dangers increases excitement, then a rapidly changing series of two risks (that of being burned alive and that of being crushed to bits) would be better than the single prolonged danger of starving to death in a cave. But that is just the point. There must be a pleasure in such stories distinct from mere excitement or I should not feel that I had been cheated in being given the earthquake instead of Haggard's actual scene. What I lose is the whole sense of the deathly (quite a different thing from simple danger of death) — the cold, the silence, and the surrounding faces of the ancient, the crowned and sceptred, dead. You may, if you please, say that Rider Haggard's effect is quite as 'crude' or 'vulgar' or 'sensational' as that which the film substituted for it. I am not at present discussing that. The point is that it is extremely different. The one lays a hushing spell on the imagination; the other excites a rapid flutter of the nerves. In reading that chapter of the book curiosity or suspense about the escape of the heroes from their death-trap makes a very minor part of one's experience. The trap I remember for ever: how they got out I have long since forgotten.

It seems to me that in talking of books which are 'mere stories' — books, that is, which concern themselves principally with the imagined event and not with character or society — nearly everyone makes the assumption that 'excitement' is the only pleasure they ever give or are intended to give. *Excitement*, in this sense, may be defined as the alternate

tension and appeasement of imagined anxiety. This is what I think untrue. In some such books, and for some readers, another factor comes in.

To put it at the very lowest, I know that something else comes in for at least one reader — myself. I must here be autobiographical for the sake of being evidential. Here is a man who has spent more hours than he cares to remember in reading romances, and received from them more pleasure perhaps than he should. I know the geography of Tormance better than that of Tellus. I have been more curious about travels from Uplands to Utterbol and from Morna Moruna to Koshtra Belorn than about those recorded in Hakluyt. Though I saw the trenches before Arras I could not now lecture on them so tactically as on the Greek wall, and Scamander and the Scaean Gate. As a social historian I am sounder on Toad Hall and the Wild Wood or the cave-dwelling Selenites or Hrothgar's court or Vortigern's than on London, Oxford, and Belfast. If to love Story is to love excitement then I ought to be the greatest lover of excitement alive. But the fact is that what is said to be the most 'exciting' novel in the world, *The Three Musketeers*, makes no appeal to me at all. The total lack of atmosphere repels me. There is no country in the book — save as a storehouse of inns and ambushes. There is no weather. When they cross to London there is no feeling that London differs from Paris. There is not a moment's rest from the 'adventures': one's nose is kept ruthlessly to the grindstone. It all means nothing to me. If that is what is meant by Romance, then Romance is my aversion and I greatly prefer George Eliot or Trollope. In saying this I am not attempting to criticize *The Three Musketeers*. I believe on the testimony of others that it is a capital story. I am sure that my own inability to like it is in me a defect and a misfortune. But that misfortune is evidence. If a man sensitive and perhaps over-sensitive to Romance likes least that Romance which is, by common consent, the most 'exciting' of all, then it follows that 'excitement' is not the only kind of pleasure to be got out of Romance. If a man loves wine and yet hates one of the strongest wines, then surely the sole source of pleasure in wine cannot be the alcohol?

If I am alone in this experience then, to be sure, the present essay is of merely autobiographical interest. But I am pretty sure that I am not absolutely alone. I write on the chance that some others may feel the same and in the hope that I may help them to clarify their own sensations.

In the example of *King Solomon's Mines* the producer of the film substituted at the climax one kind of danger for another and thereby, for me,

ruined the story. But where excitement is the only thing that matters kinds of danger must be irrelevant. Only degrees of danger will matter. The greater the danger and the narrower the hero's escape from it, the more exciting the story will be. But when we are concerned with the 'something else' this is not so. Different kinds of danger strike different chords from the imagination. Even in real life different kinds of danger produce different kinds of fear. There may come a point at which fear is so great that such distinctions vanish, but that is another matter. There is a fear which is twin sister to awe, such as a man in war-time feels when he first comes within sound of the guns; there is a fear which is twin sister to disgust, such as a man feels on finding a snake or scorpion in his bedroom. There are taut, quivering fears (for one split second hardly distinguishable from a kind of pleasureable thrill) that a man may feel on a dangerous horse or a dangerous sea; and again, dead, squashed, flattened, numbing fears, as when we think we have cancer or cholera. There are also fears which are not of *danger* at all: like the fear of some large and hideous, though innocuous, insect or the fear of a ghost. All this, even in real life. But in imagination, where the fear does not rise to abject terror and is not discharged in action, the qualitative difference is much stronger.

I can never remember a time when it was not, however vaguely, present to my consciousness. *Jack the Giant-Killer* is not, in essence, simply the story of a clever hero surmounting danger. It is in essence the story of such a hero surmounting *danger from giants*. It is quite easy to contrive a story in which, though the enemies are of normal size, the odds against Jack are equally great. But it will be quite a different story. The whole quality of the imaginative response is determined by the fact that the enemies are giants. That heaviness, that monstrosity, that uncouthness, hangs over the whole thing. Turn it into music and you will feel the difference at once. If your villain is a giant your orchestra will proclaim his entrance in one way: if he is any other kind of villain, in another. I have seen landscapes (notably in the Mourne Mountains) which, under a particular light, made me feel that at any moment a giant might raise his head over the next ridge. Nature has that in her which compels us to invent giants: and only giants will do. (Notice that Gawain was in the north-west corner of England when 'etins aneleden him', giants came *blowing* after him on the high fells. Can it be an accident that Wordsworth was in the same places when he heard 'low breathings coming after him'?) The dangerousness of the giants is, though important,

secondary. In some folk-tales we meet giants who are not dangerous. But they still affect us in much the same way. A *good* giant is legitimate: but he would be twenty tons of living, earth-shaking oxymoron. The intolerable pressure, the sense of something older, wilder, and more earthy than humanity, would still cleave to him.

But let us descend to a lower instance. Are pirates, any more than giants, merely a machine for threatening the hero? That sail which is rapidly overhauling us may be an ordinary enemy: a Don or a Frenchman. The ordinary enemy may easily be made just as lethal as the pirate. At the moment when she runs up the Jolly Roger, what exactly does this do to the imagination? It means, I grant you, that if we are beaten there will be no quarter. But that could be contrived without piracy. It is not the mere increase of danger that does the trick. It is the whole image of the utterly lawless enemy, the men who have cut adrift from all human society and become, as it were, a species of their own — men strangely clad, dark men with ear-rings, men with a history which they know and we don't, lords of unspecified treasure buried in undiscovered islands. They are, in fact, to the young reader almost as mythological as the giants. It does not cross his mind that a man — a mere man like the rest of us — might be a pirate at one time of his life and not at another, or that there is any smudgy frontier between piracy and privateering. A pirate is a pirate, just as a giant is a giant.

Consider, again, the enormous difference between being shut out and being shut in: if you like between agoraphobia and claustrophobia. In *King Solomon's Mines* the heroes were shut in: so, more terribly, the narrator imagined himself to be in Poe's *Premature Burial*. Your breath shortens while you read it. Now remember the chapter called 'Mr. Bedford Alone' in H. G. Wells's *First Men in the Moon*. There Bedford finds himself shut out on the surface of the Moon just as the long lunar day is drawing to its close — and with the day go the air and all heat. Read it from the terrible moment when the first tiny snowflake startles him into a realization of his position down to the point at which he reaches the 'sphere' and is saved. Then ask yourself whether what you have been feeling is simply suspense. 'Over me, around me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer was the Eternal . . . the infinite and final Night of space.' That is the idea which has kept you enthralled. But if we were concerned only with the question whether Mr. Bedford will live or freeze, that idea is quite beside the purpose. You can

die of cold between Russian Poland and new Poland, just as well as by going to the Moon, and the pain will be equal. For the purpose of killing Mr. Bedford ‘the infinite and final Night of space’ is almost entirely otiose: what is by cosmic standards an infinitesimal change of temperature is sufficient to kill a man and absolute zero can do no more. That airless outer darkness is important not for what it can do to Bedford but for what it does to us: to trouble us with Pascal’s old fear of those eternal silences which have gnawed at so much religious faith and shattered so many humanistic hopes: to evoke with them and through them all our racial and childish memories of exclusion and desolation: to present, in fact, as an intuition one permanent aspect of human experience.

And here, I expect, we come to one of the differences between life and art. A man really in Bedford’s position would probably not feel very acutely that sidereal loneliness. The immediate issue of death would drive the contemplative object out of his mind: he would have no interest in the many degrees of increasing cold lower than the one which made his survival impossible. That is one of the functions of art: to present what the narrow and desperately practical perspectives of real life exclude.

I have sometimes wondered whether the ‘excitement’ may not be an element actually hostile to the deeper imagination. In inferior romances, such as the American magazines of ‘scientifiction’ supply, we often come across a really suggestive idea. But the author has no expedient for keeping the story on the move except that of putting his hero into violent danger. In the hurry and scurry of his escapes the poetry of the basic idea is lost. In a much milder degree I think this has happened to Wells himself in the *War of the Worlds*. What really matters in this story is the idea of being attacked by something utterly ‘outside’. As in *Piers Plowman* destruction has come upon us ‘from the planets’. If the Martian invaders are merely dangerous — if we once become mainly concerned with the fact that they can *kill* us — why, then, a burglar or a bacillus can do as much. The real nerve of the romance is laid bare when the hero first goes to look at the newly fallen projectile on Horsell Common. ‘The yellowish-white metal that gleamed in the crack between the lid and the cylinder had an unfamiliar hue. *Extra-terrestrial* had no meaning for most of the onlookers.’ But *extra-terrestrial* is the key word of the whole story. And in the later horrors, excellently as they are done, we lose the feeling of it. Similarly in the Poet Laureate’s *Sard Harker* it is the journey across the Sierras that really matters. That the

man who has heard that noise in the cañon— ‘He could not think what it was. It was not sorrowful nor joyful nor terrible. It was great and strange. It was like the rock speaking’ — that this man should be later in danger of mere murder is almost an impertinence.

It is here that Homer shows his supreme excellence. The landing on Circe’s island, the sight of the smoke going up from amidst those unexplored woods, the god meeting us (‘the messenger, the slayer of Argus’) — what an anti-climax if all these had been the prelude only to some ordinary risk of life and limb! But the peril that lurks here, the silent, painless, unendurable change into brutality, is worthy of the setting. Mr. de la Mare too has surmounted the difficulty. The threat launched in the opening paragraphs of his best stories is seldom fulfilled in any identifiable event: still less is it dissipated. Our fears are never, in one sense, realized: yet we lay down the story feeling that they, and far more, were justified. But perhaps the most remarkable achievement in this kind is that of Mr. David Lindsay’s *Voyage to Arcturus*. The experienced reader, noting the threats and promises of the opening chapter, even while he gratefully enjoys them, feels sure that they cannot be carried out. He reflects that in stories of this kind the first chapter is nearly always the best and reconciles himself to disappointment; Tormance, when we reach it, he forbodes, will be less interesting than Tormance seen from the Earth. But never will he have been more mistaken. Unaided by any special skill or even any sound taste in language, the author leads us up a stair of unpredictables. In each chapter we think we have found his final position: each time we are utterly mistaken. He builds whole worlds of imagery and passion, any one of which would have served another writer for a whole book, only to pull each of them to pieces and pour scorn on it. The physical dangers, which are plentiful, here count for nothing: it is we ourselves and the author who walk through a world of spiritual dangers which makes them seem trivial. There is no recipe for writing of this kind. But part of the secret is that the author (like Kafka) is recording a lived dialectic. His Tormance is a region of the spirit. He is the first writer to discover what ‘other planets’ are really good for in fiction. No merely physical strangeness or merely spatial distance will realize that idea of otherness which is what we are always trying to grasp in a story about voyaging through space: you must go into another dimension. To construct plausible and moving ‘other worlds’ you must draw on the only real ‘other world’ we know, that of the spirit.

Notice here the corollary. If some fatal progress of applied science ever enables us in fact to reach the Moon, that real journey will not at all satisfy the impulse which we now seek to gratify by writing such stories. The real Moon, if you could reach it and survive, would in a deep and deadly sense be just like anywhere else. You would find cold, hunger, hardship, and danger; and after the first few hours they would be *simply* cold, hunger, hardship, and danger as you might have met them on Earth. And death would be simply death among those bleached craters as it is simply death in a nursing home at Sheffield. No man would find an abiding strangeness on the Moon unless he were the sort of man who could find it in his own back garden. ‘He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him.’

Good stories often introduce the marvellous or supernatural, and nothing about Story has been so often misunderstood as this. Thus, for example, Dr. Johnson, if I remember rightly, thought that children liked stories of the marvellous because they were too ignorant to know that they were impossible. But children do not always like them, nor are those who like them always children; and to enjoy reading about fairies — much more about giants and dragons — it is not necessary to believe in them. Belief is at best irrelevant; it may be a positive disadvantage. Nor are the marvels in good Story ever mere arbitrary fictions stuck on to make the narrative more sensational. I happened to remark to a man who was sitting beside me at dinner the other night that I was reading Grimm in German of an evening but never bothered to look up a word I didn’t know, ‘so that it is often great fun’ (I added) ‘guessing what it was that the old woman gave to the prince which he afterwards lost in the wood’. ‘And specially difficult in a fairy-tale,’ said he, ‘where everything is arbitrary and therefore the object might be anything at all.’ His error was profound. The logic of a fairy-tale is as strict as that of a realistic novel, though different.

Does anyone believe that Kenneth Grahame made an arbitrary choice when he gave his principal character the form of a toad, or that a stag, a pigeon, a lion would have done as well? The choice is based on the fact that the real toad’s face has a grotesque resemblance to a certain kind of human face — a rather apoplectic face with a fatuous grin on it. This is, no doubt, an accident in the sense that all the lines which suggest the resemblance are really there for quite different biological reasons. The ludicrous quasi-human expression is therefore changeless: the toad cannot stop grinning

because its ‘grin’ is not really a grin at all. Looking at the creature we thus see, isolated and fixed, an aspect of human vanity in its funniest and most pardonable form; following that hint Grahame creates Mr. Toad — an ultra-Jonsonian ‘humour’. And we bring back the wealth of the Indies; we have henceforward more amusement in, and kindness towards, a certain kind of vanity in real life.

But why should the characters be disguised as animals at all? The disguise is very thin, so thin that Grahame makes Mr. Toad on one occasion ‘comb the dry leaves out of his *hair*’. Yet it is quite indispensable. If you try to rewrite the book with all the characters humanized you are faced at the outset with a dilemma. Are they to be adults or children? You will find that they can be neither. They are like children in so far as they have no responsibilities, no struggle for existence, no domestic cares. Meals turn up; one does not even ask who cooked them. In Mr. Badger’s kitchen ‘plates on the dresser grinned at pots on the shelf’. Who kept them clean? Where were they bought? How were they delivered in the Wild Wood? Mole is very snug in his subterranean home, but what was he living *on*? If he is a *rentier* where is the bank, what are his investments? The tables in his forecourt were ‘marked with rings that hinted at beer mugs’. But where did he get the beer? In that way the life of all the characters is that of children for whom everything is provided and who take everything for granted. But in other ways it is the life of adults. They go where they like and do what they please, they arrange their own lives.

To that extent the book is a specimen of the most scandalous escapism: it paints a happiness under incompatible conditions — the sort of freedom we can have only in childhood and the sort we can have only in maturity — and conceals the contradiction by the further pretence that the characters are not human beings at all. The one absurdity helps to hide the other. It might be expected that such a book would unfit us for the harshness of reality and send us back to our daily lives unsettled and discontented. I do not find that it does so. The happiness which it presents to us is in fact full of the simplest and most attainable things — food, sleep, exercise, friendship, the face of nature, even (in a sense) religion. That ‘simple but sustaining meal’ of ‘bacon and broad beans and a macaroni pudding’ which Rat gave to his friends has, I doubt not, helped down many a real nursery dinner. And in the same way the whole story, paradoxically enough, strengthens our relish for

real life. This excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure to the actual.

It is usual to speak in a playfully apologetic tone about one's adult enjoyment of what are called 'children's books'. I think the convention a silly one. No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty — except, of course, books of information. The only imaginative works we ought to grow out of are those which it would have been better not to have read at all. A mature palate will probably not much care for *crême de menthe*: but it ought still to enjoy bread and butter and honey.

Another very large class of stories turns on fulfilled prophecies — the story of Oedipus, or *The Man who would be King*, or *The Hobbit*. In most of them the very steps taken to prevent the fulfilment of the prophecy actually bring it about. It is foretold that Oedipus will kill his father and marry his mother. In order to prevent this from happening he is exposed on the mountain: and that exposure, by leading to his rescue and thus to his life among strangers in ignorance of his real parentage, renders possible both the disasters. Such stories produce (at least in me) a feeling of awe, coupled with a certain sort of bewilderment such as one often feels in looking at a complex pattern of lines that pass over and under one another. One sees, yet does not quite see, the regularity. And is there not good occasion both for awe and bewilderment? We have just had set before our imagination something that has always baffled the intellect: we have *seen* how destiny and free will can be combined, even how free will is the *modus operandi* of destiny. The story does what no theorem can quite do. It may not be 'like real life' in the superficial sense: but it sets before us an image of what reality may well be like at some more central region.

It will be seen that throughout this essay I have taken my examples indiscriminately from books which critics would (quite rightly) place in very different categories — from American 'scientifiction' and Homer, from Sophocles and *Märchen*, from children's stories and the intensely sophisticated art of Mr. de la Mare. This does not mean that I think them of equal literary merit. But if I am right in thinking that there is another enjoyment in Story besides the excitement, then popular romance even on the lowest level becomes rather more important than we had supposed. When you see an immature or uneducated person devouring what seem to you merely sensational stories, can you be sure what kind of pleasure he is

enjoying? It is, of course, no good asking *him*. If he were capable of analysing his own experience as the question requires him to do, he would be neither uneducated nor immature. But because he is inarticulate we must not give judgement against him. He may be seeking only the recurring tension of imagined anxiety. But he may also, I believe, be receiving certain profound experiences which are, for him, not acceptable in any other form.

Mr. Roger Green, writing in *English* not long ago, remarked that the reading of Rider Haggard had been to many a sort of religious experience. To some people this will have seemed simply grotesque. I myself would strongly disagree with it if 'religious' is taken to mean 'Christian'. And even if we take it in a sub-Christian sense, it would have been safer to say that such people had first met in Haggard's romances elements which they would meet again in religious experience if they ever came to have any. But I think Mr. Green is very much nearer the mark than those who assume that no one has ever read the romances except in order to be thrilled by hair-breadth escapes. If he had said simply that something which the educated receive from poetry can reach the masses through stories of adventure, and almost in no other way, then I think he would have been right. If so, nothing can be more disastrous than the view that the cinema can and should replace popular written fiction. The elements which it excludes are precisely those which give the untrained mind its only access to the imaginative world. There is death in the camera.

As I have admitted, it is very difficult to tell in any given case whether a story is piercing to the unliterary reader's deeper imagination or only exciting his emotions. You cannot tell even by reading the story for yourself. Its badness proves very little. The more imagination the reader has, being an untrained reader, the more he will do for himself. He will, at a mere hint from the author, flood wretched material with suggestion and never guess that he is himself chiefly making what he enjoys. The nearest we can come to a test is by asking whether he often *re-reads* the same story.

It is, of course, a good test for every reader of every kind of book. An unliterary man may be defined as one who reads books once only. There is hope for a man who has never read Malory or Boswell or *Tristram Shandy* or Shakespeare's *Sonnets*: but what can you do with a man who says he 'has read' them, meaning he has read them once, and thinks that this settles the matter? Yet I think the test has a special application to the matter in hand. For excitement, in the sense defined above, is just what must disappear

from a second reading. You cannot, except at the first reading, be really curious about what happened. If you find that the reader of popular romance — however uneducated a reader, however bad the romances — goes back to his old favourites again and again, then you have pretty good evidence that they are to him a sort of poetry.

The re-reader is looking not for actual surprises (which can come only once) but for a certain ideal surprisingness. The point has often been misunderstood. The man in Peacock thought that he had disposed of 'surprise' as an element in landscape gardening when he asked what happened if you walked through the garden for the second time. Wiseacre! In the only sense that matters the surprise works as well the twentieth time as the first. It is the *quality* of unexpectedness, not the *fact* that delights us. It is even better the second time. Knowing that the 'surprise' is coming we can now fully relish the fact that this path through the shrubbery doesn't *look* as if it were suddenly going to bring us out on the edge of the cliff. So in literature. We do not enjoy a story fully at the first reading. Not till the curiosity, the sheer narrative lust, has been given its sop and laid asleep, are we at leisure to savour the real beauties. Till then, it is like wasting great wine on a ravenous natural thirst which merely wants cold wetness. The children understand this well when they ask for the same story over and over again, and in the same words. They want to have again the 'surprise' of discovering that what seemed Little-Red-Riding-Hood's grandmother is really the wolf. It is better when you know it is coming: free from the shock of actual surprise you can attend better to the intrinsic surprisingness of the *peripeteia*.

I should like to be able to believe that I am here in a very small way contributing (for criticism does not always come later than practice) to the encouragement of a better school of prose story in England: of story that can mediate imaginative life to the masses while not being contemptible to the few. But perhaps this is not very likely. It must be admitted that the art of Story as I see it is a very difficult one. What its central difficulty is I have already hinted when I complained that in the *War of the Worlds* the idea that really matters becomes lost or blunted as the story gets under way. I must now add that there is a perpetual danger of this happening in all stories. To be stories at all they must be series of events: but it must be understood that this series — the *plot*, as we call it — is only really a net whereby to catch something else. The real theme may be, and perhaps usually is, something

that has no sequence in it, something other than a process and much more like a state or quality. Giantship, otherness, the desolation of space, are examples that have crossed our path. The titles of some stories illustrate the point very well. *The Well at the World's End* — can a man write a story to that title? Can he find a series of events following one another in time which will really catch and fix and bring home to us all that we grasp at on merely hearing the six words? Can a man write a story on Atlantis — or is it better to leave the word to work on its own? And I must confess that the net very seldom does succeed in catching the bird. Morris in the *Well at the World's End* came near to success — quite near enough to make the book worth many readings. Yet, after all, the best moments of it come in the first half.

But it does sometimes succeed. In the works of the late E. R. Eddison it succeeds completely. You may like or dislike his invented worlds (I myself like that of *The Worm Ouroboros* and strongly dislike that of *Mistress of Mistresses*) but there is here no quarrel between the theme and the articulation of the story. Every episode, every speech, helps to incarnate what the author is imagining. You could spare none of them. It takes the whole story to build up that strange blend of renaissance luxury and northern hardness. The secret here is largely the style, and especially the style of the dialogue. These proud, reckless, amorous people create themselves and the whole atmosphere of their world chiefly by talking. Mr. de la Mare also succeeds, partly by style and partly by never laying the cards on the table. Mr. David Lindsay, however, succeeds while writing a style which is at times (to be frank) abominable. He succeeds because his real theme is, like the plot, sequential, a thing in time, or quasi-time: a passionate spiritual journey. Charles Williams had the same advantage, but I do not mention his stories much here because they are hardly pure story in the sense we are now considering. They are, despite their free use of the supernatural, much closer to the novel; a believed religion, detailed character drawing, and even social satire all come in. *The Hobbit* escapes the danger of degenerating into mere plot and excitement by a very curious shift of tone. As the humour and homeliness of the early chapters, the sheer 'Hobbitry', dies away we pass insensibly into the world of epic. It is as if the battle of Toad Hall had become a serious *heimsókn* and Badger had begun to talk like Njal. Thus we lose one theme but find another. We kill — but not the same fox.

It may be asked why anyone should be encouraged to write a form in which the means are apparently so often at war with the end. But I am hardly suggesting that anyone who can write great poetry should write stories instead. I am rather suggesting what those whose work will in any case be a romance should aim at. And I do not think it unimportant that good work in this kind, even work less than perfectly good, can come where poetry will never come.

Shall I be thought whimsical if, in conclusion, I suggest that this internal tension in the heart of every story between the theme and the plot constitutes, after all, its chief resemblance to life? If story fails in that way does not life commit the same blunder? In real life, as in a story, something must happen. That is just the trouble. We grasp at a state and find only a succession of events in which the state is never quite embodied. The grand idea of finding Atlantis which stirs us in the first chapter of the adventure story is apt to be frittered away in mere excitement when the journey has once been begun. But so, in real life, the idea of adventure fades when the day-to-day details begin to happen. Nor is this merely because actual hardship and danger shoulder it aside. Other grand ideas — home-coming, reunion with a beloved — similarly elude our grasp. Suppose there is no disappointment; even so — well, you are here. But now, something must happen, and after that something else. All that happens may be delightful: but can any such series quite embody the sheer state of being which was what we wanted? If the author's plot is only a net, and usually an imperfect one, a net of time and event for catching what is not really a process at all, is life much more? I am not sure, on second thoughts, that the slow fading of the magic in *The Well at the World's End* is, after all, a blemish. It is an image of the truth. Art, indeed, may be expected to do what life cannot do: but so it has done. The bird has escaped us. But it was at least entangled in the net for several chapters. We saw it close and enjoyed the plumage. How many 'real lives' have nets that can do as much?

In life and art both, as it seems to me, we are always trying to catch in our net of successive moments something that is not successive. Whether in real life there is any doctor who can teach us how to do it, so that at last either the meshes will become fine enough to hold the bird, or we be so changed that we can throw our nets away and follow the bird to its own country, is not a question for this essay. But I think it is sometimes done —

or very, very nearly done — in stories. I believe the effort to be well worth making.

TRANSPOSITION, AND OTHER ADDRESSES



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PREFACE

This book contains a selection of the too numerous addresses which I was induced to give during the late war and the years that immediately followed it. All were composed in response to personal requests and for particular audiences, without thought of subsequent publication. As a result, in one or two places they seem to repeat, though they really anticipated, sentences of mine which have already appeared in print. When I was asked to make this collection I supposed that I could remove such overlappings, but I was mistaken. There comes a time (and it need not always be a long one) when a composition belongs so definitely to the past that the author himself cannot alter it much without the feeling that he is producing a kind of forgery. The period from which these pieces date was, for all of us, an exceptional one; and though I do not think I have altered any belief that they embody I could not now recapture the tone and temper in which they were written. Nor would those who wanted to have them in a permanent form be pleased with a patchwork. It has therefore seemed better to let them go with only a few verbal corrections.

I have to thank the S.P.C.K., the S.C.M., and the proprietors of *Sobornost'* for their kind permission to re-print *Weight of Glory*, *Learning in War-Time* and *Membership* respectively. *The Inner Ring* here appears in print for the first time. A different version of *Transposition*, written expressly for that purpose and then translated into Italian, has appeared in the *Rivista* of Milan.

C. S. L.

I. Transposition

A sermon preached on Whit-Sunday in Mansfield College Chapel, Oxford

In the church to which I belong this day is set apart for commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the first Christians shortly after the Ascension. I want to consider one of the phenomena which accompanied, or followed, this descent; the phenomenon which our translation calls "speaking with tongues" and which the learned call *glossolalia*. You will not suppose that I think this the most important aspect of Pentecost, but I have two reasons for selecting it. In the first place it would be ridiculous for me to speak about the nature of the Holy Ghost or the modes of His operation: that would be an attempt to teach where I have nearly all to learn. In the second place, *glossolalia* has often been a stumbling-block to me. It is, to be frank, an embarrassing phenomenon. St. Paul himself seems to have been rather embarrassed by it in 1 Corinthians and labours to turn the desire and the attention of the Church to more obviously edifying gifts. But he goes no further. He throws in almost parenthetically the statement that he himself spoke with tongues more than anyone else, and he does not question the spiritual, or supernatural, source of the phenomenon.

The difficulty I feel is this. On the one hand, *glossolalia* has remained an intermittent "variety of religious experience" down to the present day. Every now and then we hear that in some revivalist meeting one or more of those present has burst into a torrent of what appears to be gibberish. The thing does not seem to be edifying, and all non-Christian opinion would regard it as a kind of hysteria, an involuntary discharge of nervous excitement. A good deal even of Christian opinion would explain most instances of it in exactly the same way; and I must confess that it would be very hard to believe that in all instances of it the Holy Ghost is operating. We suspect, even if we cannot be sure, that it is usually an affair of the nerves. That is one horn of the dilemma. On the other hand, we cannot as Christians shelve the story of Pentecost or deny that there, at any rate, the speaking with tongues was miraculous. For the men spoke not gibberish but languages unknown to them though known to other people present. And the whole event of which this makes part is built into the very fabric of the birth-story of the Church. It is this very event which the risen Lord had told the Church to wait for — almost in the last words He uttered before His

ascension. It looks, therefore, as if we shall have to say that the very same phenomenon which is sometimes not only natural but even pathological is at other times (or at least at one other time) the organ of the Holy Ghost. And this seems at first very surprising and very open to attack. The sceptic will certainly seize this opportunity to talk to us about Occam's razor, to accuse us of multiplying hypotheses. If most instances of *glossolalia* are covered by hysteria, is it not (he will ask) extremely probable that that explanation covers the remaining instances too?

It is to this difficulty that I would gladly bring a little ease if I can. And I will begin by pointing out that it belongs to a class of difficulties. The closest parallel to it within that class is raised by the erotic language and imagery we find in the mystics. In them we find a whole range of expressions — and therefore possibly of emotions — with which we are quite familiar in another context and which, in that other context, have a clear natural significance. But in the mystical writings it is claimed that these elements have a different cause. And once more the sceptic will ask why the cause which we are content to accept for ninety-nine instances of such language should not be held to cover the hundredth too. The hypothesis that mysticism is an erotic phenomenon will seem to him immensely more probable than any other.

Put in its most general terms our problem is that of the obvious continuity between things which are admittedly natural and things which, it is claimed, are spiritual; the reappearance in what professes to be our supernatural life of all the same old elements which make up our natural life and (it would seem) of no others. If we have really been visited by a revelation from beyond Nature, is it not very strange that an Apocalypse can furnish heaven with nothing more than selections from terrestrial experience (crowns, thrones, and music), that devotion can find no language but that of human lovers, and that the rite whereby Christians enact a mystical union should turn out to be only the old, familiar act of eating and drinking? And you may add that the very same problem also breaks out on a lower level, not only between spiritual and natural but also between higher and lower levels of the natural life. Hence cynics very plausibly challenge our civilized conception of the difference between love and lust by pointing out that when all is said and done they usually end in what is, physically, the same act. They similarly challenge the difference between justice and revenge on the ground that what finally happens to the criminal may be the

same. And in all these cases, let us admit that the cynics and sceptics have a good *prima facie* case. The same acts do reappear in justice as well as in revenge: the consummation of humanized and conjugal love is physiologically the same as that of the merely biological lust; religious language and imagery, and probably religious emotion too, contains nothing that has not been borrowed from Nature.

Now it seems to me that the only way to refute the critic here is to show that the same *prima facie* case is equally plausible in some instance where we all know (not by faith or by logic, but empirically) that it is in fact false. Can we find an instance of higher and lower where the higher is within almost everyone's experience? I think we can. Consider the following quotation from *Pepys's Diary*:

With my wife to the King's House to see *The Virgin Martyr*, and it is mighty pleasant. . . . But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind musick when the angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me and, indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife . . . and makes me resolve to practise wind musick and to make my wife do the like. (Feb. 27, 1668.)

There are several points here that deserve attention. Firstly that the internal sensation accompanying intense aesthetic delight was indistinguishable from the sensation accompanying two other experiences, that of being in love and that of being, say, in a rough channel crossing. (2) That of these two other experiences one at least is the very reverse of pleasurable. No man enjoys nausea. (3) That Pepys was, nevertheless, anxious to have again the experience whose sensational accompaniment was identical with the very unpleasant accompaniments of sickness. That was why he decided to take up wind music.

Now it may be true that not many of us have fully shared Pepys's experience; but we have all experienced that sort of thing. For myself I find that if, during a moment of intense aesthetic rapture, one tries to turn round and catch by introspection what one is actually feeling, one can never lay one's hand on anything but a physical sensation. In my case it is a kind of kick or flutter in the diaphragm. Perhaps that is all Pepys meant by "really sick". But the important point is this: I find that this kick or flutter is exactly the same sensation which, in me, accompanies great and sudden anguish. Introspection can discover no difference at all between my neural response

to very bad news and my neural response to the overture of *The Magic Flute*. If I were to judge simply by sensations I should come to the absurd conclusion that joy and anguish are the same thing, that what I most dread is the same with what I most desire. Introspection discovers nothing more or different in the one than in the other. And I expect that most of you, if you are in the habit of noticing such things, will report more or less the same.

Now let us take a step further. These sensations — Pepys's sickness and my flutter in the diaphragm — do not merely accompany very different experiences as an irrelevant or neutral addition. We may be quite sure that Pepys hated that sensation when it came in real sickness: and we know from his own words that he liked it when it came with wind music, for he took measures to make as sure as possible of getting it again. And I likewise love this internal flutter in one context and call it a pleasure and hate it in another and call it misery. It is not a mere sign of joy and anguish: it becomes what it signifies. When the joy thus flows over into the nerves that overflow is its consummation: when the anguish thus flows over that physical symptom is the crowning horror. The very same thing which makes the sweetest drop of all in the sweet cup also makes the bitterest drop in the bitter.

And here, I suggest, we have found what we are looking for. I take our emotional life to be "higher" than the life of our sensations — not, of course, morally higher, but richer, more varied, more subtle. And this is a higher level which nearly all of us know. And I believe that if anyone watches carefully the relation between his emotions and his sensations he will discover the following facts; (1) that the nerves do respond, and in a sense most adequately and exquisitely, to the emotions; (2) that their resources are far more limited, the possible variations of sense far fewer, than those of emotion; (3) and that the senses compensate for this by using the *same* sensation to express more than one emotion — even, as we have seen, to express opposite emotions.

Where we tend to go wrong is in assuming that if there is to be a correspondence between two systems it must be a one for one correspondence — that A in the one system must be represented by *a* in the other, and so on. But the correspondence between emotion and sensation turns out not to be of that sort. And there never could be correspondence of that sort where the one system was really richer than the other. If the richer system is to be represented in the poorer at all, this can only be by giving

each element in the poorer system more than one meaning. The transposition of the richer into the poorer must, so to speak, be algebraical, not arithmetical. If you are to translate from a language which has a large vocabulary into a language that has a small vocabulary, then you must be allowed to use several words in more than one sense. If you are to write a language with twenty-two vowel sounds in an alphabet with only five vowel characters then you must be allowed to give each of those five characters more than one value. If you are making a piano version of a piece originally scored for an orchestra, then the same piano notes which represent flutes in one passage must also represent violins in another.

As the examples show we are all quite familiar with this kind of transposition or adaptation from a richer to a poorer medium. The most familiar example of all is the art of drawing. The problem here is to represent a three-dimensional world on a flat sheet of paper. The solution is perspective, and perspective means that we must give more than one value to a two-dimensional shape. Thus in a drawing of a cube we use an acute angle to represent what is a right angle in the real world. But elsewhere an acute angle on the paper may represent what was already an acute angle in the real world: for example, the point of a spear on the gable of a house. The very same shape which you must draw to give the illusion of a straight road receding from the spectator is also the shape you draw for a dunces' cap. As with the lines, so with the shading. Your brightest light in the picture is, in literal fact, only plain white paper: and this must do for the sun, or a lake in evening light, or snow, or human flesh.

I now make two comments on the instances of Transposition which are already before us:

(1) It is clear that in each case what is happening in the lower medium can be understood only if we know the higher medium. The instance where this knowledge is most commonly lacking is the musical one. The piano version means one thing to the musician who knows the original orchestral score and another thing to the man who hears it simply as a piano piece. But the second man would be at an even greater disadvantage if he had never heard any instrument but a piano and even doubted the existence of other instruments. Even more, we understand pictures only because we know and inhabit the three-dimensional world. If we can imagine a creature who perceived only two dimensions and yet could somehow be aware of the lines as he crawled over them on the paper, we shall easily see how

impossible it would be for him to understand. At first he might be prepared to accept on authority our assurance that there was a world in three dimensions. But when we pointed to the lines on the paper and tried to explain, say, that “This is a road,” would he not reply that the shape which we were asking him to accept as a revelation of our mysterious other world was the very same shape which, on our own showing, elsewhere meant nothing but a triangle. And soon, I think, he would say, “You keep on telling me of this other world and its unimaginable shapes which you call solid. But isn’t it very suspicious that all the shapes which you offer me as images or reflections of the solid ones turn out on inspection to be simply the old two-dimensional shapes of my own world as I have always known it? Is it not obvious that your vaunted other world, so far from being the archetype, is a dream which borrows all its elements from this one?”

(2) It is of some importance to notice that the word *symbolism* is not adequate in all cases to cover the relation between the higher medium and its transposition in the lower. It covers some cases perfectly, but not others. Thus the relation between speech and writing is one of symbolism. The written characters exist solely for the eye, the spoken words solely for the ear. There is complete discontinuity between them. They are not like one another, nor does the one cause the other to be. The one is simply a *sign* of the other and signifies it by a convention. But a picture is not related to the visible world in just that way. Pictures are part of the visible world themselves and represent it only by being part of it. Their visibility has the same source as its. The suns and lamps in pictures seem to shine only because real suns or lamps shine on them: that is, they seem to shine a great deal because they really shine a little in reflecting their archetypes. The sunlight in a picture is therefore not related to real sunlight simply as written words are to spoken. It is a sign, but also something more than a sign: and only a sign because it is also more than a sign, because in it the thing signified is really in a certain mode present. If I had to name the relation I should call it not symbolical but sacramental. But in the case we started from — that of emotion and sensation — we are even further beyond mere symbolism. For there, as we have seen, the very same sensation does not merely accompany, nor merely signify, diverse and opposite emotions, but becomes part of them. The emotion descends bodily, as it were, into the sensation and digests, transforms, transubstantiates it, so that the same thrill along the nerves *is* delight or *is* agony.

I am not going to maintain that what I call Transposition is the only possible mode whereby a poorer medium can respond to a richer: but I claim that it is very hard to imagine any other. It is therefore, at the very least, not improbable that Transposition occurs whenever the higher reproduces itself in the lower. Thus, to digress for a moment, it seems to me very likely that the real relation between mind and body is one of Transposition. We are certain that, in this life at any rate, thought is intimately connected with the brain. The theory that thought therefore is merely a movement in the brain is, in my opinion, nonsense; for if so, that theory itself would be merely a movement, an event among atoms, which may have speed and direction but of which it would be meaningless to use the words “true” or “false”. We are driven then to some kind of correspondence. But if we assume a one-for-one correspondence this means that we have to attribute an almost unbelievable complexity and variety of events to the brain. But I submit that a one-for-one relation is probably quite unnecessary. All our examples suggest that the brain can respond — in a sense, adequately and exquisitely correspond — to the seemingly infinite variety of consciousness without providing one single physical modification for each single modification of consciousness.

But that is a digression. Let us now return to our original question, about Spirit and Nature, God and Man. Our problem was that in what claims to be our spiritual life all the elements of our natural life recur: and, what is worse, it looks at first glance as if no other elements were present. We now see that if the spiritual is richer than the natural (as no one who believes in its existence would deny) then this is exactly what we should expect. And the sceptic’s conclusion that the so-called spiritual is really derived from the natural, that it is a mirage or projection or imaginary extension of the natural, is also exactly what we should expect; for, as we have seen, this is the mistake which an observer who knew only the lower medium would be bound to make in every case of Transposition. The brutal man never can by analysis find anything but lust in love; the Flatlander never can find anything but flat shapes in a picture; physiology never can find anything in thought except twitchings of the grey matter. It is no good browbeating the critic who approaches a Transposition from below. On the evidence available to him his conclusion is the only one possible.

Everything is different when you approach the Transposition from above, as we all do in the case of emotion and sensation or of the three-

dimensional world and pictures, and as the spiritual man does in the case we are considering. Those who spoke with tongues, as St. Paul did, can well understand how that holy phenomenon differed from the hysterical phenomenon — although be it remembered, they were in a sense exactly the same phenomenon, just as the very same sensation came to Pepys in love, in the enjoyment of music, and in sickness. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things and is judged of none.

But who dares claim to be a spiritual man? In the full sense, none of us. And yet we are somehow aware that we approach from above, or from inside, at least some of those Transpositions which embody the Christian life in this world. With whatever sense of unworthiness, with whatever sense of audacity, we must affirm that we know a little of the higher system which is being transposed. In a way the claim we are making is not a very startling one. We are only claiming to know that our apparent devotion, whatever else it may have been, was not simply erotic, or that our apparent desire for Heaven, whatever else it may have been, was not simply a desire for longevity or jewelry or social splendours. Perhaps we have never really attained at all to what St. Paul would describe as spiritual life. But at the very least we know, in some dim and confused way, that we were trying to use natural acts and images and language with a new value, have at least desired a repentance which was not merely prudential and a love which was not self-centred. At the worst, we know enough of the spiritual to know that we have fallen short of it: as if the picture knew enough of the three-dimensional world to be aware that it was flat.

It is not only for humility's sake (that, of course) that we must emphasize the dimness of our knowledge. I suspect that, save by God's direct miracle, spiritual experience can never abide introspection. If even our emotions will not do so, (since the attempt to find out what we are now *feeling* yields nothing more than a physical sensation) much less will the operations of the Holy Ghost. The attempt to discover by introspective analysis our own spiritual condition is to me a horrible thing which reveals, at best, not the secrets of God's spirit and ours, but their transpositions in intellect, emotion and imagination, and which at worst may be the quickest road to presumption or despair.

With this my case, as the lawyers say, is complete. But I have just four points to add:

(1) I hope it is quite clear that the conception of Transposition, as I call it, is distinct from another conception often used for the same purpose — I mean the conception of development. The Developmentalist explains the continuity between things that claim to be spiritual and things that are certainly natural by saying that the one slowly turned into the other. I believe this view explains some facts, but I think it has been much overworked. At any rate it is not the theory I am putting forward. I am not saying that the natural act of eating after millions of years somehow blossoms into the Christian sacrament. I am saying that the Spiritual Reality, which existed before there were any creatures who ate, gives this natural act a new meaning, and more than a new meaning: makes it in a certain context to be a different thing. In a word, I think that real landscapes enter into pictures, not that pictures will one day sprout out into real trees and grass.

(2) I have found it impossible, in thinking of what I call Transposition, not to ask myself whether it may help us to conceive the Incarnation. Of course if Transposition were merely a mode of symbolism it could give us no help at all in this matter: on the contrary, it would lead us wholly astray, back into a new kind of Docetism (or would it be only the old kind?) and away from the utterly historical and concrete reality which is the centre of all our hope, faith and love. But then, as I have pointed out, Transposition is not always symbolism. In varying degrees the lower reality can actually be drawn into the higher and become part of it. The sensation which accompanies joy becomes itself joy: we can hardly choose but say "incarnates joy". If this is so, then I venture to suggest, though with great doubt and in the most provisional way, that the concept of Transposition may have some contribution to make to the theology — or at least to the philosophy — of the Incarnation. For we are told in one of the creeds that the Incarnation worked "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God". And it seems to me that there is a real analogy between this and what I have called Transposition: that humanity, still remaining itself, is not merely counted as, but veritably drawn into, Deity, seems to me like what happens when a sensation (not in itself a pleasure) is drawn into the joy it accompanies. But I walk *in mirabilibus supra me* and submit all to the verdict of real theologians.

(3) I have tried to stress throughout the inevitableness of the error made about every transposition by one who approaches it from the lower medium

only. The strength of such a critic lies in the words “merely” or “nothing but”. He sees all the facts but not the meaning. Quite truly, therefore, he claims to have seen all the facts. There *is* nothing else there; except the meaning. He is therefore, as regards the matter in hand, in the position of an animal. You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand *pointing*. You point to a bit of food on the floor: the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning. And in a period when factual realism is dominant we shall find people deliberately inducing upon themselves this dog-like mind. A man who has experienced love from within will deliberately go about to inspect it analytically from outside and regard the results of this analysis as truer than his experience. The extreme limit of this self-blinding is seen in those who, like the rest of us, have consciousness, yet go about to study the human organism as if they did not know it was conscious. As long as this deliberate refusal to understand things from above, even where such understanding is possible, continues, it is idle to talk of any final victory over materialism. The critique of every experience from below, the voluntary ignoring of meaning and concentration on fact, will always have the same plausibility. There will always be evidence, and every month fresh evidence, to show that religion is only psychological, justice only self-protection, politics only economics, love only lust, and thought itself only cerebral biochemistry.

(4) Finally, I suggest that what has been said of Transposition throws a new light on the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. For in a sense Transposition can do anything. However great the difference between Spirit and Nature, between aesthetic joy and that flutter in the diaphragm, between reality and picture, yet the Transposition can be in its own way adequate. I said before that in your drawing you had only plain white paper for sun and cloud, snow, water, and human flesh. In one sense, how miserably inadequate! Yet in another, how perfect. If the shadows are properly done that patch of white paper will, in some curious way, be very like blazing sunshine: we shall almost feel cold while we look at the paper snow and almost warm our hands at the paper fire. May we not, by a reasonable analogy, suppose likewise that there is no experience of the spirit so transcendent and supernatural, no vision of Deity Himself so close and so far beyond all images and emotions, that to it also there cannot be an appropriate correspondence on the sensory level? Not by a new sense but by

the incredible flooding of those very sensations we now have with a meaning, a transvaluation, of which we have here no faintest guess?

II. The Weight of Glory

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If you asked twenty good men to-day what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you had asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative ideal of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

We must not be troubled by unbelievers when they say that this promise of reward makes the Christian life a mercenary affair. There are different kinds of reward. There is the reward which has no natural connexion with the things you do to earn it, and is quite foreign to the desires that ought to accompany those things. Money is not the natural reward of love; that is why we call a man mercenary if he marries a woman for the sake of her money. But marriage is the proper reward for a real lover, and he is not mercenary for desiring it. A general who fights well in order to get a

peerage is mercenary; a general who fights for victory is not, victory being the proper reward of battle as marriage is the proper reward of love. The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation. There is also a third case, which is more complicated. An enjoyment of Greek poetry is certainly a proper, and not a mercenary, reward for learning Greek; but only those who have reached the stage of enjoying Greek poetry can tell from their own experience that this is so. The schoolboy beginning Greek grammar cannot look forward to his adult enjoyment of Sophocles as a lover looks forward to marriage or a general to victory. He has to begin by working for marks, or to escape punishment, or to please his parents, or, at best, in the hope of a future good which he cannot at present imagine or desire. His position, therefore, bears a certain resemblance to that of the mercenary; the reward he is going to get will, in actual fact, be a natural or proper reward, but he will not know that till he has got it. Of course, he gets it gradually; enjoyment creeps in upon the mere drudgery, and nobody could point to a day or an hour when the one ceased and the other began. But it is just in so far as he approaches the reward that he becomes able to desire it for its own sake; indeed, the power of so desiring it is itself a preliminary reward.

The Christian, in relation to heaven, is in much the same position as this schoolboy. Those who have attained everlasting life in the vision of God doubtless know very well that it is no mere bribe, but the very consummation of their earthly discipleship; but we who have not yet attained it cannot know this in the same way, and cannot even begin to know it at all except by continuing to obey and finding the first reward of our obedience in our increasing power to desire the ultimate reward. Just in proportion as the desire grows, our fear lest it should be a mercenary desire will die away and finally be recognized as an absurdity. But probably this will not, for most of us, happen in a day; poetry replaces grammar, gospel replaces law, longing transforms obedience, as gradually as the tide lifts a grounded ship.

But there is one other important similarity between the schoolboy and ourselves. If he is an imaginative boy he will, quite probably, be revelling in the English poets and romancers suitable to his age some time before he begins to suspect that Greek grammar is going to lead him to more and more enjoyments of this same sort. He may even be neglecting his Greek to read Shelley and Swinburne in secret. In other words, the desire which

Greek is really going to gratify already exists in him and is attached to objects which seem to him quite unconnected with Xenophon and the verbs in [Greek: mi]. Now, if we are made for heaven, the desire for our proper place will be already in us, but not yet attached to the true object, and will even appear as the rival of that object. And this, I think, is just what we find. No doubt there is one point in which my analogy of the schoolboy breaks down. The English poetry which he reads when he ought to be doing Greek exercises may be just as good as the Greek poetry to which the exercises are leading him, so that in fixing on Milton instead of journeying on to Aeschylus his desire is not embracing a false object. But our case is very different. If a transtemporal, transfinite good is our real destiny, then any other good on which our desire fixes must be in some degree fallacious, must bear at best only a symbolical relation to what will truly satisfy.

In speaking of this desire for our own far-off country, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you — the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence; the secret also which pierces with such sweetness that when, in very intimate conversation, the mention of it becomes imminent, we grow awkward and affect to laugh at ourselves; the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell, though we desire to do both. We cannot tell it because it is a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience. We cannot hide it because our experience is constantly suggesting it, and we betray ourselves like lovers at the mention of a name. Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter. Wordsworth's expedient was to identify it with certain moments in his own past. But all this is a cheat. If Wordsworth had gone back to those moments in the past, he would not have found the thing itself, but only the reminder of it; what he remembered would turn out to be itself a remembering. The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not *in* them, it only came *through* them, and what came through them was longing. These things — the beauty, the memory of our own past — are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news

from a country we have never yet visited. Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years. Almost our whole education has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent, inner voice; almost all our modern philosophies have been devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found on this earth. And yet it is a remarkable thing that such philosophies of Progress or Creative Evolution themselves bear reluctant witness to the truth that our real goal is elsewhere. When they want to convince you that earth is your home, notice how they set about it. They begin by trying to persuade you that earth can be made into heaven, thus giving a sop to your sense of exile in earth as it is. Next, they tell you that this fortunate event is still a good way off in the future, thus giving a sop to your knowledge that the fatherland is not here and now. Finally, lest your longing for the transtemporal should awake and spoil the whole affair, they use any rhetoric that comes to hand to keep out of your mind the recollection that even if all the happiness they promised could come to man on earth, yet still each generation would lose it by death, including the last generation of all, and the whole story would be nothing, not even a story, for ever and ever. Hence all the nonsense that Mr. Shaw puts into the final speech of Lilith, and Bergson's remark that the *élan vital* is capable of surmounting all obstacles, perhaps even death — as if we could believe that any social or biological development on this planet will delay the senility of the sun or reverse the second law of thermodynamics.

Do what they will, then, we remain conscious of a desire which no natural happiness will satisfy. But is there any reason to suppose that reality offers any satisfaction to it? "Nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread." But I think it may be urged that this misses the point. A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men

will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called “falling in love” occurred in a sexless world.

Here, then, is the desire, still wandering and uncertain of its object and still largely unable to see that object in the direction where it really lies. Our sacred books give us some account of the object. It is, of course, a symbolical account. Heaven is, by definition, outside our experience, but all intelligible descriptions must be of things within our experience. The scriptural picture of heaven is therefore just as symbolical as the picture which our desire, unaided, invents for itself; heaven is not really full of jewelry any more than it is really the beauty of Nature, or a fine piece of music. The difference is that the scriptural imagery has authority. It comes to us from writers who were closer to God than we, and it has stood the test of Christian experience down the centuries. The natural appeal of this authoritative imagery is to me, at first, very small. At first sight it chills, rather than awakes, my desire. And that is just what I ought to expect. If Christianity could tell me no more of the far-off land than my own temperament led me to surmise already, then Christianity would be no higher than myself. If it has more to give me, I must expect it to be less immediately attractive than “my own stuff”. Sophocles at first seems dull and cold to the boy who has only reached Shelley. If our religion is something objective, then we must never avert our eyes from those elements in it which seem puzzling or repellent; for it will be precisely the puzzling or the repellent which conceals what we do not yet know and need to know.

The promises of Scripture may very roughly be reduced to five heads. It is promised, firstly, that we shall be with Christ; secondly, that we shall be like Him; thirdly, with an enormous wealth of imagery, that we shall have “glory”; fourthly, that we shall, in some sense, be fed or feasted or entertained; and, finally, that we shall have some sort of official position in the universe — ruling cities, judging angels, being pillars of God’s temple. The first question I ask about these promises is: “Why any of them except the first?” Can anything be added to the conception of being with Christ? For it must be true, as an old writer says, that he who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only. I think the answer turns again on the nature of symbols. For though it may escape our notice at first glance, yet it is true that any conception of being with Christ which most of us can now form will be not very much less symbolical than the

other promises; for it will smuggle in ideas of proximity in space and loving conversation as we now understand conversation, and it will probably concentrate on the humanity of Christ to the exclusion of His deity. And, in fact, we find that those Christians who attend solely to this first promise always do fill it up with very earthly imagery indeed — in fact, with hymeneal or erotic imagery. I am not for a moment condemning such imagery. I heartily wish I could enter into it more deeply than I do, and pray that I yet shall. But my point is that this also is only a symbol, like the reality in some respects, but unlike it in others, and therefore needs correction from the different symbols in the other promises. The variation of the promises does not mean that anything other than God will be our ultimate bliss; but because God is more than a Person, and lest we should imagine the joy of His presence too exclusively in terms of our present poor experience of personal love, with all its narrowness and strain and monotony, a dozen changing images, correcting and relieving each other, are supplied.

I turn next to the idea of glory. There is no getting away from the fact that this idea is very prominent in the New Testament and in early Christian writings. Salvation is constantly associated with palms, crowns, white robes, thrones, and splendour like the sun and stars. All this makes no immediate appeal to me at all, and in that respect I fancy I am a typical modern. Glory suggests two ideas to me, of which one seems wicked and the other ridiculous. Either glory means to me fame, or it means luminosity. As for the first, since to be famous means to be better known than other people, the desire for fame appears to me as a competitive passion and therefore of hell rather than heaven. As for the second, who wishes to become a kind of living electric light bulb?

When I began to look into this matter I was shocked to find such different Christians as Milton, Johnson and Thomas Aquinas taking heavenly glory quite frankly in the sense of fame or good report. But not fame conferred by our fellow creatures — fame with God, approval or (I might say) “appreciation” by God. And then, when I had thought it over, I saw that this view was scriptural; nothing can eliminate from the parable the divine *accolade*, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” With that, a good deal of what I had been thinking all my life fell down like a house of cards. I suddenly remembered that no one can enter heaven except as a child; and nothing is so obvious in a child — not in a conceited child, but in

a good child — as its great and undisguised pleasure in being praised. Not only in a child, either, but even in a dog or a horse. Apparently what I had mistaken for humility had, all these years, prevented me from understanding what is in fact the humblest, the most childlike, the most creaturely of pleasures — nay, the specific pleasure of the inferior: the pleasure of a beast before men, a child before its father, a pupil before his teacher, a creature before its Creator. I am not forgetting how horribly this most innocent desire is parodied in our human ambitions, or how very quickly, in my own experience, the lawful pleasure of praise from those whom it was my duty to please turns into the deadly poison of self-admiration. But I thought I could detect a moment — a very, very short moment — before this happened, during which the satisfaction of having pleased those whom I rightly loved and rightly feared was pure. And that is enough to raise our thoughts to what may happen when the redeemed soul, beyond all hope and nearly beyond belief, learns at last that she has pleased Him whom she was created to please. There will be no room for vanity then. She will be free from the miserable illusion that it is her doing. With no taint of what we should now call self-approval she will most innocently rejoice in the thing that God has made her to be, and the moment which heals her old inferiority complex for ever will also drown her pride deeper than Prospero’s book. Perfect humility dispenses with modesty. If God is satisfied with the work, the work may be satisfied with itself; “it is not for her to bandy compliments with her Sovereign”. I can imagine someone saying that he dislikes my idea of heaven as a place where we are patted on the back. But proud misunderstanding is behind that dislike. In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or with the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised. I read in a periodical the other day that the fundamental thing is how we think of God. By God Himself, it is not! How God thinks of us is not only more important, but infinitely more important. Indeed, how we think of Him is of no importance except in so far as it is related to how He thinks of us. It is written that we shall “stand before” Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God . . . to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness . . . to be

loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son — it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.

And now notice what is happening. If I had rejected the authoritative and scriptural image of glory and stuck obstinately to the vague desire which was, at the outset, my only pointer to heaven, I could have seen no connexion at all between that desire and the Christian promise. But now, having followed up what seemed puzzling and repellent in the sacred books, I find, to my great surprise, looking back, that the connexion is perfectly clear. Glory, as Christianity teaches me to hope for it, turns out to satisfy my original desire and indeed to reveal an element in that desire which I had not noticed. By ceasing for a moment to consider my own wants I have begun to learn better what I really wanted. When I attempted, a few minutes ago, to describe our spiritual longings, I was omitting one of their most curious characteristics. We usually notice it just as the moment of vision dies away, as the music ends or as the landscape loses the celestial light. What we feel then has been well described by Keats as “the journey homeward to habitual self”. You know what I mean. For a few minutes we have had the illusion of belonging to that world. Now we wake to find that it is no such thing. We have been mere spectators. Beauty has smiled, but not to welcome us; her face was turned in our direction, but not to see us. We have not been accepted, welcomed, or taken into the dance. We may go when we please, we may stay if we can: “Nobody marks us.” A scientist may reply that since most of the things we call beautiful are inanimate, it is not very surprising that they take no notice of us. That, of course, is true. It is not the physical objects that I am speaking of, but that indescribable something of which they become for a moment the messengers. And part of the bitterness which mixes with the sweetness of that message is due to the fact that it so seldom seems to be a message intended for us, but rather something we have overheard. By bitterness I mean pain, not resentment. We should hardly dare to ask that any notice be taken of ourselves. But we pine. The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory, in the sense described, becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory meant good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome

into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last.

Perhaps it seems rather crude to describe glory as the fact of being "noticed" by God. But this is almost the language of the New Testament. St. Paul promises to those who love God not, as we should expect, that they will know Him, but that they will be known by Him (1 Cor. viii. 3). It is a strange promise. Does not God know all things at all times? But it is dreadfully re-echoed in another passage of the New Testament. There we are warned that it may happen to any one of us to appear at last before the face of God and hear only the appalling words: "I never knew you. Depart from Me." In some sense, as dark to the intellect as it is unendurable to the feelings, we can be both banished from the presence of Him who is present everywhere and erased from the knowledge of Him who knows all. We can be left utterly and absolutely *outside* — repelled, exiled, estranged, finally and unspeakably ignored. On the other hand, we can be called in, welcomed, received, acknowledged. We walk every day on the razor edge between these two incredible possibilities. Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.

And this brings me to the other sense of glory — glory as brightness, splendour, luminosity. We are to shine as the sun, we are to be given the Morning Star. I think I begin to see what it means. In one way, of course, God has given us the Morning Star already: you can go and enjoy the gift on many fine mornings if you get up early enough. What more, you may ask, do we want? Ah, but we want so much more — something the books on aesthetics take little notice of. But the poets and the mythologies know all about it. We do not want merely to *see* beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words — to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. That is why we have peopled air and earth and water with gods and goddesses and nymphs and elves — that, though we cannot, yet these projections can, enjoy in themselves that beauty, grace, and power of which Nature is the image. That is why the poets tell us such lovely falsehoods. They talk as if the west

wind could really sweep into a human soul; but it can't. They tell us that "beauty born of murmuring sound" will pass into a human face; but it won't. Or not yet. For if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day *give* us the Morning Star and cause us to *put on* the splendour of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy. At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendours we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get *in*. When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch. For you must not think that I am putting forward any heathen fancy of being absorbed into Nature. Nature is mortal; we shall outlive her. When all the suns and nebulae have passed away, each one of you will still be alive. Nature is only the image, the symbol; but it is the symbol Scripture invites me to use. We are summoned to pass in through Nature, beyond her, into that splendour which she fitfully reflects.

And in there, in beyond Nature, we shall eat of the tree of life. At present, if we are reborn in Christ, the spirit in us lives directly on God; but the mind, and still more the body, receives life from Him at a thousand removes — through our ancestors, through our food, through the elements. The faint, far-off results of those energies which God's creative rapture implanted in matter when He made the worlds are what we now call physical pleasures; and even thus filtered, they are too much for our present management. What would it be to taste at the fountain-head that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will "flow over" into the glorified body. In the light of our present specialized and depraved appetites we cannot imagine this *torrens voluptatis*, and I warn everyone most seriously not to try. But it must be mentioned, to drive out thoughts even more misleading — thoughts that what is saved is a mere ghost, or that the risen body lives in numb insensibility. The body was made for the Lord, and these dismal fancies are wide of the mark.

Meanwhile the cross comes before the crown and tomorrow is a Monday morning. A cleft has opened in the pitiless walls of the world, and we are invited to follow our great Captain inside. The following Him is, of course, the essential point. That being so, it may be asked what practical use there is in the speculations which I have been indulging. I can think of at least one such use. It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbour's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit — immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously — no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner — no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbour he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ *vere latitat* — the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.

III. Membership

An address to the Society of St. Alban and St. Sergius. (Reprinted from Sobornost')

No Christian and, indeed, no historian could accept the epigram which defines religion as "what a man does with his solitude". It was one of the Wesleys, I think, who said that the New Testament knows nothing of solitary religion. We are forbidden to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. Christianity is already institutional in the earliest of its documents. The Church is the Bride of Christ. We are members of one another.

In our own age the idea that religion belongs to our private life — that it is, in fact, an occupation for the individual's hour of leisure — is at once paradoxical, dangerous, and natural. It is paradoxical because this exaltation of the individual in the religious field springs up in an age when collectivism is ruthlessly defeating the individual in every other field. I see this even in a University. When I first went to Oxford the typical undergraduate society consisted of a dozen men, who knew one another intimately, hearing a paper by one of their own number in a small sitting-room and hammering out their problem till one or two in the morning. Before the war the typical undergraduate society had come to be a mixed audience of one or two hundred students assembled in a public hall to hear a lecture from some visiting celebrity. Even on those rare occasions when a modern undergraduate is not attending some such society he is seldom engaged in those solitary walks, or walks with a single companion, which built the minds of the previous generations. He lives in a crowd; caucus has replaced friendship. And this tendency not only exists both within and without the University, but is often approved. There is a crowd of busybodies, self-appointed masters of ceremonies, whose life is devoted to destroying solitude wherever solitude still exists. They call it "taking the young people out of themselves", or "waking them up", or "overcoming their apathy". If an Augustine, a Vaughan, a Traherne or a Wordsworth should be born in the modern world, the leaders of a Youth Organization would soon cure him. If a really good home, such as the home of Alcinous and Arete in the *Odyssey* or the Rostovs in *War and Peace* or any of Charlotte M. Yonge's families, existed to-day, it would be denounced as

bourgeois and every engine of destruction would be levelled against it. And even where the planners fail and someone is left physically by himself, the wireless has seen to it that he will be — in a sense not intended by Scipio — never less alone than when alone. We live, in fact, in a world starved for solitude, silence, and privacy: and therefore starved for meditation and true friendship.

That religion should be relegated to solitude in such an age is, then, paradoxical. But it is also dangerous for two reasons. In the first place, when the modern world says to us aloud, "You may be religious when you are alone," it adds under its breath, "and I will see to it that you never are alone." To make Christianity a private affair while banishing all privacy is to relegate it to the rainbow's end or the Greek Calends. That is one of the enemy's stratagems. In the second place, there is the danger that real Christians who know that Christianity is not a solitary affair may react against that error by simply transporting into our spiritual life that same collectivism which has already conquered our secular life. That is the enemy's other stratagem. Like a good chess player he is always trying to manoeuvre you into a position where you can save your castle only by losing your bishop. In order to avoid the trap we must insist that though the private conception of Christianity is an error it is a profoundly natural one, and is clumsily attempting to guard a great truth. Behind it is the obvious feeling that our modern collectivism is an outrage upon human nature and that from this, as from all other evils, God will be our shield and buckler.

This feeling is just. As personal and private life is lower than participation in the Body of Christ, so the collective life is lower than the personal and private life and has no value save in its service. The secular community, since it exists for our natural good and not for our supernatural, has no higher end than to facilitate and safeguard the family, and friendship, and solitude. To be happy at home, said Johnson, is the end of all human endeavour. As long as we are thinking only of natural values we must say that the sun looks down on nothing half so good as a household laughing together over a meal, or two friends talking over a pint of beer, or a man alone reading a book that interests him; and that all economics, politics, laws, armies, and institutions, save in so far as they prolong and multiply such scenes, are a mere ploughing the sand and sowing the ocean, a meaningless vanity and vexation of spirit. Collective activities are, of course, necessary; but this is the end to which they are necessary. Great

sacrifices of this private happiness by those who have it may be necessary in order that it may be more widely distributed. All may have to be a little hungry in order that none may starve. But do not let us mistake necessary evils for good. The mistake is easily made. Fruit has to be tinned if it is to be transported, and has to lose thereby some of its good qualities. But one meets people who have learned actually to prefer the tinned fruit to the fresh. A sick society must think much about politics, as a sick man must think much about his digestion: to ignore the subject may be fatal cowardice for the one as for the other. But if either comes to regard it as the natural food of the mind — if either forgets that we think of such things only in order to be able to think of something else — then what was undertaken for the sake of health has become itself a new and deadly disease.

There is, in fact, a fatal tendency in all human activities for the means to encroach upon the very ends which they were intended to serve. Thus money comes to hinder the exchange of commodities, and rules of art to hamper genius, and examinations to prevent young men from becoming learned. It does not, unfortunately, always follow that the encroaching means can be dispensed with. I think it probable that the collectivism of our life is necessary and will increase; and I think that our only safeguard against its deathly properties is in a Christian life; for we were promised that we could handle serpents and drink deadly things and yet live. That is the truth behind the erroneous definition of religion with which we started. Where it went wrong was in opposing to the collective mass mere solitude. The Christian is called, not to individualism but to membership in the mystical body. A consideration of the differences between the secular collective and the mystical body is therefore the first step to understanding how Christianity without being individualistic can yet counteract collectivism.

At the outset we are hampered by a difficulty of language. The very word *membership* is of Christian origin, but it has been taken over by the world and emptied of all meaning. In any book on logic you may see the expression “members of a class”. It must be most emphatically stated that the items or particulars included in a homogeneous class are almost the reverse of what St. Paul meant by *members*. By *members* [Greek: melê] he meant what we should call *organs*, things essentially different from, and complementary to, one another: things differing not only in structure and function but also in dignity. Thus, in a club, the committee as a whole, and

the servants as a whole, may both properly be regarded as “members”; what we should call the members of the club are merely units. A row of identically dressed and identically trained soldiers set side by side, or a number of citizens listed as voters in a constituency, are not members of anything in the Pauline sense. I am afraid that when we describe a man as “a member of the Church” we usually mean nothing Pauline: we mean only that he is a unit — that he is one more specimen of the some kind of thing as X and Y and Z. How true membership in a body differs from inclusion in a collective may be seen in the structure of a family. The grandfather, the parents, the grown-up son, the child, the dog, and the cat are true members (in the organic sense) precisely because they are not members or units of a homogeneous class. They are not interchangeable. Each person is almost a species in himself. The mother is not simply a different person from the daughter, she is a different kind of person. The grown-up brother is not simply one unit in the class children, he is a separate estate of the realm. The father and grandfather are almost as different as the cat and the dog. If you subtract any one member you have not simply reduced the family in number, you have inflicted an injury on its structure. Its unity is a unity of unlikes, almost of incommensurables.

A dim perception of the richness inherent in this kind of unity is one reason why we enjoy a book like *The Wind in the Willows*; a trio such as Rat, Mole, and Badger symbolizes the extreme differentiation of persons in harmonious union which we know intuitively to be our true refuge both from solitude and from the collective. The affection between such oddly matched couples as Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, or Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, pleases in the same way. That is why the modern notion that children should call their parents by their Christian names is so perverse. For this is an effort to ignore the difference in kind which makes for real organic unity. They are trying to inoculate the child with the preposterous view that one’s mother is simply a fellow-citizen like anyone else, to make it ignorant of what all men know and insensible to what all men feel. They are trying to drag the featureless repetitions of the collective into the fuller and more concrete world of the family.

A convict has a number instead of a name. That is the collective idea carried to its extreme. But a man in his own house may also lose his name, because he is called simply “Father”. That is membership in a body. The

loss of the name in both cases reminds us that there are two opposite ways of departing from isolation.

The society into which the Christian is called at baptism is not a collective but a Body. It is in fact that Body of which the family is an image on the natural level. If anyone came to it with the misconception that membership of the Church was membership in a debased modern sense — a massing together of persons as if they were pennies or counters — he would be corrected at the threshold by the discovery that the Head of this Body is so unlike the inferior members that they share no predicate with Him save by analogy. We are summoned from the outset to combine as creatures with our Creator, as mortals with immortal, as redeemed sinners with sinless Redeemer. His presence, the interaction between Him and us, must always be the overwhelmingly dominant factor in the life we are to lead within the Body; and any conception of Christian fellowship which does not mean primarily fellowship with Him is out of court. After that it seems almost trivial to trace further down the diversity of operations to the unity of the Spirit. But it is very plainly there. There are priests divided from the laity, catechumens divided from those who are in full fellowship. There is authority of husbands over wives and parents over children. There is, in forms too subtle for official embodiment, a continual interchange of complementary ministrations. We are all constantly teaching and learning, forgiving and being forgiven, representing Christ to man when we intercede, and man to Christ when others intercede for us. The sacrifice of selfish privacy which is daily demanded of us is daily repaid a hundredfold in the true growth of personality which the life of the Body encourages. Those who are members of one another become as diverse as the hand and the ear. That is why the worldlings are so monotonously alike compared with the almost fantastic variety of the saints. Obedience is the road to freedom, humility the road to pleasure, unity the road to personality.

And now I must say something that may appear to you a paradox. You have often heard that, though in the world we hold different stations, yet we are all equal in the sight of God. There are of course senses in which this is true. God is no accepter of persons: His love for us is not measured by our social rank or our intellectual talents. But I believe there is a sense in which this maxim is the reverse of the truth. I am going to venture to say that artificial equality is necessary in the life of the State, but that in the Church

we strip off this disguise, we recover our real inequalities, and are thereby refreshed and quickened.

I believe in political equality. But there are two opposite reasons for being a democrat. You may think all men so good that they deserve a share in the government of the commonwealth, and so wise that the commonwealth needs their advice. That is, in my opinion, the false, romantic doctrine of democracy. On the other hand, you may believe fallen men to be so wicked that not one of them can be trusted with any irresponsible power over his fellows.

That I believe to be the true ground of democracy. I do not believe that God created an egalitarian world. I believe the authority of parent over child, husband over wife, learned over simple, to have been as much a part of the original plan as the authority of man over beast. I believe that if we had not fallen Filmer would be right, and patriarchal monarchy would be the sole lawful government. But since we have learned sin, we have found, as Lord Acton says, that “all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. The only remedy has been to take away the powers and substitute a legal fiction of equality. The authority of Father and Husband has been rightly abolished on the legal plane, not because this authority is in itself bad (on the contrary, it is, I hold, divine in origin) but because Fathers and Husbands are bad. Theocracy has been rightly abolished not because it is bad that learned priests should govern ignorant laymen, but because priests are wicked men like the rest of us. Even the authority of man over beast has had to be interfered with because it is constantly abused.

Equality is for me in the same position as clothes. It is a result of the Fall and the remedy for it. Any attempt to retrace the steps by which we have arrived at egalitarianism and to re-introduce the old authorities on the political level is for me as foolish as it would be to take off our clothes. The Nazi and the Nudist make the same mistake. But it is the naked body, still there beneath the clothes of each one of us, which really lives. It is the hierarchical world, still alive and (very properly) hidden behind a façade of equal citizenship, which is our real concern.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not in the least belittling the value of this egalitarian fiction which is our only defence against one another’s cruelty. I should view with the strongest disapproval any proposal to abolish manhood suffrage, or the Married Women’s Property Act. But the function of equality is purely protective. It is medicine, not food. By treating human

persons (in judicious defiance of the observed facts) as if they were all the same kind of thing, we avoid innumerable evils. But it is not on this that we were made to live. It is idle to say that men are of equal value. If value is taken in a worldly sense — if we mean that all men are equally useful or beautiful or good or entertaining — then it is nonsense. If it means that all are of equal value as immortal souls then I think it conceals a dangerous error. The infinite value of each human soul is not a Christian doctrine. God did not die for man because of some value He perceived in him. The value of each human soul considered simply in itself, out of relation to God, is zero. As St. Paul writes, to have died for valuable men would have been not divine but merely heroic; but God died for sinners. He loved us not because we were lovable, but because He is Love. It may be that He loves all equally — He certainly loved all to the death — and I am not certain what the expression means. If there is equality it is in His love, not in us.

Equality is a quantitative term and therefore love often knows nothing of it. Authority exercised with humility and obedience accepted with delight are the very lines along which our spirits live. Even in the life of the affections, much more in the Body of Christ, we step outside that world which says “I am as good as you.” It is like turning from a march to a dance. It is like taking off our clothes. We become, as Chesterton said, taller when we bow; we become lowlier when we instruct. It delights me that there should be moments in the services of my own Church when the priest stands and I kneel. As democracy becomes more complete in the outer world and opportunities for reverence are successively removed, the refreshment, the cleansing, and invigorating returns to inequality, which the Church offers us, become more and more necessary.

In this way then, the Christian life defends the single personality from the collective, not by isolating him but by giving him the status of an organ in the mystical Body. As the book of Revelation says, he is made “a pillar in the temple of God”; and it adds, “he shall go no more out.” That introduces a new side of our subject. That structural position in the Church which the humblest Christian occupies is eternal and even cosmic. The Church will outlive the universe; in it the individual person will outlive the universe. Everything that is joined to the immortal Head will share His immortality. We hear little of this from the Christian pulpit to-day. What has come of our silence may be judged from the fact that recently addressing the Forces on this subject, I found that one of my audience regarded this doctrine as

“theosophical”. If we do not believe it let us be honest and relegate the Christian faith to museums. If we do, let us give up the pretence that it makes no difference. For this is the real answer to every excessive claim made by the collective. It is mortal; we shall live for ever. There will come a time when every culture, every institution, every nation, the human race, all biological life, is extinct, and every one of us is still alive. Immortality is promised to us, not to these generalities. It was not for societies or states that Christ died, but for men. In that sense Christianity must seem to secular collectivists to involve an almost frantic assertion of individuality. But then it is not the individual as such who will share Christ’s victory over death. We shall share the victory by being in the Victor. A rejection, or in Scripture’s strong language, a crucifixion of the natural self is the passport to everlasting life. Nothing that has not died will be resurrected. That is just how Christianity cuts across the antithesis between individualism and collectivism. There lies the maddening ambiguity of our faith as it must appear to outsiders. It sets its face relentlessly against our natural individualism; on the other hand, it gives back to those who abandon individualism an eternal possession of their own personal being, even of their bodies. As mere biological entities, each with its separate will to live and to expand, we are apparently of no account; we are cross-fodder. But as organs in the Body of Christ, as stones and pillars in the temple, we are assured of our eternal self-identity and shall live to remember the galaxies as an old tale.

This may be put in another way. Personality is eternal and inviolable. But then, personality is not a datum from which we start. The individualism in which we all begin is only a parody or shadow of it. True personality lies ahead — how far ahead, for most of us, I dare not say. And the key to it does not lie in ourselves. It will not be attained by development from within outwards. It will come to us when we occupy those places in the structure of the eternal cosmos for which we were designed or invented. As a colour first reveals its true quality when placed by an excellent artist in its pre-elected spot between certain others, as a spice reveals its true flavour when inserted just where and when a good cook wishes among the other ingredients, as the dog becomes really doggy only when he has taken his place in the household of man, so we shall then first be true persons when we have suffered ourselves to be fitted into our places. We are marble waiting to be shaped, metal waiting to be run into a mould. No doubt there

are already, even in the unregenerate self, faint hints of what mould each is designed for, or what sort of pillar he will be. But it is, I think, a gross exaggeration to picture the saving of a soul as being, normally, at all like the development from seed to flower. The very words repentance, regeneration, the New Man, suggest something very different. Some tendencies in each natural man may have to be simply rejected. Our Lord speaks of eyes being plucked out and hands lopped off — a frankly Procrustean method of adaptation.

The reason we recoil from this is that we have in our day started by getting the whole picture upside down. Starting with the doctrine that every individuality is "of infinite value" we then picture God as a kind of employment committee whose business it is to find suitable careers for souls, square holes for square pegs. In fact, however, the value of the individual does not lie in him. He is capable of receiving value. He receives it by union with Christ. There is no question of finding for him a place in the living temple which will do justice to his inherent value and give scope to his natural idiosyncrasy. The place was there first. The man was created for it. He will not be himself till he is there. We shall be true and everlasting and really divine persons only in Heaven, just as we are, even now, coloured bodies only in the light.

To say this is to repeat what everyone here admits already — that we are saved by grace, that in our flesh dwells no good thing, that we are, through and through, creatures not creators, derived beings, living not of ourselves but from Christ. If I seem to have complicated a simple matter, you will, I hope, forgive me. I have been anxious to bring out two points. I have wanted to try to expel that quite unchristian worship of the human individual simply as such which is so rampant in modern thought side by side with our collectivism; for one error begets the opposite error and, far from neutralizing, they aggravate each other. I mean the pestilent notion (one sees it in literary criticism) that each of us starts with a treasure called "Personality" locked up inside him, and that to expand and express this, to guard it from interference, to be "original", is the main end of life. This is Pelagian, or worse, and it defeats even itself. No man who values originality will ever be original. But try to tell the truth as you see it, try to do any bit of work as well as it can be done for the work's sake, and what men call originality will come unsought. Even on that level, the submission of the individual to the function is already beginning to bring true Personality to

birth. And secondly, I have wanted to show that Christianity is not, in the long run, concerned either with individuals or communities. Neither the individual nor the community as popular thought understands them can inherit eternal life: neither the natural self, nor the collective mass, but a new creature.

IV. Learning in War-Time

A sermon preached in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, Autumn, 1939

A university is a society for the pursuit of learning. As students, you will be expected to make yourselves, or to start making yourselves, into what the Middle Ages called clerks: into philosophers, scientists, scholars, critics, or historians. And at first sight this seems to be an odd thing to do during a great war. What is the use of beginning a task which we have so little chance of finishing? Or, even if we ourselves should happen not to be interrupted by death or military service, why should we — indeed how can we — continue to take an interest in these placid occupations when the lives of our friends and the liberties of Europe are in the balance? Is it not like fiddling while Rome burns?

Now it seems to me that we shall not be able to answer these questions until we have put them by the side of certain other questions which every Christian ought to have asked himself in peace-time. I spoke just now of fiddling while Rome burns. But to a Christian the true tragedy of Nero must be not that he fiddled while the city was on fire but that he fiddled on the brink of hell. You must forgive me for the crude monosyllable. I know that many wiser and better Christians than I in these days do not like to mention heaven and hell even in a pulpit. I know, too, that nearly all the references to this subject in the New Testament come from a single source. But then that source is Our Lord Himself. People will tell you it is St. Paul, but that is untrue. These overwhelming doctrines are dominical. They are not really removable from the teaching of Christ or of His Church. If we do not believe them, our presence in this church is great tomfoolery. If we do, we must sometime overcome our spiritual prudery and mention them.

The moment we do so we can see that every Christian who comes to a university must at all times face a question compared with which the questions raised by the war are relatively unimportant. He must ask himself how it is right, or even psychologically possible, for creatures who are every moment advancing either to heaven or to hell, to spend any fraction of the little time allowed them in this world on such comparative trivialities as literature or art, mathematics or biology. If human culture can stand up to

that, it can stand up to anything. To admit that we can retain our interest in learning under the shadow of these eternal issues, but not under the shadow of a European war, would be to admit that our ears are closed to the voice of reason and very wide open to the voice of our nerves and our mass emotions.

This indeed is the case with most of us: certainly with me. For that reason I think it important to try to see the present calamity in a true perspective. The war creates no absolutely new situation: it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice. Human culture has always had to exist under the shadow of something infinitely more important than itself. If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure, the search would never have begun. We are mistaken when we compare war with “normal life”. Life has never been normal. Even those periods which we think most tranquil, like the nineteenth century, turn out, on closer inspection, to be full of crises, alarms, difficulties, emergencies. Plausible reasons have never been lacking for putting off all merely cultural activities until some imminent danger has been averted or some crying injustice put right. But humanity long ago chose to neglect those plausible reasons. They wanted knowledge and beauty now, and would not wait for the suitable moment that never comes. Periclean Athens leaves us not only the Parthenon but, significantly, the Funeral Oration. The insects have chosen a different line: they have sought first the material welfare and security of the hive, and presumably they have their reward. Men are different. They propound mathematical theorems in beleaguered cities, conduct metaphysical arguments in condemned cells, make jokes on scaffolds, discuss the last new poem while advancing to the walls of Quebec, and comb their hair at Thermopylae. This is not *panache*: it is our nature.

But since we are fallen creatures the fact that this is now our nature would not, by itself, prove that it is rational or right. We have to inquire whether there is really any legitimate place for the activities of the scholar in a world such as this. That is, we have always to answer the question: “How can you be so frivolous and selfish as to think about anything but the salvation of human souls?” and we have, at the moment, to answer the additional question “How can you be so frivolous and selfish as to think of anything but the war?” Now part of our answer will be the same for both

questions. The one implies that our life can, and ought, to become exclusively and explicitly religious: the other, that it can and ought to become exclusively national. I believe that our whole life can, and indeed must, become religious in a sense to be explained later. But if it is meant that all our activities are to be of the kind that can be recognized as “sacred” and opposed to “secular” then I would give a single reply to both my imaginary assailants. I would say, “Whether it ought to happen or not, the thing you are recommending is not going to happen.” Before I became a Christian I do not think I fully realized that one’s life, after conversion, would inevitably consist in doing most of the same things one had been doing before: one hopes, in a new spirit, but still the same things. Before I went to the last war I certainly expected that my life in the trenches would, in some mysterious sense, be all war. In fact, I found that the nearer you got to the front line the less every one spoke and thought of the allied cause and the progress of the campaign; and I am pleased to find that Tolstoi, in the greatest war book ever written, records the same thing — and so, in its own way, does the Iliad. Neither conversion nor enlistment in the army is really going to obliterate our human life. Christians and soldiers are still men: the infidel’s idea of a religious life, and the civilian’s idea of active service, are fantastic. If you attempted, in either case, to suspend your whole intellectual and aesthetic activity, you would only succeed in substituting a worse cultural life for a better. You are not, in fact, going to read nothing, either in the Church or in the line: if you don’t read good books you will read bad ones. If you don’t go on thinking rationally, you will think irrationally. If you reject aesthetic satisfactions you will fall into sensual satisfactions.

There is therefore this analogy between the claims of our religion and the claims of the war: neither of them, for most of us, will simply cancel or remove from the slate the merely human life which we were leading before we entered them. But they will operate in this way for different reasons. The war will fail to absorb our whole attention because it is a finite object, and therefore intrinsically unfitted to support the whole attention of a human soul. In order to avoid misunderstanding I must here make a few distinctions. I believe our cause to be, as human causes go, very righteous, and I therefore believe it to be a duty to participate in this war. And every duty is a religious duty, and our obligation to perform every duty is therefore absolute. Thus we may have a duty to rescue a drowning man, and perhaps, if we live on a dangerous coast, to learn life-saving so as to be

ready for any drowning man when he turns up. It may be our duty to lose our own lives in saving him. But if anyone devoted himself to life-saving in the sense of giving it his total attention — so that he thought and spoke of nothing else and demanded the cessation of all other human activities until everyone had learned to swim — he would be a monomaniac. The rescue of drowning men is, then, a duty worth dying for, but not worth living for. It seems to me that all political duties (among which I include military duties) are of this kind. A man may have to die for our country: but no man must, in any exclusive sense, live for his country. He who surrenders himself without reservation to the temporal claims of a nation, or a party, or a class is rendering to Caesar that which, of all things, most emphatically belongs to God: himself.

It is for a very different reason that religion cannot occupy the whole of life in the sense of excluding all our natural activities. For, of course, in some sense, it must occupy the whole of life. There is no question of a compromise between the claims of God and the claims of culture, or politics, or anything else. God's claim is infinite and inexorable. You can refuse it: or you can begin to try to grant it. There is no middle way. Yet in spite of this it is clear that Christianity does not exclude any of the ordinary human activities. St. Paul tells people to get on with their jobs. He even assumes that Christians may go to dinner parties, and, what is more, dinner parties given by pagans. Our Lord attends a wedding and provides miraculous wine. Under the aegis of His Church, and in the most Christian ages, learning and the arts flourish. The solution of this paradox is, of course, well known to you. "Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

All our merely natural activities will be accepted, if they are offered to God, even the humblest: and all of them, even the noblest, will be sinful if they are not. Christianity does not simply replace our natural life and substitute a new one: it is rather a new organization which exploits, to its own supernatural ends, these natural materials. No doubt, in a given situation, it demands the surrender of some, or of all, our merely human pursuits: it is better to be saved with one eye, than, having two, to be cast into Gehenna. But it does this, in a sense, *per accidens* — because, in those special circumstances, it has ceased to be possible to practise this or that activity to the glory of God. There is no essential quarrel between the spiritual life and the human activities as such. Thus the omnipresence of

obedience to God in a Christian's life is, in a way, analogous to the omnipresence of God in space. God does not fill space as a body fills it, in the sense that parts of Him are in different parts of space, excluding other objects from them. Yet He is everywhere — totally present at every point of space — according to good theologians.

We are now in a position to answer the view that human culture is an inexcusable frivolity on the part of creatures loaded with such awful responsibilities as we. I reject at once an idea which lingers in the mind of some modern people that cultural activities are in their own right spiritual and meritorious — as though scholars and poets were intrinsically more pleasing to God than scavengers and bootblacks. I think it was Matthew Arnold who first used the English word *spiritual* in the sense of the German *geistlich*, and so inaugurated this most dangerous and most anti-Christian error. Let us clear it forever from our minds. The work of a Beethoven, and the work of a charwoman, become spiritual on precisely the same condition, that of being offered to God, of being done humbly "as to the Lord". This does not, of course, mean that it is for anyone a mere toss-up whether he should sweep rooms or compose symphonies. A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow. We are members of one body, but differentiated members, each with his own vocation. A man's upbringing, his talents, his circumstances, are usually a tolerable index of his vocation. If our parents have sent us to Oxford, if our country allows us to remain there, this is *prima facie* evidence that the life which we, at any rate, can best lead to the glory of God at present is the learned life. By leading that life to the glory of God I do not, of course, mean any attempt to make our intellectual inquiries work out to edifying conclusions. That would be, as Bacon says, to offer to the author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie. I mean the pursuit of knowledge and beauty, in a sense, for their own sake, but in a sense which does not exclude their being for God's sake. An appetite for these things exists in the human mind, and God makes no appetite in vain. We can therefore pursue knowledge as such, and beauty, as such, in the sure confidence that by so doing we are either advancing to the vision of God ourselves or indirectly helping others to do so. Humility, no less than the appetite, encourages us to concentrate simply on the knowledge or the beauty, not too much concerning ourselves with their ultimate relevance to the vision of God. That relevance may not be intended for us but for our betters — for men who come after and find the spiritual

significance of what we dug out in blind and humble obedience to our vocation. This is the teleological argument that the existence of the impulse and the faculty prove that they must have a proper function in God's scheme — the argument by which Thomas Aquinas proves that sexuality would have existed even without the Fall. The soundness of the argument, as regards culture, is proved by experience. The intellectual life is not the only road to God, nor the safest, but we find it to be a road, and it may be the appointed road for us. Of course it will be so only so long as we keep the impulse pure and disinterested. That is the great difficulty. As the author of the *Theologia Germanica* says, we may come to love knowledge — *our* knowing — more than the thing known: to delight not in the exercise of our talents but in the fact that they are ours, or even in the reputation they bring us. Every success in the scholar's life increases this danger. If it becomes irresistible, he must give up his scholarly work. The time for plucking out the right eye has arrived.

That is the essential nature of the learned life as I see it. But it has indirect values which are especially important to-day. If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But, as it is, a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. To be ignorant and simple now — not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground — would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defence but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. The cool intellect must work not only against cool intellect on the other side, but against the muddy heathen mysticisms which deny intellect altogether. Most of all, perhaps, we need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that the basic assumptions have been quite different in different periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion. A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village: the scholar has lived in many times and is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age.

The learned life then is, for some, a duty. At the moment it looks as if it were your duty. I am well aware that there may seem to be an almost comic

discrepancy between the high issues we have been considering and the immediate task you may be set down to, such as Anglo-Saxon sound laws or chemical formulae. But there is a similar shock awaiting us in every vocation — a young priest finds himself involved in choir treats and a young subaltern in accounting for pots of jam. It is well that it should be so. It weeds out the vain, windy people and keeps in those who are both humble and tough. On that kind of difficulty we need waste no sympathy. But the peculiar difficulty imposed on you by the war is another matter: and of it I would again repeat, what I have been saying in one form or another ever since I started — do not let your nerves and emotions lead you into thinking your predicament more abnormal than it really is. Perhaps it may be useful to mention the three mental exercises which may serve as defences against the three enemies which war raises up against the scholar.

The first enemy is excitement — the tendency to think and feel about the war when we had intended to think about our work. The best defence is a recognition that in this, as in everything else, the war has not really raised up a new enemy but only aggravated an old one. There are always plenty of rivals to our work. We are always falling in love or quarrelling, looking for jobs or fearing to lose them, getting ill and recovering, following public affairs. If we let ourselves, we shall always be waiting for some distraction or other to end before we can really get down to our work. The only people who achieve much are those who want knowledge so badly that they seek it while the conditions are still unfavourable. Favourable conditions never come. There are, of course, moments when the pressure of the excitement is so great that only superhuman self-control could resist it. They come both in war and peace. We must do the best we can.

The second enemy is frustration — the feeling that we shall not have time to finish. If I say to you that no one has time to finish, that the longest human life leaves a man, in any branch of learning, a beginner, I shall seem to you to be saying something quite academic and theoretical. You would be surprised if you knew how soon one begins to feel the shortness of the tether: of how many things, even in middle life, we have to say “No time for that”, “Too late now”, and “Not for me”. But Nature herself forbids you to share that experience. A more Christian attitude, which can be attained at any age, is that of leaving futurity in God’s hands. We may as well, for God will certainly retain it whether we leave it to Him or not. Never, in peace or war, commit your virtue or your happiness to the future. Happy work is best

done by the man who takes his long-term plans somewhat lightly and works from moment to moment “as to the Lord”. It is only our *daily* bread that we are encouraged to ask for. The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received.

The third enemy is fear. War threatens us with death and pain. No man — and specially no Christian who remembers Gethsemane — need try to attain a stoic indifference about these things: but we can guard against the illusions of the imagination. We think of the streets of Warsaw and contrast the deaths there suffered with an abstraction called Life. But there is no question of death or life for any of us; only a question of this death or of that — of a machine gun bullet now or a cancer forty years later. What does war do to death? It certainly does not make it more frequent: 100 per cent of us die, and the percentage cannot be increased. It puts several deaths earlier: but I hardly suppose that that is what we fear. Certainly when the moment comes, it will make little difference how many years we have behind us. Does it increase our chances of a painful death? I doubt it. As far as I can find out, what we call natural death is usually preceded by suffering: and a battlefield is one of the very few places where one has a reasonable prospect of dying with no pain at all. Does it decrease our chances of dying at peace with God? I cannot believe it. If active service does not persuade a man to prepare for death, what conceivable concatenation of circumstances would? Yet war does do something to death. It forces us to remember it. The only reason why the cancer at sixty or the paralysis at seventy-five do not bother us is that we forget them. War makes death real to us: and that would have been regarded as one of its blessings by most of the great Christians of the past. They thought it good for us to be always aware of our mortality. I am inclined to think they were right. All the animal life in us, all schemes of happiness that centred in this world, were always doomed to a final frustration. In ordinary times only a wise man can realize it. Now the stupidest of us knows. We see unmistakably the sort of universe in which we have all along been living, and must come to terms with it. If we had foolish un-Christian hopes about human culture, they are now shattered. If we thought we were building up a heaven on earth, if we looked for something that would turn the present world from a place of pilgrimage into a permanent city satisfying the soul of man, we are disillusioned, and not a moment too soon. But if we thought that for some souls, and at some times, the life of learning, humbly offered to God, was, in its own small way, one

of the appointed approaches to the Divine reality and the Divine beauty which we hope to enjoy hereafter, we can think so still.

V. The Inner Ring

The Memorial Oration at King's College, the University of London, 1944

May I read you a few lines from Tolstoi's *War and Peace*?

When Boris entered the room, Prince Andrey was listening to an old general, wearing his decorations, who was reporting something to Prince Andrey, with an expression of soldierly servility on his purple face. "Alright. Please wait!", he said to the general, speaking in Russian with the French accent which he used when he spoke with contempt. The moment he noticed Boris he stopped listening to the general who trotted imploringly after him and begged to be heard, while Prince Andrey turned to Boris with a cheerful smile and a nod of the head. Boris now clearly understood — what he had already guessed — that side by side with the system of discipline and subordination which were laid down in the Army Regulations, there existed a different and a more real system — the system which compelled a tightly laced general with a purple face to wait respectfully for his turn while a mere captain like Prince Andrey chatted with a mere second lieutenant like Boris. Boris decided at once that he would be guided not by the official system but by this other unwritten system. — Part III, Cha.

When you invite a middle-aged moralist to address you, I suppose I must conclude, however unlikely the conclusion seems, that you have a taste for middle-aged moralizing. I shall do my best to gratify it. I shall in fact give you advice about the world in which you are going to live. I do not mean by this that I am going to attempt a talk on what are called current affairs. You probably know quite as much about them as I do. I am not going to tell you — except in a form so general that you will hardly recognize it — what part you ought to play in post-war reconstruction. It is not, in fact, very likely that any of you will be able, in the next ten years, to make any direct contribution to the peace or prosperity of Europe. You will be busy finding jobs, getting married, acquiring facts. I am going to do something more old-fashioned than you perhaps expected. I am going to give advice. I am going to issue warnings. Advice and warnings about things which are so perennial that no one calls them "current affairs".

And of course every one knows what a middle-aged moralist of my type warns his juniors against. He warns them against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. But one of this trio will be enough to deal with to-day. The Devil, I shall leave strictly alone. The association between him and me in the public mind has already gone quite as deep as I wish: in some quarters it has already reached the level of confusion, if not of identification. I begin to realize the truth of the old proverb that he who sups with that formidable host needs a long spoon. As for the Flesh, you must be very abnormal young people if you do not know quite as much about it as I do. But on the World I think I have something to say.

In the passage I have just read from Tolstoi, the young second lieutenant Boris Dubretskoi discovers that there exist in the army two different systems or hierarchies. The one is printed in some little red book and anyone can easily read it up. It also remains constant. A general is always superior to a colonel and a colonel to a captain. The other is not printed anywhere. Nor is it even a formally organized secret society with officers and rules which you would be told after you had been admitted. You are never formally and explicitly admitted by anyone. You discover gradually, in almost indefinable ways, that it exists and that you are outside it; and then later, perhaps, that you are inside it. There are what correspond to pass words, but they too are spontaneous and informal. A particular slang, the use of particular nicknames, an allusive manner of conversation, are the marks. But it is not constant. It is not easy, even at a given moment, to say who is inside and who is outside. Some people are obviously in and some are obviously out, but there are always several on the border-line. And if you come back to the same Divisional Headquarters, or Brigade Headquarters, or the same regiment or even the same company, after six weeks' absence, you may find this second hierarchy quite altered. There are no formal admissions or expulsions. People think they are in it after they have in fact been pushed out of it, or before they have been allowed in: this provides great amusement for those who are really inside. It has no fixed name. The only certain rule is that the insiders and outsiders call it by different names. From inside it may be designated, in simple cases, by mere enumeration: it may be called "You and Tony and me". When it is very secure and comparatively stable in membership it calls itself "we". When it has to be suddenly expanded to meet a particular emergency it calls itself "All the sensible people at this place." From outside, if you have despaired

of getting into it, you call it “That gang” or “They” or “So-and-so and his set” or “the Caucus” or “the Inner Ring”. If you are a candidate for admission you probably don’t call it anything. To discuss it with the other outsiders would make you feel outside yourself. And to mention it in talking to the man who is inside, and who may help you in if this present conversation goes well, would be madness.

Badly as I may have described it, I hope you will all have recognized the thing I am describing. Not, of course, that you have been in the Russian Army or perhaps in any army. But you have met the phenomenon of an Inner Ring. You discovered one in your house at school before the end of the first term. And when you had climbed up to somewhere near it by the end of your second year, perhaps you discovered that within the Ring there was a Ring yet more inner, which in its turn was the fringe of the great school Ring to which the house Rings were only satellites. It is even possible that the School Ring was almost in touch with a Masters’ Ring. You were beginning, in fact, to pierce through the skins of the onion. And here, too, at your university — shall I be wrong in assuming that at this very moment, invisible to me, there are several rings — independent systems or concentric rings — present in this room? And I can assure you that in whatever hospital, inn of court, diocese, school, business, or college you arrive after going down, you will find the Rings — what Tolstoi calls the second or unwritten systems.

All this is rather obvious. I wonder whether you will say the same of my next step, which is this. I believe that in all men’s lives at certain periods, and in many men’s lives at all periods between infancy and extreme old age, one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and the terror of being left outside. This desire, in one of its forms, has indeed had ample justice done to it in literature. I mean, in the form of snobbery. Victorian fiction is full of characters who are hag-ridden by the desire to get inside that particular Ring which is, or was, called Society. But it must be clearly understood that “Society”, in that sense of the word, is merely one of a hundred Rings and snobbery therefore only one form of the longing to be inside. People who believe themselves to be free, and indeed are free, from snobbery, and who read satires on snobbery with tranquil superiority, may be devoured by the desire in another form. It may be the very intensity of their desire to enter some quite different Ring which renders them immune from the allurements of high life. An invitation from

a duchess would be very cold comfort to a man smarting under the sense of exclusion from some artistic or communist côterie. Poor man — it is not large, lighted rooms, or champagne, or even scandals about peers and Cabinet Ministers that he wants: it is the sacred little attic or studio, the heads bent together, the fog of tobacco smoke, and the delicious knowledge that we — we four or five all huddled beside this stove — are the people who *know*. Often the desire conceals itself so well that we hardly recognize the pleasures of fruition. Men tell not only their wives but themselves that it is a hardship to stay late at the office or the school on some bit of important extra work which they have been let in for because they and So-and-so and the two others are the only people left in the place who really know how things are run. But it is not quite true. It is a terrible bore, of course, when old Fatty Smithson draws you aside and whispers “Look here, we’ve got to get you in on this examination somehow” or “Charles and I saw at once that you’ve got to be on this committee”. A terrible bore . . . ah, but how much more terrible if you were left out! It is tiring and unhealthy to lose your Saturday afternoons: but to have them free because you don’t matter, that is much worse.

Freud would say, no doubt, that the whole thing is a subterfuge of the sexual impulse. I wonder whether the shoe is not sometimes on the other foot. I wonder whether, in ages of promiscuity, many a virginity has not been lost less in obedience to Venus than in obedience to the lure of the caucus. For of course, when promiscuity is the fashion, the chaste are outsiders. They are ignorant of something that other people know. They are uninitiated. And as for lighter matters, the number who first smoked or first got drunk for a similar reason is probably very large.

I must now make a distinction. I am not going to say that the existence of Inner Rings is an evil. It is certainly unavoidable. There must be confidential discussions: and it is not only not a bad thing, it is (in itself) a good thing, that personal friendship should grow up between those who work together. And it is perhaps impossible that the official hierarchy of any organization should quite coincide with its actual workings. If the wisest and most energetic people invariably held the highest posts, it might coincide; since they often do not, there must be people in high positions who are really deadweights and people in lower positions who are more important than their rank and seniority would lead you to suppose. In that way the second, unwritten system is bound to grow up. It is necessary; and

perhaps it is not a necessary evil. But the desire which draws us into Inner Rings is another matter. A thing may be morally neutral and yet the desire for that thing may be dangerous. As Byron has said,

Sweet is a legacy, and passing sweet
The unexpected death of some old lady.

The painless death of a pious relative at an advanced age is not an evil. But an earnest desire for her death on the part of her heirs is not reckoned a proper feeling, and the law frowns on even the gentlest attempt to expedite her departure. Let Inner Rings be an unavoidable and even an innocent feature of life, though certainly not a beautiful one: but what of our longing to enter them, our anguish when we are excluded, and the kind of pleasure we feel when we get in?

I have no right to make assumptions about the degree to which any of you may already be compromised. I must not assume that you have ever first neglected, and finally shaken off, friends whom you really loved and who might have lasted you a lifetime, in order to court the friendship of those who appeared to you more important, more esoteric. I must not ask whether you have ever derived actual pleasure from the loneliness and humiliation of the outsiders after you yourself were in: whether you have talked to fellow members of the Ring in the presence of outsiders simply in order that the outsiders might envy; whether the means whereby, in your days of probation, you propitiated the Inner Ring, were always wholly admirable. I will ask only one question — and it is, of course, a rhetorical question which expects no answer. In the whole of your life as you now remember it, has the desire to be on the right side of that invisible line ever prompted you to any act or word on which, in the cold small hours of a wakeful night, you can look back with satisfaction? If so, your case is more fortunate than most.

But I said I was going to give advice, and advice should deal with the future, not the past. I have hinted at the past only to awake you to what I believe to be the real nature of human life. I don’t believe that the economic motive and the erotic motive account for everything that goes on in what we moralists call the World. Even if you add Ambition I think the picture is still incomplete. The lust for the esoteric, the longing to be inside, take many forms which are not easily recognizable as Ambition. We hope, no doubt,

for tangible profits from every Inner Ring we penetrate: power, money, liberty to break rules, avoidance of routine duties, evasion of discipline. But all these would not satisfy us if we did not get in addition the delicious sense of secret intimacy. It is no doubt a great convenience to know that we need fear no official reprimands from our official senior because he is old Percy, a fellow-member of our Ring. But we don't value the intimacy only for the sake of the convenience; quite equally we value the convenience as a proof of the intimacy.

My main purpose in this address is simply to convince you that this desire is one of the great permanent mainsprings of human action. It is one of the factors which go to make up the world as we know it — this whole pell-mell of struggle, competition, confusion, graft, disappointment and advertisement, and if it is one of the permanent mainsprings then you may be quite sure of this. Unless you take measures to prevent it, this desire is going to be one of the chief motives of your life, from the first day on which you enter your profession until the day when you are too old to care. That will be the natural thing — the life that will come to you of its own accord. Any other kind of life, if you lead it, will be the result of conscious and continuous effort. If you do nothing about it, if you drift with the stream, you will in fact be an "inner ringer". I don't say you'll be a successful one; that's as may be. But whether by pining and moping outside Rings that you can never enter, or by passing triumphantly further and further in — one way or the other you will be that kind of man.

I have already made it fairly clear that I think it better for you not to be that kind of man. But you may have an open mind on the question. I will therefore suggest two reasons for thinking as I do.

It would be polite and charitable, and in view of your age reasonable too, to suppose that none of you is yet a scoundrel. On the other hand, by the mere law of averages (I am saying nothing against free will) it is almost certain that at least two or three of you before you die will have become something very like scoundrels. There must be in this room the makings of at least that number of unscrupulous, treacherous, ruthless egotists. The choice is still before you: and I hope you will not take my hard words about your possible future characters as a token of disrespect to your present characters. And the prophecy I make is this. To nine out of ten of you the choice which could lead to scoundrelism will come, when it does come, in no very dramatic colours. Obviously bad men, obviously threatening or

bribing, will almost certainly not appear. Over a drink or a cup of coffee, disguised as a triviality and sandwiched between two jokes, from the lips of a man, or woman, whom you have recently been getting to know rather better and whom you hope to know better still — just at the moment when you are most anxious not to appear crude, or naif or a prig — the hint will come. It will be the hint of something which is not quite in accordance with the technical rules of fair play: something which the public, the ignorant, romantic public, would never understand: something which even the outsiders in your own profession are apt to make a fuss about: but something, says your new friend, which “we” — and at the word “we” you try not to blush for mere pleasure — something “we always do”. And you will be drawn in, if you are drawn in, not by desire for gain or ease, but simply because at that moment, when the cup was so near your lips, you cannot bear to be thrust back again into the cold outer world. It would be so terrible to see the other man’s face — that genial, confidential, delightfully sophisticated face — turn suddenly cold and contemptuous, to know that you had been tried for the Inner Ring and rejected. And then, if you are drawn in, next week it will be something a little further from the rules, and next year something further still, but all in the jolliest, friendliest spirit. It may end in a crash, a scandal, and penal servitude: it may end in millions, a peerage and giving the prizes at your old school. But you will be a scoundrel.

That is my first reason. Of all passions the passion for the Inner Ring is most skilful in making a man who is not yet a very bad man do very bad things.

My second reason is this. The torture allotted to the Danaids in the classical underworld, that of attempting to fill sieves with water, is the symbol not of one vice but of all vices. It is the very mark of a perverse desire that it seeks what is not to be had. The desire to be inside the invisible line illustrates this rule. As long as you are governed by that desire you will never get what you want. You are trying to peel an onion: if you succeed there will be nothing left. Until you conquer the fear of being an outsider, an outsider you will remain.

This is surely very clear when you come to think of it. If you want to be made free of a certain circle for some wholesome reason — if, say, you want to join a musical society because you really like music — then there is a possibility of satisfaction. You may find yourself playing in a quartet and

you may enjoy it. But if all you want is to be in the know, your pleasure will be short-lived. The circle cannot have from within the charm it had from outside. By the very act of admitting you it has lost its magic. Once the first novelty is worn off the members of this circle will be no more interesting than your old friends. Why should they be? You were not looking for virtue or kindness or loyalty or humour or learning or wit or any of the things that can be really enjoyed. You merely wanted to be “in”. And that is a pleasure that cannot last. As soon as your new associates have been staled to you by custom, you will be looking for another Ring. The rainbow’s end will still be ahead of you. The old Ring will now be only the drab background for your endeavour to enter the new one.

And you will always find them hard to enter, for a reason you very well know. You yourself, once you are in, want to make it hard for the next entrant, just as those who are already in made it hard for you. Naturally. In any wholesome group of people which holds together for a good purpose, the exclusions are in a sense accidental. Three or four people who are together for the sake of some piece of work exclude others because there is work only for so many or because the others can’t in fact do it. Your little musical group limits its numbers because the rooms they meet in are only so big. But your genuine Inner Ring exists for exclusion. There’d be no fun if there were no outsiders. The invisible line would have no meaning unless most people were on the wrong side of it. Exclusion is no accident: it is the essence.

The quest of the Inner Ring will break your hearts unless you break it. But if you break it, a surprising result will follow. If in your working hours you make the work your end, you will presently find yourself all unawares inside the only circle in your profession that really matters. You will be one of the sound craftsmen, and other sound craftsmen will know it. This group of craftsmen will by no means coincide with the Inner Ring or the Important People or the People in the Know. It will not shape that professional policy or work up that professional influence which fights for the profession as a whole against the public: nor will it lead to those periodic scandals and crises which the Inner Ring produces. But it will do those things which that profession exists to do and will in the long run be responsible for all the respect which that profession in fact enjoys and which the speeches and advertisements cannot maintain. And if in your spare time you consort simply with the people you like, you will again find

that you have come unawares to a real inside: that you are indeed snug and safe at the centre of something which, seen from without, would look exactly like an Inner Ring. But the difference is that its secrecy is accidental, and its exclusiveness a by-product, and no one was led thither by the lure of the esoteric: for it is only four or five people who like one another meeting to do things that they like. This is friendship. Aristotle placed it among the virtues. It causes perhaps half of all the happiness in the world, and no Inner Ringer can ever have it.

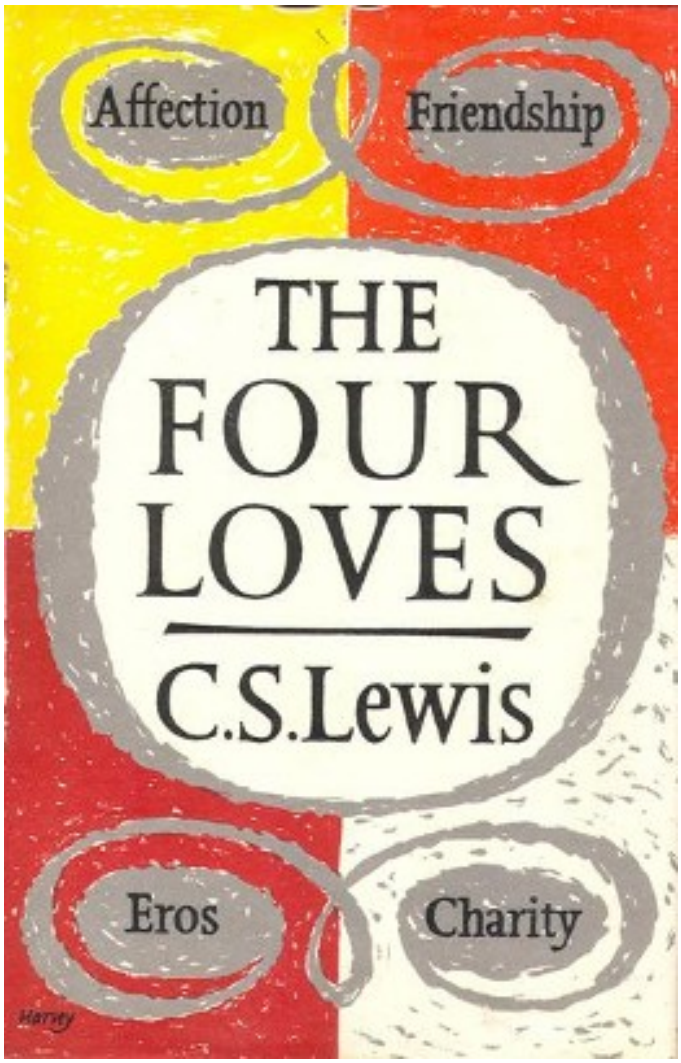
We are told in Scripture that those who ask get. That is true, in senses I can't now explore. But in another sense there is much truth in the schoolboy's principle "them as asks shan't have." To a young person, just entering on adult life, the world seems full of "insides", full of delightful intimacies and confidentialities, and he desires to enter them. But if he follows that desire he will reach no "inside" that is worth reaching. The true road lies in quite another direction. It is like the house in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*.

THE FOUR LOVES



The Four Loves explores the nature of love from a Christian and philosophical perspective through thought experiments. The book was based on a set of radio talks that took place in 1958, criticised in the US at the time for their frankness about sex. The book opens with an analysis of St. John's words: "God is Love"; Lewis initially contrasts "Need-love" (such as the love of a child for its mother) and "Gift-love" (epitomised by God's love for humanity), to the disparagement of the former. However, he swiftly happens on the insight that the natures of even these basic categorisations of love are more complicated than they at first seemed: a child's need for parental comfort is a necessity, not a selfish indulgence, while conversely parental Gift-love in excessive form can be a perversion of its own.

Lewis continues his examination by exploring the nature of pleasure, distinguishing Need-pleasures (such as water for the thirsty) from Pleasures of Appreciation, such as the love of nature. From the latter, he develops what he calls "a third element in love...Appreciative love", to go along with Need-love and Gift-love.



The first edition

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

“God is love,” says St. John. When I first tried to write this book I thought that his maxim would provide me with a very plain highroad through the whole subject. I thought I should be able to say that human loves deserved to be called loves at all just in so far as they resembled that Love which is God. The first distinction I made was therefore between what I called Gift-love and Need-love. The typical example of Gift-love would be that love which moves a man to work and plan and save for the future well-being of his family which he will die without sharing or seeing; of the second, that which sends a lonely or frightened child to its mother’s arms.

There was no doubt which was more like Love Himself. Divine Love is Gift-love. The Father gives all He is and has to the Son. The Son gives Himself back to the Father, and gives Himself to the world, and for the world to the Father, and thus gives the world (in Himself) back to the Father too.

And what, on the other hand, can be less like anything we believe of God’s life than Need-love? He lacks nothing, but our Need-love, as Plato saw, is “the son of Poverty”. It is the accurate reflection in consciousness of our actual nature. We are born helpless. As soon as we are fully conscious we discover loneliness. We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually; we need them if we are to know anything, even ourselves.

I was looking forward to writing some fairly easy panegyrics on the first sort of love and disparagements of the second. And much of what I was going to say still seems to me to be true. I still think that if all we mean by our love is a craving to be loved, we are in a very deplorable state. But I would not now say (with my master, MacDonald) that if we mean only this craving we are mistaking for love something that is not love at all. I cannot now deny the name love to Need-love. Every time I have tried to think the thing out along those lines I have ended in puzzles and contradictions. The reality is more complicated than I supposed.

First of all, we do violence to most languages, including our own, if we do not call Need-love “love”. Of course language is not an infallible guide, but it contains, with all its defects, a good deal of stored insight and

experience. If you begin by flouting it, it has a way of avenging itself later on. We had better not follow Humpty Dumpty in making words mean whatever we please.

Secondly, we must be cautious about calling Need-love "mere selfishness". *Mere* is always a dangerous word. No doubt Need-love, like all our impulses, can be selfishly indulged. A tyrannous and gluttonous demand for affection can be a horrible thing. But in ordinary life no one calls a child selfish because it turns for comfort to its mother; nor an adult who turns to his fellow "for company". Those, whether children or adults, who do so least are not usually the most selfless. Where Need-love is felt there may be reasons for denying or totally mortifying it; but not to feel it is in general the mark of the cold egoist. Since we do in reality need one another ("it is not good for man to be alone"), then the failure of this need to appear as Need-love in consciousness — in other words, the illusory feeling that it *is* good for us to be alone — is a bad spiritual symptom; just as lack of appetite is a bad medical symptom because men do really need food.

But thirdly, we come to something far more important. Every Christian would agree that a man's spiritual health is exactly proportional to his love for God. But man's love for God, from the very nature of the case, must always be very largely, and must often be entirely, a Need-love. This is obvious when we implore forgiveness for our sins or support in our tribulations. But in the long run it is perhaps even more apparent in our growing — for it ought to be growing — awareness that our whole being by its very nature is one vast need; incomplete, preparatory, empty yet cluttered, crying out for Him who can untie things that are now knotted together and tie up things that are still dangling loose. I do not say that man can never bring to God anything at all but sheer Need-love. Exalted souls may tell us of a reach beyond that. But they would also, I think, be the first to tell us that those heights would cease to be true Graces, would become Neo-Platonic or finally diabolical illusions, the moment a man dared to think that he could live on them and henceforth drop out the element of need. "The highest," says the *Imitation*, "does not stand without the lowest." It would be a bold and silly creature that came before its Creator with the boast "I'm no beggar. I love you disinterestedly". Those who come nearest to a Gift-love for God will next moment, even at the very same moment, be beating their breasts with the publican and laying their

indigence before the only real Giver. And God will have it so. He addresses our Need-love: “Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy-laden,” or, in the Old Testament, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.”

Thus one Need-love, the greatest of all, either coincides with or at least makes a main ingredient in man’s highest, healthiest, and most realistic spiritual condition. A very strange corollary follows. Man approaches God most nearly when he is in one sense least like God. For what can be more unlike than fullness and need, sovereignty and humility, righteousness and penitence, limitless power and a cry for help? This paradox staggered me when I first ran into it; it also wrecked all my previous attempts to write about love. When we face it, something like this seems to result.

We must distinguish two things which might both possibly be called “nearness to God”. One is likeness to God. God has impressed some sort of likeness to Himself, I suppose, in all that He has made. Space and time, in their own fashion, mirror His greatness; all life, His fecundity; animal life, His activity. Man has a more important likeness than these by being rational. Angels, we believe, have likenesses which Man lacks: immortality and intuitive knowledge. In that way all men, whether good or bad, all angels including those that fell, are more like God than the animals are. Their natures are in this sense “nearer” to the Divine Nature. But, secondly, there is what we may call nearness of approach. If this is what we mean, the states in which a man is “nearest” to God are those in which he is most surely and swiftly approaching his final union with God, vision of God and enjoyment of God. And as soon as we distinguish nearness-by-likeness and nearness-of-approach, we see that they do not necessarily coincide. They may or may not.

Perhaps an analogy may help. Let us suppose that we are doing a mountain walk to the village which is our home. At mid-day we come to the top of a cliff where we are, in space, very near it because it is just below us. We could drop a stone into it. But as we are no cragsmen we can’t get down. We must go a long way round; five miles, maybe. At many points during that *détour* we shall, statically, be far further from the village than we were when we sat above the cliff. But only statically. In terms of progress we shall be far “nearer” our baths and teas.

Since God is blessed, omnipotent, sovereign and creative, there is obviously a sense in which happiness, strength, freedom and fertility (whether of mind or body), wherever they appear in human life, constitute

likenesses, and in that way proximities, to God. But no one supposes that the possession of these gifts has any necessary connection with our sanctification. No kind of riches is a passport to the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the cliff's top we are near the village, but however long we sit there we shall never be any nearer to our bath and our tea. So here the likeness, and in that sense nearness, to Himself which God has conferred upon certain creatures and certain states of those creatures is something finished, built in. What is near Him by likeness is never, by that fact alone, going to be any nearer. But nearness of approach is, by definition, increasing nearness. And whereas the likeness is given to us — and can be received with or without thanks, can be used or abused — the approach, however initiated and supported by Grace, is something we must do. Creatures are made in their varying ways images of God without their own collaboration or even consent. It is not so that they become sons of God. And the likeness they receive by sonship is not that of images or portraits. It is in one way more than likeness, for it is unison or unity with God in will; but this is consistent with all the differences we have been considering. Hence, as a better writer has said, our imitation of God in this life — that is, our willed imitation as distinct from any of the likenesses which He has impressed upon our natures or states — must be an imitation of God incarnate: our model is the Jesus, not only of Calvary, but of the workshop, the roads, the crowds, the clamorous demands and surly oppositions, the lack of all peace and privacy, the interruptions. For this, so strangely unlike anything we can attribute to the Divine life in itself, is apparently not only like, but is, the Divine life operating under human conditions.

I must now explain why I have found this distinction necessary to any treatment of our loves. St. John's saying that God is love has long been balanced in my mind against the remark of a modern author (M. Denis de Rougemont) that "love ceases to be a demon only when he ceases to be a god"; which of course can be re-stated in the form "begins to be a demon the moment he begins to be a god". This balance seems to me an indispensable safeguard. If we ignore it the truth that God is love may slyly come to mean for us the converse, that love is God.

I suppose that everyone who has thought about the matter will see what M. de Rougemont meant. Every human love, at its height, has a tendency to claim for itself a divine authority. Its voice tends to sound as if it were the will of God Himself. It tells us not to count the cost, it demands of us a total

commitment, it attempts to over-ride all other claims and insinuates that any action which is sincerely done “for love’s sake” is thereby lawful and even meritorious. That erotic love and love of one’s country may thus attempt to “become gods” is generally recognised. But family affection may do the same. So, in a different way, may friendship. I shall not here elaborate the point, for it will meet us again and again in later chapters.

Now it must be noticed that the natural loves make this blasphemous claim not when they are in their worst, but when they are in their best, natural condition; when they are what our grandfathers called “pure” or “noble”. This is especially obvious in the erotic sphere. A faithful and genuinely self-sacrificing passion will speak to us with what seems the voice of God. Merely animal or frivolous lust will not. It will corrupt its addict in a dozen ways, but not in that way; a man may act upon such feelings but he cannot revere them any more than a man who scratches reveres the itch. A silly woman’s temporary indulgence, which is really self-indulgence, to a spoiled child — her living doll while the fit lasts — is much less likely to “become a god” than the deep, narrow devotion of a woman who (quite really) “lives for her son”. And I am inclined to think that the sort of love for a man’s country which is worked up by beer and brass bands will not lead him to do much harm (or much good) for her sake. It will probably be fully discharged by ordering another drink and joining in the chorus.

And this of course is what we ought to expect. Our loves do not make their claim to divinity until the claim becomes plausible. It does not become plausible until there is in them a real resemblance to God, to Love Himself. Let us here make no mistake. Our Gift-loves are really God-like; and among our Gift-loves those are most God-like which are most boundless and unwearied in giving. All the things the poets say about them are true. Their joy, their energy, their patience, their readiness to forgive, their desire for the good of the beloved — all this is a real and all but adorable image of the Divine life. In its presence we are right to thank God “who has given such power to men”. We may say, quite truly and in an intelligible sense, that those who love greatly are “near” to God. But of course it is “nearness by likeness”. It will not of itself produce “nearness of approach”. The likeness has been given us. It has no necessary connection with that slow and painful approach which must be our own (though by no means our unaided) task. Meanwhile, however, the likeness is a splendour. That is why

we may mistake Like for Same. We may give our human loves the unconditional allegiance which we owe only to God. Then they become gods: then they become demons. Then they will destroy us, and also destroy themselves. For natural loves that are allowed to become gods do not remain loves. They are still called so, but can become in fact complicated forms of hatred.

Our Need-loves may be greedy and exacting but they do not set up to be gods. They are not near enough (by likeness) to God to attempt that.

It follows from what has been said that we must join neither the idolaters nor the "debunkers" of human love. Idolatry both of erotic love and of "the domestic affections" was the great error of Nineteenth Century literature. Browning, Kingsley, and Patmore sometimes talk as if they thought that falling in love was the same thing as sanctification; the novelists habitually oppose to "the World" not the Kingdom of Heaven but the home. We live in the reaction against this. The debunkers stigmatise as slush and sentimentality a very great deal of what their fathers said in praise of love. They are always pulling up and exposing the grubby roots of our natural loves. But I take it we must listen neither "to the over-wise nor to the over-foolish giant". The highest does not stand without the lowest. A plant must have roots below as well as sunlight above and roots must be grubby. Much of the grubbiness is clean dirt if only you will leave it in the garden and not keep on sprinkling it over the library table. The human loves can be glorious images of Divine love. No less than that: but also no more — proximities of likeness which in one instance may help, and in another may hinder, proximity of approach. Sometimes perhaps they have not very much to do with it either way.

CHAPTER II

Likings and Loves for the Sub-human

Most of my generation were reproved as children for saying that we "loved" strawberries, and some people take a pride in the fact that English has the two verbs *love* and *like* while French has to get on with *aimer* for both. But French has a good many other languages on its side. Indeed it very often has actual English usage on its side too. Nearly all speakers, however pedantic or however pious, talk every day about "loving" a food, a game, or a pursuit. And in fact there is a continuity between our elementary likings for things and our loves for people. Since "the highest does not stand without the lowest" we had better begin at the bottom, with mere likings; and since to "like" anything means to take some sort of pleasure in it, we must begin with pleasure.

Now it is a very old discovery that pleasures can be divided into two classes; those which would not be pleasures at all unless they were preceded by desire, and those which are pleasures in their own right and need no such preparation. An example of the first would be a drink of water. This is a pleasure if you are thirsty and a great one if you are very thirsty. But probably no one in the world, except in obedience to thirst or to a doctor's orders, ever poured himself out a glass of water and drank it just for the fun of the thing. An example of the other class would be the unsought and unexpected pleasures of smell — the breath from a bean-field or a row of sweet-peas meeting you on your morning walk. You were in want of nothing, completely contented, before it; the pleasure, which may be very great, is an unsolicited, super-added gift. I am taking very simple instances for clarity's sake, and of course there are many complications. If you are given coffee or beer where you expected (and would have been satisfied with) water, then of course you get a pleasure of the first kind (allaying of thirst) and one of the second (a nice taste) at the same time. Again, an addiction may turn what was once a pleasure of the second kind into one of the first. For the temperate man an occasional glass of wine is a treat — like the smell of the bean-field. But to the alcoholic, whose palate and digestion have long since been destroyed, no liquor gives any pleasure except that of relief from an unbearable craving. So far as he can still discern tastes at all,

he rather dislikes it; but it is better than the misery of remaining sober. Yet through all their permutations and combinations the distinction between the two classes remains tolerably clear. We may call them Need-pleasures and Pleasures of Appreciation.

The resemblance between these Need-pleasures and the “Need-loves” in my first chapter will occur to everyone. But there, you remember, I confessed that I had had to resist a tendency to disparage the Need-loves or even to say they were not loves at all. Here, for most people, there may be an opposite inclination. It would be very easy to spread ourselves in laudation of the Need-pleasures and to frown upon those that are Appreciatives: the one so natural (a word to conjure with), so necessary, so shielded from excess by their very naturalness, the other unnecessary and opening the door to every kind of luxury and vice. If we were short of matter on this theme we could turn on the tap by opening the works of the Stoics and it would run till we had a bathful. But throughout this inquiry we must be careful never to adopt prematurely a moral or evaluating attitude. The human mind is generally far more eager to praise and dispraise than to describe and define. It wants to make every distinction a distinction of value; hence those fatal critics who can never point out the differing quality of two poets without putting them in an order of preference as if they were candidates for a prize. We must do nothing of the sort about the pleasures. The reality is too complicated. We are already warned of this by the fact that Need-pleasure is the state in which Appreciative pleasures end up when they go bad (by addiction).

For us at any rate the importance of the two sorts of pleasure lies in the extent to which they foreshadow characteristics in our “loves” (properly so called).

The thirsty man who has just drunk off a tumbler of water may say, “By Jove, I *wanted* that.” So may the alcoholic who has just had his “nip”. The man who passes the sweet-peas in his morning walk is more likely to say, “How lovely the smell *is*.” The connoisseur after his first sip of the famous claret, may similarly say, “This *is* a great wine.” When Need-pleasures are in question we tend to make statements about ourselves in the past tense; when Appreciative pleasures are in question we tend to make statements about the object in the present tense. It is easy to see why.

Shakespeare has described the satisfaction of a tyrannous lust as something

Past reason hunted and, no sooner had,
Past reason hated.

But the most innocent and necessary of Need-pleasures have about them something of the same character — only something, of course. They are not hated once we have had them, but they certainly “die on us” with extraordinary abruptness, and completely. The scullery tap and the tumbler are very attractive indeed when we come in parched from mowing the grass; six seconds later they are emptied of all interest. The smell of frying food is very different before and after breakfast. And, if you will forgive me for citing the most extreme instance of all, have there not for most of us been moments (in a strange town) when the sight of the word GENTLEMEN over a door has roused a joy almost worthy of celebration in verse?

Pleasures of Appreciation are very different. They make us feel that something has not merely gratified our senses in fact but claimed our appreciation by right. The connoisseur does not merely enjoy his claret as he might enjoy warming his feet when they were cold. He feels that here is a wine that deserves his full attention; that justifies all the tradition and skill that have gone to its making and all the years of training that have made his own palate fit to judge it. There is even a glimmering of unselfishness in his attitude. He wants the wine to be preserved and kept in good condition, not entirely for his own sake. Even if he were on his death-bed and was never going to drink wine again, he would be horrified at the thought of this vintage being spilled or spoiled or even drunk by clods (like myself) who can’t tell a good claret from a bad. And so with the man who passes the sweet-peas. He does not simply enjoy, he feels that this fragrance somehow deserves to be enjoyed. He would blame himself if he went past inattentive and undelighted. It would be blockish, insensitive. It would be a shame that so fine a thing should have been wasted on him. He will remember the delicious moment years hence. He will be sorry when he hears that the garden past which his walk led him that day has now been swallowed up by cinemas, garages, and the new by-pass.

Scientifically both sorts of pleasure are, no doubt, relative to our organisms. But the Need-pleasures loudly proclaim their relativity not only to the human frame but to its momentary condition, and outside that relation have no meaning or interest for us at all. The objects which afford pleasures

of appreciation give us the feeling — whether irrational or not — that we somehow owe it to them to savour, to attend to and praise it. “It would be a sin to set a wine like that before Lewis,” says the expert in claret. “How can you walk past this garden taking no notice of the smell?” we ask. But we should never feel this about a Need-pleasure: never blame ourselves or others for not having been thirsty and therefore walking past a well without taking a drink of water.

How the Need-pleasures foreshadow our Need-loves is obvious enough. In the latter the beloved is seen in relation to our own needs, just as the scullery tap is seen by the thirsty man or the glass of gin by the alcoholic. And the Need-love, like the Need-pleasure, will not last longer than the need. This does not, fortunately, mean that all affections which begin in Need-love are transitory. The need itself may be permanent or recurrent. Another kind of love may be grafted on the Need-love. Moral principles (conjugal fidelity, filial piety, gratitude, and the like) may preserve the relationship for a lifetime. But where Need-love is left unaided we can hardly expect it not to “die on us” once the need is no more. That is why the world rings with the complaints of mothers whose grown-up children neglect them and of forsaken mistresses whose lovers’ love was pure need — which they have satisfied. Our Need-love for God is in a different position because our need of Him can never end either in this world or in any other. But our awareness of it can, and then the Need-love dies too. “The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be.” There seems no reason for describing as hypocritical the short-lived piety of those whose religion fades away once they have emerged from “danger, necessity, or tribulation”. Why should they not have been sincere? They were desperate and they howled for help. Who wouldn’t?

What Appreciative pleasure foreshadows is not so quickly described.

First of all, it is the starting point for our whole experience of beauty. It is impossible to draw a line below which such pleasures are “sensual” and above which they are “aesthetic”. The experiences of the expert in claret already contain elements of concentration, judgment, and disciplined perceptiveness, which are not sensual; those of the musician still contain elements which are. There is no frontier — there is seamless continuity — between the sensuous pleasure of garden smells and an enjoyment of the countryside (or “beauty”) as a whole, or even our enjoyment of the painters and poets who treat it.

And, as we have seen, there is in these pleasures from the very beginning a shadow or dawn of, or an invitation to, disinterestedness. Of course in one way we can be disinterested or unselfish, and far more heroically so, about the Need-pleasures: it is a cup of water that the wounded Sidney sacrifices to the dying soldier. But that is not the sort of disinterestedness I now mean. Sidney loves his neighbour. But in the Appreciative pleasures, even at their lowest, and more and more as they grow up into the full appreciation of all beauty, we get something that we can hardly help calling *love* and hardly help calling *disinterested*, towards the object itself. It is the feeling which would make a man unwilling to deface a great picture even if he were the last man left alive and himself about to die; which makes us glad of unspoiled forests that we shall never see; which makes us anxious that the garden or bean-field should continue to exist. We do not merely like the things; we pronounce them, in a momentarily God-like sense, "very good."

And now our principle of starting at the lowest — without which "the highest does not stand" — begins to pay a dividend. It has revealed to me a deficiency in our previous classification of the loves into those of Need and those of Gift. There is a third element in love, no less important than these, which is foreshadowed by our appreciative pleasures. This judgment that the object is very good, this attention (almost homage) offered to it as a kind of debt, this wish that it should be and should continue being what it is even if we were never to enjoy it, can go out not only to things but to persons. When it is offered to a woman we call it admiration; when to a man, hero-worship; when to God, worship simply.

Need-love cries to God from our poverty; Gift-love longs to serve, or even to suffer for, God; Appreciative love says: "We give thanks to thee for thy great glory." Need-love says of a woman "I cannot live without her"; Gift-love longs to give her happiness, comfort, protection — if possible, wealth; Appreciative love gazes and holds its breath and is silent, rejoices that such a wonder should exist even if not for him, will not be wholly dejected by losing her, would rather have it so than never to have seen her at all.

We murder to dissect. In actual life, thank God, the three elements of love mix and succeed on another, moment by moment. Perhaps none of them except Need-love ever exists alone, in "chemical" purity, for more than a few seconds. And perhaps that is because nothing about us except our neediness is, in this life, permanent.

Two forms of love for what is not personal demand special treatment.

For some people, perhaps especially for Englishmen and Russians, what we call “the love of nature” is a permanent and serious sentiment. I mean here that love of nature which cannot be adequately classified simply as an instance of our love for beauty. Of course many natural objects — trees, flowers and animals — are beautiful. But the nature-lovers whom I have in mind are not very much concerned with individual beautiful objects of that sort. The man who is distracts them. An enthusiastic botanist is for them a dreadful companion on a ramble. He is always stopping to draw their attention to particulars. Nor are they looking for “views” or landscapes. Wordsworth, their spokesman, strongly deprecates this. It leads to “a comparison of scene with scene”, makes you “pamper” yourself with “meagre novelties of colour and proportion”. While you are busying yourself with this critical and discriminating activity you lose what really matters — the “moods of time and season”, the “spirit” of the place. And of course Wordsworth is right. That is why, if you love nature in his fashion, a landscape painter is (out of doors) an even worse companion than a botanist.

It is the “moods” or the “spirit” that matter. Nature-lovers want to receive as fully as possible whatever nature, at each particular time and place, is, so to speak, saying. The obvious richness, grace, and harmony of some scenes are no more precious to them than the grimness, bleakness, terror, monotony, or “visionary dreariness” of others. The featureless itself gets from them a willing response. It is one more word uttered by nature. They lay themselves bare to the sheer quality of every countryside every hour of the day. They want to absorb it into themselves, to be coloured through and through by it.

This experience, like so many others, after being lauded to the skies in the Nineteenth Century, has been debunked by the moderns. And one must certainly concede to the debunkers that Wordsworth, not when he was communicating it as a poet, but when he was merely talking about it as a philosopher (or philosophaster), said some very silly things. It is silly, unless you have found any evidence, to believe that flowers enjoy the air they breathe, and sillier not to add that, if this were true, flowers would undoubtedly have pains as well as pleasures. Nor have many people been taught moral philosophy by an “impulse from a vernal wood”.

If they were, it would not necessarily be the sort of moral philosophy Wordsworth would have approved. It might be that of ruthless competition. For some moderns I think it is. They love nature in so far as, for them, she calls to “the dark gods in the blood”; not although, but because, sex and hunger and sheer power there operate without pity or shame.

If you take nature as a teacher she will teach you exactly the lessons you had already decided to learn; this is only another way of saying that nature does not teach. The tendency to take her as a teacher is obviously very easily grafted on to the experience we call “love of nature”. But it is only a graft. While we are actually subjected to them, the “moods” and “spirits” of nature point no morals. Overwhelming gaiety, insupportable grandeur, sombre desolation are flung at you. Make what you can of them, if you must make at all. The only imperative that nature utters is, “Look. Listen. Attend.”

The fact that this imperative is so often misinterpreted and sets people making theologies and pantheologies and antitheologies — all of which can be debunked — does not really touch the central experience itself. What nature-lovers — whether they are Wordsworthians or people with “dark gods in their blood” — get from nature is an iconography, a language of images. I do not mean simply visual images; it is the “moods” or “spirits” themselves — the powerful expositions of terror, gloom, jocundity, cruelty, lust, innocence, purity — that are the images. In them each man can clothe his own belief. We must learn our theology or philosophy elsewhere (not surprisingly, we often learn them from theologians and philosophers).

But when I speak of “clothing” our belief in such images I do not mean anything like using nature for similes or metaphors in the manner of the poets. Indeed I might have said “filling” or “incarnating” rather than clothing. Many people — I am one myself — would never, but for what nature does to us, have had any content to put into the words we must use in confessing our faith. Nature never taught me that there exists a God of glory and of infinite majesty. I had to learn that in other ways. But nature gave the word *glory* a meaning for me. I still do not know where else I could have found one. I do not see how the “fear” of God could have ever meant to me anything but the lowest prudential efforts to be safe, if I had never seen certain ominous ravines and unapproachable crags. And if nature had never awakened certain longings in me, huge areas of what I can now mean by the “love” of God would never, so far as I can see, have existed.

Of course the fact that a Christian can so use nature is not even the beginning of a proof that Christianity is true. Those suffering from Dark Gods can equally use her (I suppose) for their creed. That is precisely the point. Nature does not teach. A true philosophy may sometimes validate an experience of nature; an experience of nature cannot validate a philosophy. Nature will not verify any theological or metaphysical proposition (or not in the manner we are now considering); she will help to show what it means.

And not, on the Christian premises, by accident. The created glory may be expected to give us hints of the uncreated; for the one is derived from the other and in some fashion reflects it.

In some fashion. But not perhaps in so direct and simple a fashion as we at first might suppose. For of course all the facts stressed by nature-lovers of the other school are facts too; there are worms in the belly as well as primroses in the wood. Try to reconcile them, or to show that they don't really need reconciliation, and you are turning from direct experience of nature — our present subject — to metaphysics or theodicy or something of that sort. That may be a sensible thing to do; but I think it should be kept distinct from the love of nature. While we are on that level, while we are still claiming to speak of what nature has directly "said" to us, we must stick to it. We have seen an image of glory. We must not try to find a direct path through it and beyond it to an increasing knowledge of God. The path peters out almost at once. Terrors and mysteries, the whole depth of God's counsels and the whole tangle of the history of the universe, choke it. We can't get through; not that way. We must make a *détour* — leave the hills and woods and go back to our studies, to church, to our Bibles, to our knees. Otherwise the love of nature is beginning to turn into a nature religion. And then, even if it does not lead us to the Dark Gods, it will lead us to a great deal of nonsense.

But we need not surrender the love of nature — chastened and limited as I have suggested — to the debunkers. Nature cannot satisfy the desires she arouses nor answer theological questions nor sanctify us. Our real journey to God involves constantly turning our backs on her; passing from the dawn-lit fields into some poky little church, or (it might be) going to work in an East End parish. But the love of her has been a valuable and, for some people, an indispensable initiation.

I need not say "has been". For in fact those who allow no more than this to the love of nature seem to be those who retain it. This is what one should

expect. This love, when it sets up as a religion, is beginning to be a god — therefore to be a demon. And demons never keep their promises. Nature "dies on" those who try to live for a love of nature. Coleridge ended by being insensible to her; Wordsworth, by lamenting that the glory had passed away. Say your prayers in a garden early, ignoring steadfastly the dew, the birds and the flowers, and you will come away overwhelmed by its freshness and joy; go there in order to be overwhelmed and, after a certain age, nine times out of ten nothing will happen to you.

I turn now to the love of one's country. Here there is no need to labour M. de Rougemont's maxim; we all know now that this love becomes a demon when it becomes a god. Some begin to suspect that it is never anything but a demon. But then they have to reject half the high poetry and half the heroic action our race has achieved. We cannot keep even Christ's lament over Jerusalem. He too exhibits love for His country.

Let us limit our field. There is no need here for an essay on international ethics. When this love becomes demoniac it will of course produce wicked acts. But others, more skilled, may say what acts between nations are wicked. We are only considering the sentiment itself in the hope of being able to distinguish its innocent from its demoniac condition. Neither of these is the efficient cause of national behaviour. For strictly speaking it is rulers, not nations, who behave internationally. Demoniac patriotism in their subjects — I write only for subjects — will make it easier for them to act wickedly; healthy patriotism may make it harder: when they are wicked they may by propaganda encourage a demoniac condition of our sentiments in order to secure our acquiescence in their wickedness. If they are good, they could do the opposite. That is one reason why we private persons should keep a wary eye on the health or disease of our own love for our country. And that is what I am writing about.

How ambivalent patriotism is may be gauged by the fact that no two writers have expressed it more vigorously than Kipling and Chesterton. If it were one element two such men could not both have praised it. In reality it contains many ingredients, of which many different blends are possible.

First, there is love of home, of the place we grew up in or the places, perhaps many, which have been our homes; and of all places fairly near these and fairly like them; love of old acquaintances, of familiar sights, sounds and smells. Note that at its largest this is, for us, a love of England, Wales, Scotland, or Ulster. Only foreigners and politicians talk about

“Britain”. Kipling’s “I do not love my empire’s foes” strikes a ludicrously false note. *My* empire! With this love for the place there goes a love for the way of life; for beer and tea and open fires, trains with compartments in them and an unarmed police force and all the rest of it; for the local dialect and (a shade less) for our native language. As Chesterton says, a man’s reasons for not wanting his country to be ruled by foreigners are very like his reasons for not wanting his house to be burned down; because he “could not even begin” to enumerate all the things he would miss.

It would be hard to find any legitimate point of view from which this feeling could be condemned. As the family offers us the first step beyond self-love, so this offers us the first step beyond family selfishness. Of course it is not pure charity; it involves love of our neighbours in the local, not of our Neighbour, in the Dominical, sense. But those who do not love the fellow-villagers or fellow-townsmen whom they have seen are not likely to have got very far towards loving “Man” whom they have not. All natural affections, including this, can become rivals to spiritual love: but they can also be preparatory imitations of it, training (so to speak) of the spiritual muscles which Grace may later put to a higher service; as women nurse dolls in childhood and later nurse children. There may come an occasion for renouncing this love; pluck out your right eye. But you need to have an eye first: a creature which had none — which had only got so far as a “photo-sensitive” spot — would be very ill employed in meditation on that severe text.

Of course patriotism of this kind is not in the least aggressive. It asks only to be let alone. It becomes militant only to protect what it loves. In any mind which has a pennyworth of imagination it produces a good attitude towards foreigners. How can I love my home without coming to realise that other men, no less rightly, love theirs? Once you have realised that the Frenchmen like *café complet* just as we like bacon and eggs — why, good luck to them and let them have it. The last thing we want is to make everywhere else just like our own home. It would not be home unless it were different.

The second ingredient is a particular attitude to our country’s past. I mean to that past as it lives in popular imagination; the great deeds of our ancestors. Remember Marathon. Remember Waterloo. “We must be free or die who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spoke.” This past is felt both to impose an obligation and to hold out an assurance; we must not fall below

the standard our fathers set us, and because we are their sons there is good hope we shall not.

This feeling has not quite such good credentials as the sheer love of home. The actual history of every country is full of shabby and even shameful doings. The heroic stories, if taken to be typical, give a false impression of it and are often themselves open to serious historical criticism. Hence a patriotism based on our glorious past is fair game for the debunker. As knowledge increases it may snap and be converted into disillusioned cynicism, or may be maintained by a voluntary shutting of the eyes. But who can condemn what clearly makes many people, at many important moments, behave so much better than they could have done without its help?

I think it is possible to be strengthened by the image of the past without being either deceived or puffed up. The image becomes dangerous in the precise degree to which it is mistaken, or substituted, for serious and systematic historical study. The stories are best when they are handed on and accepted as stories. I do not mean by this that they should be handed on as mere fictions (some of them are after all true). But the emphasis should be on the tale as such, on the picture which fires the imagination, the example that strengthens the will. The schoolboy who hears them should dimly feel — though of course he cannot put it into words — that he is hearing *saga*. Let him be thrilled — preferably "out of school" — by the "Deeds that won the Empire"; but the less we mix this up with his "history lessons" or mistake it for a serious analysis — worse still, a justification — of imperial policy, the better. When I was a child I had a book full of coloured pictures called *Our Island Story*. That title has always seemed to me to strike exactly the right note. The book did not look at all like a text-book either. What does seem to me poisonous, what breeds a type of patriotism that is pernicious if it lasts but not likely to last long in an educated adult, is the perfectly serious indoctrination of the young in knowably false or biased history — the heroic legend drably disguised as text-book fact. With this creeps in the tacit assumption that other nations have not equally their heroes; perhaps even the belief — surely it is very bad biology — that we can literally "inherit" a tradition. And these almost inevitably lead on to a third thing that is sometimes called patriotism.

This third thing is not a sentiment but a belief: a firm, even prosaic belief that our own nation, in sober fact, has long been, and still is markedly

superior to all others. I once ventured to say to an old clergyman who was voicing this sort of patriotism, “But, sir, aren’t we told that *every* people thinks its own men the bravest and its own women the fairest in the world?” He replied with total gravity — he could not have been graver if he had been saying the Creed at the altar— “Yes, but in England it’s true.” To be sure, this conviction had not made my friend (God rest his soul) a villain; only an extremely lovable old ass. It can however produce asses that kick and bite. On the lunatic fringe it may shade off into that popular Racialism which Christianity and science equally forbid.

This brings us to the fourth ingredient. If our nation is really so much better than others it may be held to have either the duties or the rights of a superior being towards them. In the Nineteenth Century the English became very conscious of such duties: the “white man’s burden”. What we called *natives* were our wards and we their self-appointed guardians. This was not all hypocrisy. We did do them some good. But our habit of talking as if England’s motives for acquiring an empire (or any youngster’s motives for seeking a job in the I.C.S.) had been mainly altruistic nauseated the world. And yet this showed the sense of superiority working at its best. Some nations who have also felt it have stressed the rights not the duties. To them, some foreigners were so bad that one had the right to exterminate them. Others, fitted only to be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the chosen people, had better be made to get on with their hewing and drawing. Dogs, know your betters! I am far from suggesting that the two attitudes are on the same level. But both are fatal. Both demand that the area in which they operate should grow “wider still and wider”. And both have about them this sure mark of evil: only by being terrible do they avoid being comic. If there were no broken treaties with Redskins, no extermination of the Tasmanians, no gas-chambers and no Belsen, no Amritsar, Black and Tans or Apartheid, the pomposity of both would be roaring farce.

Finally we reach the stage where patriotism in its demoniac form unconsciously denies itself. Chesterton picked on two lines from Kipling as the perfect example. It was unfair to Kipling, who knew — wonderfully, for so homeless a man — what the love of home can mean. But the lines, in isolation, can be taken to sum up the thing. They run:

If England was what England seems
  ‘Ow quick we’d drop ‘er. But she ain’t!

Love never spoke that way. It is like loving your children only “if they’re good”, your wife only while she keeps her looks, your husband only so long as he is famous and successful. “No man,” said one of the Greeks, “loves his city because it is great, but because it is his.” A man who really loves his country will love her in her ruin and degeneration— “England, with all thy faults, I love thee still.” She will be to him “a poor thing but mine own”. He may think her good and great, when she is not, because he loves her; the delusion is up to a point pardonable. But Kipling’s soldier reverses it; he loves her because he thinks her good and great — loves her on her merits. She is a fine going concern and it gratifies his pride to be in it. How if she ceased to be such? The answer is plainly given: “‘Ow quick we’d drop ‘er.” When the ship begins to sink he will leave her. Thus that kind of patriotism which sets off with the greatest swagger of drums and banners actually sets off on the road that can lead to Vichy. And this is a phenomenon which will meet us again. When the natural loves become lawless they do not merely do harm to other loves; they themselves cease to be the loves they were — to be loves at all.

Patriotism has then, many faces. Those who would reject it entirely do not seem to have considered what will certainly step — has already begun to step — into its place. For a long time yet, or perhaps forever, nations will live in danger. Rulers must somehow nerve their subjects to defend them or at least to prepare for their defence. Where the sentiment of patriotism has been destroyed this can be done only by presenting every international conflict in a purely ethical light. If people will spend neither sweat nor blood for “their country” they must be made to feel that they are spending them for justice, or civilisation, or humanity. This is a step down, not up. Patriotic sentiment did not of course need to disregard ethics. Good men needed to be convinced that their country’s cause was just; but it was still their country’s cause, not the cause of justice as such. The difference seems to me important. I may without self-righteousness or hypocrisy think it just to defend my house by force against a burglar; but if I start pretending that I blacked his eye purely on moral grounds — wholly indifferent to the fact that the house in question was mine — I become insufferable. The pretence that when England’s cause is just we are on England’s side — as some neutral Don Quixote might be — for that reason alone, is equally spurious. And nonsense draws evil after it. If our country’s cause is the cause of God,

wars must be wars of annihilation. A false transcendence is given to things which are very much of this world.

The glory of the old sentiment was that while it could steel men to the utmost endeavour, it still knew itself to be a sentiment. Wars could be heroic without pretending to be Holy Wars. The hero's death was not confused with the martyr's. And (delightfully) the same sentiment which could be so serious in a rearguard action, could also in peacetime, take itself as lightly as all happy loves often do. It could laugh at itself. Our older patriotic songs cannot be sung without a twinkle in the eye; later ones sound more like hymns. Give me "The British Grenadiers" (*with a tow-row-row-row*) any day rather than "Land of Hope and Glory".

It will be noticed that the sort of love I have been describing, and all its ingredients, can be for something other than a country: for a school, a regiment, a great family, or a class. All the same criticisms will still apply. It can also be felt for bodies that claim more than a natural affection: for a Church or (alas) a party in a Church, or for a religious order. This terrible subject would require a book to itself. Here it will be enough to say that the Heavenly Society is also an earthly society. Our (merely natural) patriotism towards the latter can very easily borrow the transcendent claims of the former and use them to justify the most abominable actions. If ever the book which I am not going to write is written it must be the full confession by Christendom of Christendom's specific contribution to the sum of human cruelty and treachery. Large areas of "the World" will not hear us till we have publicly disowned much of our past. Why should they? We have shouted the name of Christ and enacted the service of Moloch.

It may be thought that I should not end this chapter without a word about our love for animals. But that will fit in better in the next. Whether animals are in fact sub-personal or not, they are never loved as if they were. The fact or the illusion of personality is always present, so that love for them is really an instance of that Affection which is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

Affection

I begin with the humblest and most widely diffused of loves, the love in which our experience seems to differ least from that of the animals. Let me add at once that I do not on that account give it a lower value. Nothing in Man is either worse or better for being shared with the beasts. When we blame a man for being "a mere animal", we mean not that he displays animal characteristics (we all do) but that he displays these, and only these, on occasions where the specifically human was demanded. (When we call him "brutal" we usually mean that he commits cruelties impossible to most real brutes; they're not clever enough.)

The Greeks called this love *storge* (two syllables and the g is "hard"). I shall here call it simply Affection. My Greek Lexicon defines *storge* as "affection, especially of parents to offspring"; but also of offspring to parents. And that, I have no doubt, is the original form of the thing as well as the central meaning of the word. The image we must start with is that of a mother nursing a baby, a bitch or a cat with a basketful of puppies or kittens; all in a squeaking, nuzzling heap together; purrings, lickings, baby-talk, milk, warmth, the smell of young life.

The importance of this image is that it presents us at the very outset with a certain paradox. The Need and Need-love of the young is obvious; so is the Gift-love of the mother. She gives birth, gives suck, gives protection. On the other hand, she must give birth or die. She must give suck or suffer. That way, her Affection too is a Need-love. There is the paradox. It is a Need-love but what it needs is to give. It is a Gift-love but it needs to be needed. We shall have to return to this point.

But even in animal life, and still more in our own, Affection extends far beyond the relation of mother and young. This warm comfortableness, this satisfaction in being together, takes in all sorts of objects. It is indeed the least discriminating of loves. There are women for whom we can predict few wooers and men who are likely to have few friends. They have nothing to offer. But almost anyone can become an object of Affection; the ugly, the stupid, even the exasperating. There need be no apparent fitness between those whom it unites. I have seen it felt for an imbecile not only by his

parents but by his brothers. It ignores the barriers of age, sex, class and education. It can exist between a clever young man from the university and an old nurse, though their minds inhabit different worlds. It ignores even the barriers of species. We see it not only between dog and man but, more surprisingly, between dog and cat. Gilbert White claims to have discovered it between a horse and a hen.

Some of the novelists have seized this well. In *Tristram Shandy* "my father" and Uncle Toby are so far from being united by any community of interests or ideas that they cannot converse for ten minutes without cross-purposes; but we are made to feel their deep mutual affection. So with Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Pickwick and Sam Weller, Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness. So too, though probably without the author's conscious intention, in *The Wind in the Willows*; the quaternion of Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad suggests the amazing heterogeneity possible between those who are bound by Affection.

But Affection has its own criteria. Its objects have to be familiar. We can sometimes point to the very day and hour when we fell in love or began a new friendship. I doubt if we ever catch Affection beginning. To become aware of it is to become aware that it has already been going on for some time. The use of "old" or *vieux* as a term of Affection is significant. The dog barks at strangers who have never done it any harm and wags its tail for old acquaintances even if they never did it a good turn. The child will love a crusty old gardener who has hardly ever taken any notice of it and shrink from the visitor who is making every attempt to win its regard. But it must be an *old* gardener, one who has "always" been there — the short but seemingly immemorial "always" of childhood.

Affection, as I have said, is the humblest love. It gives itself no airs. People can be proud of being "in love", or of friendship. Affection is modest — even furtive and shame-faced. Once when I had remarked on the affection quite often found between cat and dog, my friend replied, "Yes. But I bet no dog would ever confess it to the other dogs." That is at least a good caricature of much human Affection. "Let homely faces stay at home," says Comus. Now Affection has a very homely face. So have many of those for whom we feel it. It is no proof of our refinement or perceptiveness that we love them; nor that they love us. What I have called Appreciative Love is no basic element in Affection. It usually needs absence or bereavement to set us praising those to whom only Affection

binds us. We take them for granted: and this taking for granted, which is an outrage in erotic love, is here right and proper up to a point. It fits the comfortable, quiet nature of the feeling. Affection would not be affection if it was loudly and frequently expressed; to produce it in public is like getting your household furniture out for a move. It did very well in its place, but it looks shabby or tawdry or grotesque in the sunshine. Affection almost slinks or seeps through our lives. It lives with humble, un-dress, private things; soft slippers, old clothes, old jokes, the thump of a sleepy dog's tail on the kitchen floor, the sound of a sewing-machine, a gollywog left on the lawn.

But I must at once correct myself. I am talking of Affection as it is when it exists apart from the other loves. It often does so exist; often not. As gin is not only a drink in itself but also a base for many mixed drinks, so Affection, besides being a love itself, can enter into the other loves and colour them all through and become the very medium in which from day to day they operate. They would not perhaps wear very well without it. To make a friend is not the same as to become affectionate. But when your friend has become an old friend, all those things about him which had originally nothing to do with the friendship become familiar and dear with familiarity. As for erotic love, I can imagine nothing more disagreeable than to experience it for more than a very short time without this homespun clothing of affection. That would be a most uneasy condition, either too angelic or too animal or each by turn; never quite great enough or little enough for man. There is indeed a peculiar charm, both in friendship and in Eros, about those moments when Appreciative Love lies, as it were, curled up asleep, and the mere ease and ordinariness of the relationship (free as solitude, yet neither is alone) wraps us round. No need to talk. No need to make love. No needs at all except perhaps to stir the fire.

This blending and overlapping of the loves is well kept before us by the fact that at most times and places all three of them had in common, as their expression, the kiss. In modern England friendship no longer uses it, but Affection and Eros do. It belongs so fully to both that we cannot now tell which borrowed it from the other or whether there were borrowing at all. To be sure, you may say that the kiss of Affection differs from the kiss of Eros. Yes; but not all kisses between lovers are lovers' kisses. Again, both these loves tend — and it embarrasses many moderns — to use a "little language" or "baby talk". And this is not peculiar to the human species. Professor

Lorenz has told us that when jackdaws are amorous their calls “consist chiefly of infantile sounds reserved by adult jackdaws for these occasions” (*King Solomon’s Ring*,). We and the birds have the same excuse. Different sorts of tenderness are both tenderness and the language of the earliest tenderness we have ever known is recalled to do duty for the new sort.

One of the most remarkable by-products of Affection has not yet been mentioned. I have said that is not primarily an Appreciative Love. It is not discriminating. It can “rub along” with the most unpromising people. Yet oddly enough this very fact means that it can in the end make appreciations possible which, but for it might never have existed. We may say, and not quite untruly, that we have chosen our friends and the woman we love for their various excellences — for beauty, frankness, goodness of heart, wit, intelligence, or what not. But it had to be the particular kind of wit, the particular kind of beauty, the particular kind of goodness that we like, and we have our personal tastes in these matters. That is why friends and lovers feel that they were “made for one another”. The especial glory of Affection is that it can unite those who most emphatically, even comically, are not; people who, if they had not found themselves put down by fate in the same household or community, would have had nothing to do with each other. If Affection grows out of this — of course it often does not — their eyes begin to open. Growing fond of “old so-and-so”, at first simply because he happens to be there, I presently begin to see that there is “something in him” after all. The moment when one first says, really meaning it, that though he is not “my sort of man” he is a very good man “in his own way” is one of liberation. It does not feel like that; we may feel only tolerant and indulgent. But really we have crossed a frontier. That “in his own way” means that we are getting beyond our own idiosyncracies, that we are learning to appreciate goodness or intelligence in themselves, not merely goodness or intelligence flavoured and served to suit our own palate.

“Dogs and cats should always be brought up together,” said someone, “it broadens their minds so.” Affection broadens ours; of all natural loves it is the most catholic, the least finical, the broadest. The people with whom you are thrown together in the family, the college, the mess, the ship, the religious house, are from this point of view a wider circle than the friends, however numerous, whom you have made for yourself in the outer world. By having a great many friends I do not prove that I have a wide appreciation of human excellence. You might as well say I prove the width

of my literary taste by being able to enjoy all the books in my own study. The answer is the same in both cases— "You chose those books. You chose those friends. Of course they suit you." The truly wide taste in reading is that which enables a man to find something for his needs on the sixpenny tray outside any secondhand bookshop. The truly wide taste in humanity will similarly find something to appreciate in the cross-section of humanity whom one has to meet every day. In my experience it is Affection that creates this taste, teaching us first to notice, then to endure, then to smile at, then to enjoy, and finally to appreciate, the people who "happen to be there". Made for us? Thank God, no. They are themselves, odder than you could have believed and worth far more than we guessed.

And now we are drawing near the point of danger. Affection, I have said, gives itself no airs; charity, said St. Paul, is not puffed up. Affection can love the unattractive: God and His saints love the unlovable. Affection "does not expect too much", turns a blind eye to faults, revives easily after quarrels; just so charity suffers long and is kind and forgives. Affection opens our eyes to goodness we could not have seen, or should not have appreciated without it. So does humble sanctity. If we dwelled exclusively on these resemblances we might be led on to believe that this Affection is not simply one of the natural loves but is Love Himself working in our human hearts and fulfilling the law. Were the Victorian novelists right after all? Is love (of this sort) really enough? Are the "domestic affections", when in their best and fullest development, the same thing as the Christian life? The answer to all these questions, I submit, is certainly No.

I do not mean simply that those novelists sometimes wrote as if they had never heard the text about "hating" wife and mother and one's own life also. That of course is true. The rivalry between all natural loves and the love of God is something a Christian dare not forget. God is the great Rival, the ultimate object of human jealousy; that beauty, terrible as the Gorgon's, which may at any moment steal from me — or it seems like stealing to me — my wife's or husband's or daughter's heart. The bitterness of some unbelief, though disguised even from those who feel it as anti-clericalism or hatred of superstition, is really due to this. But I am not at present thinking of that rivalry; we shall have to face it in a later chapter. For the moment our business is more "down to earth".

How many of these "happy homes" really exist? Worse still; are all the unhappy ones unhappy because Affection is absent? I believe not. It can be

present, causing the unhappiness. Nearly all the characteristics of this love are ambivalent. They may work for ill as well as for good. By itself, left simply to follow its own bent, it can darken and degrade human life. The debunkers and anti-sentimentalists have not said all the truth about it, but all they have said is true.

Symptomatic of this, perhaps, is the odiousness of nearly all those treacly tunes and saccharine poems in which popular art expresses Affection. They are odious because of their falsity. They represent as a ready-made recipe for bliss (and even for goodness) what is in fact only an opportunity. There is no hint that we shall have to do anything: only let Affection pour over us like a warm shower-bath and all, it is implied, will be well.

Affection, we have seen, includes both Need-love and Gift-love. I begin with the Need — our craving for the Affection of others.

Now there is a clear reason why this craving, of all love-cravings, easily becomes the most unreasonable. I have said that almost anyone may be the object of Affection. Yes; and almost everyone expects to be. The egregious Mr. Pontifex in *The Way of all Flesh* is outraged to discover that his son does not love him; it is “unnatural” for a boy not to love his own father. It never occurs to him to ask whether, since the first day the boy can remember, he has ever done or said anything that could excite love. Similarly, at the beginning of *King Lear* the hero is shown as a very unlovable old man devoured with a ravenous appetite for Affection. I am driven to literary examples because you, the reader, and I, do not live in the same neighbourhood; if we did, there would unfortunately be no difficulty about replacing them with examples from real life. The thing happens every day. And we can see why. We all know that we must do something, if not to merit, at least to attract, erotic love or friendship. But Affection is often assumed to be provided, ready made, by nature; “built-in”, “laid-on”, “on the house”. We have a right to expect it. If the others do not give it, they are “unnatural”.

This assumption is no doubt the distortion of a truth. Much has been “built-in”. Because we are a mammalian species, instinct will provide at least some degree, often a high one, of maternal love. Because we are a social species familiar association provides a *milieu* in which, if all goes well, Affection will arise and grow strong without demanding any very shining qualities in its objects. If it is given us it will not necessarily be

given us on our merits; we may get it with very little trouble. From a dim perception of the truth (many are loved with Affection far beyond their deserts) Mr. Pontifex draws the ludicrous conclusion, “Therefore I, without desert, have a right to it.” It is as if, on a far higher plane, we argued that because no man by merit has a right to the Grace of God, I, having no merit, am entitled to it. There is no question or rights in either case. What we have is not “a right to expect” but a “reasonable expectation” of being loved by our intimates if we, and they, are more or less ordinary people. But we may not be. We may be intolerable. If we are, “nature” will work against us. For the very same conditions of intimacy which make Affection possible also — and no less naturally — make possible a peculiarly incurable distaste; a hatred as immemorial, constant, unemphatic, almost at times unconscious, as the corresponding form of love. Siegfried, in the opera, could not remember a time before every shuffle, mutter, and fidget of his dwarfish foster-father had become odious. We never catch this kind of hatred, any more than Affection, at the moment of its beginning. It was always there before. Notice that *old* is a term of wearied loathing as well as of endearment: “at his old tricks,” “in his old way,” “the same old thing.”

It would be absurd to say that Lear is lacking in Affection. In so far as Affection is Need-love he is half-crazy with it. Unless, in his own way, he loved his daughters he would not so desperately desire their love. The most unlovable parent (or child) may be full of such ravenous love. But it works to their own misery and everyone else’s. The situation becomes suffocating. If people are already unlovable a continual demand on their part (as of right) to be loved — their manifest sense of injury, their reproaches, whether loud and clamorous or merely implicit in every look and gesture of resentful self-pity — produce in us a sense of guilt (they are intended to do so) for a fault we could not have avoided and cannot cease to commit. They seal up the very fountain for which they are thirsty. If ever, at some favoured moment, any germ of Affection for them stirs in us, their demand for more and still more, petrifies us again. And of course such people always desire the same proof of our love; we are to join their side, to hear and share their grievance against someone else. If my boy really loved me he would see how selfish his father is ... if my brother loved me he would make a party with me against my sister ... if you loved me you wouldn’t let me be treated like this ...

And all the while they remain unaware of the real road. “If you would be loved, be lovable,” said Ovid. That cheery old reprobate only meant, “If you want to attract the girls you must be attractive,” but his maxim has a wider application. The amorist was wiser in his generation than Mr. Pontifex and King Lear.

The really surprising thing is not that these insatiable demands made by the unlovable are sometimes made in vain, but that they are so often met. Sometimes one sees a woman’s girlhood, youth and long years of her maturity up to the verge of old age all spent in tending, obeying, caressing, and perhaps supporting, a maternal vampire who can never be caressed and obeyed enough. The sacrifice — but there are two opinions about that — may be beautiful; the old woman who exacts it is not.

The “built-in” or unmerited character of Affection thus invites a hideous misinterpretation. So does its ease and informality.

We hear a great deal about the rudeness of the rising generation. I am an oldster myself and might be expected to take the oldsters’ side, but in fact I have been far more impressed by the bad manners of parents to children than by those of children to parents. Who has not been the embarrassed guest at family meals where the father or mother treated their grown-up offspring with an incivility which, offered to any other young people, would simply have terminated the acquaintance? Dogmatic assertions on matters which the children understand and their elders don’t, ruthless interruptions, flat contradictions, ridicule of things the young take seriously — sometimes of their religion — insulting references to their friends, all provide an easy answer to the question “Why are they always out? Why do they like every house better than their home?” Who does not prefer civility to barbarism?

If you asked any of these insufferable people — they are not all parents of course — why they behaved that way at home, they would reply, “Oh, hang it all, one comes home to relax. A chap can’t be always on his best behaviour. If a man can’t be himself in his own house, where can he? Of course we don’t want Company Manners at home. We’re a happy family. We can say *anything* to one another here. No one minds. We all understand.”

Once again it is so nearly true yet so fatally wrong. Affection is an affair of old clothes, and ease, of the unguarded moment, of liberties which would be ill-bred if we took them with strangers. But old clothes are one thing; to wear the same shirt till it stank would be another. There are proper clothes

for a garden party; but the clothes for home must be proper too, in their own different way. Similarly there is a distinction between public and domestic courtesy. The root principle of both is the same: “that no one give any kind of preference to himself.” But the more public the occasion, the more our obedience to this principle has been “taped” or formalised. There are “rules” of good manners. The more intimate the occasion, the less the formalisation; but not therefore the less need of courtesy. On the contrary, Affection at its best practises a courtesy which is incomparably more subtle, sensitive, and deep than the public kind. In public a ritual would do. At home you must have the reality which that ritual represented, or else the deafening triumphs of the greatest egoist present. You must really give no kind of preference to yourself; at a party it is enough to conceal the preference. Hence the old proverb “come live with me and you’ll know me”. Hence a man’s familiar manners first reveal the true value of his (significantly odious phrase!) “Company” or “Party” manners. Those who leave their manners behind them when they come home from the dance or the sherry party have no real courtesy even there. They were merely aping those who had.

“We can say *anything* to one another.” The truth behind this is that Affection at its best can say whatever Affection at its best wishes to say, regardless of the rules that govern public courtesy; for Affection at its best wishes neither to wound nor to humiliate nor to domineer. You may address the wife of your bosom as “Pig!” when she has inadvertently drunk your cocktail as well as her own. You may roar down the story which your father is telling once too often. You may tease and hoax and banter. You can say “Shut up. I want to read”. You can do anything in the right tone and at the right moment — the tone and moment which are not intended to, and will not, hurt. The better the Affection the more unerringly it knows which these are (every love has its *art of love*). But the domestic Rudesby means something quite different when he claims liberty to say “anything”. Having a very imperfect sort of Affection himself, or perhaps at that moment none, he arrogates to himself the beautiful liberties which only the fullest Affection has a right to or knows how to manage. He then uses them spitefully in obedience to his resentments; or ruthlessly in obedience to his egoism; or at best stupidly, lacking the art. And all the time he may have a clear conscience. He knows that Affection takes liberties. He is taking liberties. Therefore (he concludes) he is being affectionate. Resent anything

and he will say that the defect of love is on your side. He is hurt. He has been misunderstood.

He then sometimes avenges himself by getting on his high horse and becoming elaborately “polite”. The implication is of course, “Oh! So we are not to be intimate? We are to behave like mere acquaintances? I had hoped — but no matter. Have it your own way.” This illustrates prettily the difference between intimate and formal courtesy. Precisely what suits the one may be a breach of the other. To be free and easy when you are presented to some eminent stranger is bad manners; to practice formal and ceremonial courtesies at home (“public faces in private places”) is — and is always intended to be — bad manners. There is a delicious illustration of really good domestic manners in *Tristram Shandy*. At a singularly unsuitable moment Uncle Toby has been holding forth on his favourite theme of fortification. “My Father,” driven for once beyond endurance, violently interrupts. Then he sees his brother’s face; the utterly unretaliating face of Toby, deeply wounded, not by the slight to himself — he would never think of that — but by the slight to the noble art. My Father at once repents. There is an apology, a total reconciliation. Uncle Toby, to show how complete is his forgiveness, to show that he is not on his dignity, resumes the lecture on fortification.

But we have not yet touched on jealousy. I suppose no one now believes that jealousy is especially connected with erotic love. If anyone does the behaviour of children, employees, and domestic animals, ought soon to undeceive him. Every kind of love, almost every kind of association, is liable to it. The jealousy of Affection is closely connected with its reliance on what is old and familiar. So also with the total, or relative, unimportance for Affection of what I call Appreciative love. We don’t want the “old, familiar faces” to become brighter or more beautiful, the old ways to be changed even for the better, the old jokes and interests to be replaced by exciting novelties. Change is a threat to Affection.

A brother and sister, or two brothers — for sex here is not at work — grow to a certain age sharing everything. They have read the same comics, climbed the same trees, been pirates or spacemen together, taken up and abandoned stamp-collecting at the same moment. Then a dreadful thing happens. One of them flashes ahead — discovers poetry or science or serious music or perhaps undergoes a religious conversion. His life is flooded with the new interest. The other cannot share it; he is left behind. I

doubt whether even the infidelity of a wife or husband raises a more miserable sense of desertion or a fiercer jealousy than this can sometimes do. It is not yet jealousy of the new friends whom the deserter will soon be making. That will come; at first it is jealousy of the thing itself — of this science, this music, of God (always called "religion" or "all this religion" in such contexts). The jealousy will probably be expressed by ridicule. The new interest is "all silly nonsense", contemptibly childish (or contemptibly grown-up), or else the deserter is not really interested in it at all — he's showing off, swanking; it's all affectation. Presently the books will be hidden, the scientific specimens destroyed, the radio forcibly switched off the classical programmes. For Affection is the most instinctive, in that sense the most animal, of the loves; its jealousy is proportionately fierce. It snarls and bares its teeth like a dog whose food has been snatched away. And why would it not? Something or someone has snatched away from the child I am picturing his life-long food, his second self. His world is in ruins.

But it is not only children who react thus. Few things in the ordinary peacetime life of a civilised country are more nearly fiendish than the rancour with which a whole unbelieving family will turn on the one member of it who has become a Christian, or a whole lowbrow family on the one who shows signs of becoming an intellectual. This is not, as I once thought, simply the innate and, as it were, disinterested hatred of darkness for light. A church-going family in which one has gone atheist will not always behave any better. It is the reaction to a desertion, even to robbery. Someone or something has stolen "our" boy (or girl). He who was one of Us has become one of Them. What right had anybody to do it? He is *ours*. But once change has thus begun, who knows where it will end? (And we all so happy and comfortable before and doing no harm to no one!)

Sometimes a curious double jealousy is felt, or rather two inconsistent jealousies which chase each other round in the sufferer's mind. On the other hand "This" is "All nonsense, all bloody high-brow nonsense, all canting humbug". But on the other, "Supposing — it can't be, it mustn't be, but just supposing — there were something in it?" Supposing there really were anything in literature, or in Christianity? How if the deserter has really entered a new world which the rest of us never suspected? But, if so, how unfair! Why him? Why was it never opened to us? "A chit of a girl — a whipper-snapper of a boy — being shown things that are hidden from their

elders?" And since that is clearly incredible and unendurable, jealousy returns to the hypothesis "All nonsense".

Parents in this state are much more comfortably placed than brothers and sisters. Their past is unknown to their children. Whatever the deserter's new world is, they can always claim that they have been through it themselves and come out the other end. "It's a phase," they say, "It'll blow over." Nothing could be more satisfactory. It cannot be there and then refuted, for it is a statement about the future. It stings, yet — so indulgently said — is hard to resent. Better still, the elders may really believe it. Best of all, it may finally turn out to have been true. It won't be their fault if it doesn't.

"Boy, boy, these wild courses of yours will break your mother's heart." That eminently Victorian appeal may often have been true. Affection was bitterly wounded when one member of the family fell from the homely *ethos* into something worse — gambling, drink, keeping an opera girl. Unfortunately it is almost equally possible to break your mother's heart by rising above the homely *ethos*. The conservative tenacity of Affection works both ways. It can be a domestic counterpart to that nationally suicidal type of education which keeps back the promising child because the idlers and dunces might be "hurt" if it were undemocratically moved into a higher class than themselves.

All these perversions of Affection are mainly connected with Affection as a Need-love. But Affection as a Gift-love has its perversions too.

I am thinking of Mrs. Fidget, who died a few months ago. It is really astonishing how her family have brightened up. The drawn look has gone from her husband's face; he begins to be able to laugh. The younger boy, whom I had always thought an embittered, peevish little creature, turns out to be quite human. The elder, who was hardly ever at home except when he was in bed, is nearly always there now and has begun to reorganise the garden. The girl, who was always supposed to be "delicate" (though I never found out what exactly the trouble was), now has the riding lessons which were once out of the question, dances all night, and plays any amount of tennis. Even the dog who was never allowed out except on a lead is now a well-known member of the Lamp-post Club in their road.

Mrs. Fidget very often said that she lived for her family. And it was not untrue. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew it. "She lives for her family," they said; "what a wife and mother!" She did all the washing; true, she did it badly, and they could have afforded to send it out to a laundry, and they

frequently begged her not to do it. But she did. There was always a hot lunch for anyone who was at home and always a hot meal at night (even in midsummer). They implored her not to provide this. They protested almost with tears in their eyes (and with truth) that they liked cold meals. It made no difference. She was living for her family. She always sat up to "welcome" you home if you were out late at night; two or three in the morning, it made no odds; you would always find the frail, pale, weary face awaiting you, like a silent accusation. Which meant of course that you couldn't with any decency go out very often. She was always making things too; being in her own estimation (I'm no judge myself) an excellent amateur dressmaker and a great knitter. And of course, unless you were a heartless brute, you had to wear the things. (The Vicar tells me that, since her death, the contributions of that family alone to "sales of work" outweigh those of all his other parishioners put together). And then her care for their health! She bore the whole burden of that daughter's "delicacy" alone. The Doctor — an old friend, and it was not being done on National Health — was never allowed to discuss matters with his patient. After the briefest examination of her, he was taken into another room by the mother. The girl was to have no worries, no responsibility for her own health. Only loving care; caresses, special foods, horrible tonic wines, and breakfast in bed. For Mrs. Fidget, as she so often said, would "work her fingers to the bone" for her family. They couldn't stop her. Nor could they — being decent people — quite sit still and watch her do it. They had to help. Indeed they were always having to help. That is, they did things for her to help her to do things for them which they didn't want done. As for the dear dog, it was to her, she said, "just like one of the children." It was in fact as like one of them as she could make it. But since it had no scruples it got on rather better than they, and though vetted, dieted and guarded within an inch of its life, contrived sometimes to reach the dustbin or the dog next door.

The Vicar says Mrs. Fidget is now at rest. Let us hope she is. What's quite certain is that her family are.

It is easy to see how liability to this state is, so to speak, congenital in the maternal instinct. This, as we saw, is a Gift-love, but one that needs to give; therefore needs to be needed. But the proper aim of giving is to put the recipient in a state where he no longer needs our gift. We feed children in order that they may soon be able to feed themselves; we teach them in order that they may soon not need our teaching. Thus a heavy task is laid upon

this Gift-love. It must work towards its own abdication. We must aim at making ourselves superfluous. The hour when we can say “They need me no longer” should be our reward. But the instinct, simply in its own nature, has no power to fulfil this law. The instinct desires the good of its object, but not simply; only the good it can itself give. A much higher love — a love which desires the good of the object as such, from whatever source that good comes — must step in and help or tame the instinct before it can make the abdication. And of course it often does. But where it does not, the ravenous need to be needed will gratify itself either by keeping its objects needy or by inventing for them imaginary needs. It will do this all the more ruthlessly because it thinks (in one sense truly) that it is a Gift-love and therefore regards itself as “unselfish”.

It is not only mothers who can do this. All those other Affections which, whether by derivation from parental instinct or by similarity of function, need to be needed may fall into the same pit. The Affection of patron for *protégé* is one. In Jane Austen’s novel, Emma intends that Harriet Smith should have a happy life; but only the sort of happy life which Emma herself has planned for her. My own profession — that of a university teacher — is in this way dangerous. If we are any good we must always be working towards the moment at which our pupils are fit to become our critics and rivals. We should be delighted when it arrives, as the fencing master is delighted when his pupil can pink and disarm him. And many are.

But not all. I am old enough to remember the sad case of Dr. Quartz. No university boasted a more effective or devoted teacher. He spent the whole of himself on his pupils. He made an indelible impression on nearly all of them. He was the object of much well merited hero-worship. Naturally, and delightfully, they continued to visit him after the tutorial relation had ended — went round to his house of an evening and had famous discussions. But the curious thing is that this never lasted. Sooner or later — it might be within a few months or even a few weeks — came the fatal evening when they knocked on his door and were told that the Doctor was engaged. After that he would always be engaged. They were banished from him forever. This was because, at their last meeting, they had rebelled. They had asserted their independence — differed from the master and supported their own view, perhaps not without success. Faced with that very independence which he had laboured to produce and which it was his duty to produce if he could, Dr. Quartz could not bear it. Wotan had toiled to create the free

Siegfried; presented with the free Siegfried, he was enraged. Dr. Quartz was an unhappy man.

This terrible need to be needed often finds its outlet in pampering an animal. To learn that someone is “fond of animals” tells us very little until we know in what way. For there are two ways. On the one hand the higher and domesticated animal is, so to speak, a “bridge” between us and the rest of nature. We all at times feel somewhat painfully our human isolation from the sub-human world — the atrophy of instinct which our intelligence entails, our excessive self-consciousness, the innumerable complexities of our situation, our inability to live in the present. If only we could shuffle it all off! We must not — and incidentally we can’t — become beasts. But we can be *with* a beast. It is personal enough to give the word *with* a real meaning; yet it remains very largely an unconscious little bundle of biological impulses. It has three legs in nature’s world and one in ours. It is a link, an ambassador. Who would not wish, as Bosanquet put it, “to have a representative at the court of Pan”? Man with dog closes a gap in the universe. But of course animals are often used in a worse fashion. If you need to be needed and if your family, very properly, decline to need you, a pet is the obvious substitute. You can keep it all its life in need of you. You can keep it permanently infantile, reduce it to permanent invalidism, cut it off from all genuine animal well-being, and compensate for this by creating needs for countless little indulgences which only you can grant. The unfortunate creature thus becomes very useful to the rest of the household; it acts as a sump or drain — you are too busy spoiling a dog’s life to spoil theirs. Dogs are better for this purpose than cats: a monkey, I am told, is best of all. Also it is more like the real thing. To be sure, it’s all very bad luck for the animal. But probably it cannot fully realise the wrong you have done it. Better still, you would never know if it did. The most down-trodden human, driven too far, may one day turn and blurt out a terrible truth. Animals can’t speak.

Those who say “The more I see of men the better I like dogs” — those who find in animals a *relief* from the demands of human companionship — will be well advised to examine their real reasons.

I hope I am not being misunderstood. If this chapter leads anyone to doubt that the lack of “natural affection” is an extreme depravity I shall have failed. Nor do I question for a moment that Affection is responsible for nine-tenths of whatever solid and durable happiness there is in our natural

lives. I shall therefore have some sympathy with those whose comment on the last few pages takes the form “Of course. Of course. These things do happen. Selfish or neurotic people can twist anything, even love, into some sort of misery or exploitation. But why stress these marginal cases? A little common sense, a little give and take, prevents their occurrence among decent people.” But I think this comment itself needs a commentary.

Firstly, as to *neurotic*. I do not think we shall see things more clearly by classifying all these malefical states of Affection as pathological. No doubt there are really pathological conditions which make the temptation to these states abnormally hard or even impossible to resist for particular people. Send those people to the doctors by all means. But I believe that everyone who is honest with himself will admit that he has felt these temptations. Their occurrence is not a disease; or if it is, the name of that disease is Being a Fallen Man. In ordinary people the yielding to them — and who does not sometimes yield? — is not disease, but sin. Spiritual direction will here help us more than medical treatment. Medicine labours to restore “natural” structure or “normal” function. But greed, egoism, self-deception and self-pity are not unnatural or abnormal in the same sense as astigmatism or a floating kidney. For who, in Heaven’s name, would describe as natural or normal the man from whom these failings were wholly absent? “Natural”, if you like, in a quite different sense; archnatural, unfallen. We have seen only one such Man. And He was not at all like the psychologist’s picture of the integrated, balanced, adjusted, happily married, employed, popular citizen. You can’t really be very well “adjusted” to your world if it says you “have a devil” and ends by nailing you up naked to a stake of wood.

But secondly, the comment in its own language admits the very thing I am trying to say. Affection produces happiness if — and only if — there is common sense and give and take and “decency”. In other words, only if something more, and other, than Affection is added. The mere feeling is not enough. You need “common sense”, that is, reason. You need “give and take”; that is, you need justice, continually stimulating mere Affection when it fades and restraining it when it forgets or would defy the *art* of love. You need “decency”. There is no disguising the fact that this means goodness; patience, self-denial, humility, and the continual intervention of a far higher sort of love than Affection, in itself, can ever be. That is the whole point. If we try to live by Affection alone, Affection will “go bad on us”.

How bad, I believe we seldom recognise. Can Mrs. Fidget really have been quite unaware of the countless frustrations and miseries she inflicted on her family? It passes belief. She knew — of course she knew — that it spoiled your whole evening to know that when you came home you would find her uselessly, accusingly, “sitting up for you”. She continued all these practices because if she had dropped them she would have been faced with the fact she was determined not to see; would have known that she was not necessary. That is the first motive. Then too, the very laboriousness of her life silenced her secret doubts as to the quality of her love. The more her feet burned and her back ached, the better, for this pain whispered in her ear “How much I must love them if I do all this!” That is the second motive. But I think there is a lower depth. The unappreciativeness of the others, those terrible, wounding words — anything will “wound” a Mrs. Fidget — in which they begged her to send the washing out, enabled her to feel ill-used, therefore, to have a continual grievance, to enjoy the pleasures of resentment. If anyone says he does not know those pleasures, he is a liar or a saint. It is true that they are pleasures only to those who hate. But then a love like Mrs. Fidget’s contains a good deal of hatred. It was of erotic love that the Roman poet said, “I love and hate,” but other kinds of love admit the same mixture. They carry in them the seeds of hatred. If Affection is made the absolute sovereign of a human life the seeds will germinate. Love, having become a god, becomes a demon.

CHAPTER IV

Friendship

When either Affection or Eros is one's theme, one finds a prepared audience. The importance and beauty of both have been stressed and almost exaggerated again and again. Even those who would debunk them are in conscious reaction against this laudatory tradition and, to that extent, influenced by it. But very few modern people think Friendship a love of comparable value or even a love at all. I cannot remember that any poem since *In Memoriam*, or any novel, has celebrated it. Tristan and Isolde, Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, have innumerable counterparts in modern literature: David and Jonathan, Pylades and Orestes, Roland and Oliver, Amis and Amile, have not. To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few "friends". But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as "friendships", show clearly that what they are talking about has very little to do with that *Philia* which Aristotle classified among the virtues or that *Amicitia* on which Cicero wrote a book. It is something quite marginal; not a main course in life's banquet; a diversion; something that fills up the chinks of one's time. How has this come about?

The first and most obvious answer is that few value it because few experience it. And the possibility of going through life without the experience is rooted in that fact which separates Friendship so sharply from both the other loves. Friendship is — in a sense not at all derogatory to it — the least *natural* of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary. It has least commerce with our nerves; there is nothing throaty about it; nothing that quickens the pulse or turns you red and pale. It is essentially between individuals; the moment two men are friends they have in some degree drawn apart together from the herd. Without Eros none of us would have been begotten and without Affection none of us would have been reared; but we can live and breed without Friendship. The species, biologically considered, has no need of it. The pack or herd — the community — may even dislike and distrust it. Its

leaders very often do. Headmasters and Headmistresses and Heads of religious communities, colonels and ships' captains, can feel uneasy when close and strong friendships arise between little knots of their subjects.

This (so to call it) "non-natural" quality in Friendship goes far to explain why it was exalted in ancient and medieval times and has come to be made light of in our own. The deepest and most permanent thought of those ages was ascetic and world-renouncing. Nature and emotion and the body were feared as dangers to our souls, or despised as degradations of our human status. Inevitably that sort of love was most prized which seemed most independent, or even defiant, of mere nature. Affection and Eros were too obviously connected with our nerves, too obviously shared with the brutes. You could feel these tugging at your guts and fluttering in your diaphragm. But in Friendship — in that luminous, tranquil, rational world of relationships freely chosen — you got away from all that. This alone, of all the loves, seemed to raise you to the level of gods or angels.

But then came Romanticism and "tearful comedy" and the "return to nature" and the exaltation of Sentiment; and in their train all that great wallow of emotion which, though often criticised, has lasted ever since. Finally, the exaltation of instinct, the dark gods in the blood; whose hierophants may be incapable of male friendship. Under this new dispensation all that had once commended this love now began to work against it. It had not tearful smiles and keepsakes and baby-talk enough to please the sentimentalists. There was not blood and guts enough about it to attract the primitivists. It looked thin and etiolated; a sort of vegetarian substitute for the more organic loves.

Other causes have contributed. To those — and they are now the majority — who see human life merely as a development and complication of animal life all forms of behaviour which cannot produce certificates of an animal origin and of survival value are suspect. Friendship's certificates are not very satisfactory. Again, that outlook which values the collective above the individual necessarily disparages Friendship; it is a relation between men at their highest level of individuality. It withdraws men from collective "togetherness" as surely as solitude itself could do; and more dangerously, for it withdraws them by two's and three's. Some forms of democratic sentiment are naturally hostile to it because it is selective and an affair of the few. To say "These are my friends" implies "Those are not". For all these reasons if a man believes (as I do) that the old estimate of Friendship

was the correct one, he can hardly write a chapter on it except as a rehabilitation.

This imposes on me at the outset a very tiresome bit of demolition. It has actually become necessary in our time to rebut the theory that every firm and serious friendship is really homosexual.

The dangerous word *really* is here important. To say that every Friendship is consciously and explicitly homosexual would be too obviously false; the wiseacres take refuge in the less palpable charge that it is *really* — unconsciously, cryptically, in some Pickwickian sense — homosexual. And this, though it cannot be proved, can never of course be refuted. The fact that no positive evidence of homosexuality can be discovered in the behaviour of two Friends does not disconcert the wiseacres at all: “That”, they say gravely, “is just what we should expect.” The very lack of evidence is thus treated as evidence; the absence of smoke proves that the fire is very carefully hidden. Yes — if it exists at all. But we must first prove its existence. Otherwise we are arguing like a man who should say “If there were an invisible cat in that chair, the chair would look empty; but the chair does look empty; therefore there is an invisible cat in it.”

A belief in invisible cats cannot perhaps be logically disproved, but it tells us a good deal about those who hold it. Those who cannot conceive Friendship as a substantive love but only as a disguise or elaboration of Eros betray the fact that they have never had a Friend. The rest of us know that though we can have erotic love and friendship for the same person yet in some ways nothing is less like a Friendship than a love-affair. Lovers are always talking to one another about their love; Friends hardly ever about their Friendship. Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest. Above all, Eros (while it lasts) is necessarily between two only. But two, far from being the necessary number for Friendship, is not even the best. And the reason for this is important.

Lamb says somewhere that if, of three friends (A, B, and C), A should die, then B loses not only A but “A’s part in C”, while C loses not only A but “A’s part in B”. In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald’s reaction

to a specifically Caroline joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him "to myself" now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald. Hence true Friendship is the least jealous of loves. Two friends delight to be joined by a third, and three by a fourth, if only the newcomer is qualified to become a real friend. They can then say, as the blessed souls say in Dante, "Here comes one who will augment our loves." For in this love "to divide is not to take away". Of course the scarcity of kindred souls — not to mention practical considerations about the size of rooms and the audibility of voices — set limits to the enlargement of the circle; but within those limits we possess each friend not less but more as the number of those with whom we share him increases. In this, Friendship exhibits a glorious "nearness by resemblance" to Heaven itself where the very multitude of the blessed (which no man can number) increases the fruition which each has of God. For every soul, seeing Him in her own way, doubtless communicates that unique vision to all the rest. That, says an old author, is why the Seraphim in Isaiah's vision are crying "Holy, Holy, Holy" *to one another* (*Isaiah* VI, 3). The more we thus share the Heavenly Bread between us, the more we shall all have.

The homosexual theory therefore seems to me not even plausible. This is not to say that Friendship and abnormal Eros have never been combined. Certain cultures at certain periods seem to have tended to the contamination. In war-like societies it was, I think, especially likely to creep into the relation between the mature Brave and his young armour-bearer or squire. The absence of the women while you were on the warpath had no doubt something to do with it. In deciding, if we think we need or can decide, where it crept in and where it did not, we must surely be guided by the evidence (when there is any) and not by an *a priori* theory. Kisses, tears and embraces are not in themselves evidence of homosexuality. The implications would be, if nothing else, too comic. Hrothgar embracing Beowulf, Johnson embracing Boswell (a pretty flagrantly heterosexual couple) and all those hairy old toughs of centurions in Tacitus, clinging to one another and begging for last kisses when the legion was broken up ... all pansies? If you can believe that you can believe anything. On a broad historical view it is, of course, not the demonstrative gestures of Friendship among our ancestors but the absence of such gestures in our own society that calls for some special explanation. We, not they, are out of step.

I have said that Friendship is the least biological of our loves. Both the individual and the community can survive without it. But there is something else, often confused with Friendship, which the community does need; something which, though not Friendship, is the matrix of Friendship.

In early communities the co-operation of the males as hunters or fighters was no less necessary than the begetting and rearing of children. A tribe where there was no taste for the one would die no less surely than a tribe where there was no taste for the other. Long before history began we men have got together apart from the women and done things. We had to. And to like doing what must be done is a characteristic that has survival value. We not only had to do the things, we had to talk about them. We had to plan the hunt and the battle. When they were over we had to hold a *post mortem* and draw conclusions for future use. We liked this even better. We ridiculed or punished the cowards and bunglers, we praised the star-performers. We revelled in technicalities. (“He might have known he’d never get near the brute, not with the wind that way” ... “You see, I had a lighter arrowhead; that’s what did it” ... “What I always say is — —” ... “stuck him just like that, see? Just the way I’m holding this stick” ...). In fact, we talked shop. We enjoyed one another’s society greatly: we Braves, we hunters, all bound together by shared skill, shared dangers and hardships, esoteric jokes — away from the women and children. As some wag has said, palaeolithic man may or may not have had a club on his shoulder but he certainly had a club of the other sort. It was probably part of his religion; like that sacred smoking-club where the savages in Melville’s *Typee* were “famously snug” every evening of their lives.

What were the women doing meanwhile? How should I know? I am a man and never spied on the mysteries of the Bona Dea. They certainly often had rituals from which men were excluded. When, as sometimes happened, agriculture was in their hands, they must, like the men, have had common skills, toils and triumphs. Yet perhaps their world was never as emphatically feminine as that of their men-folk was masculine. The children were with them; perhaps the old men were there too. But I am only guessing. I can trace the pre-history of Friendship only in the male line.

This pleasure in co-operation, in talking shop, in the mutual respect and understanding of men who daily see one another tested, is biologically valuable. You may, if you like, regard it as a product of the “gregarious instinct”. To me that seems a round-about way of getting at something

which we all understand far better already than anyone has ever understood the word *instinct* — something which is going on at this moment in dozens of ward-rooms, bar-rooms, common-rooms, messes and golf-clubs. I prefer to call it Companionship — or Clubbableness.

This Companionship is, however, only the matrix of Friendship. It is often called Friendship, and many people when they speak of their "friends" mean only their companions. But it is not Friendship in the sense I give to the word. By saying this I do not at all intend to disparage the merely Clubbable relation. We do not disparage silver by distinguishing it from gold.

Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one." We can imagine that among those early hunters and warriors single individuals — one in a century? one in a thousand years? — saw what others did not; saw that the deer was beautiful as well as edible, that hunting was fun as well as necessary, dreamed that his gods might be not only powerful but holy. But as long as each of these percipient persons dies without finding a kindred soul, nothing (I suspect) will come of it; art or sport or spiritual religion will not be born. It is when two such persons discover one another, when, whether with immense difficulties and semi-articulate fumblings or with what would seem to us amazing and elliptical speed, they share their vision — it is then that Friendship is born. And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude.

Lovers seek for privacy. Friends find this solitude about them, this barrier between them and the herd, whether they want it or not. They would be glad to reduce it. The first two would be glad to find a third.

In our own time Friendship arises in the same way. For us of course the shared activity and therefore the companionship on which Friendship supervenes will not often be a bodily one like hunting or fighting. It may be a common religion, common studies, a common profession, even a common recreation. All who share it will be our companions; but one or two or three who share something more will be our Friends. In this kind of love, as Emerson said, *Do you love me?* means *Do you see the same truth?* — Or at least, "Do you *care about* the same truth?" The man who agrees with us that

some question, little regarded by others, is of great importance, can be our Friend. He need not agree with us about the answer.

Notice that Friendship thus repeats on a more individual and less socially necessary level the character of the Companionship which was its matrix. The Companionship was between people who were doing something together — hunting, studying, painting or what you will. The Friends will still be doing something together, but something more inward, less widely shared and less easily defined; still hunters, but of some immaterial quarry; still collaborating, but in some work the world does not, or not yet, take account of; still travelling companions, but on a different kind of journey. Hence we picture lovers face to face but Friends side by side; their eyes look ahead.

That is why those pathetic people who simply "want friends" can never make any. The very condition of having Friends is that we should want something else besides Friends. Where the truthful answer to the question *Do you see the same truth?* would be "I see nothing and I don't care about the truth; I only want a Friend", no Friendship can arise — though Affection of course may. There would be nothing for the Friendship to be *about*; and Friendship must be about something, even if it were only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow-travellers.

When the two people who thus discover that they are on the same secret road are of different sexes, the friendship which arises between them will very easily pass — may pass in the first half-hour — into erotic love. Indeed, unless they are physically repulsive to each other or unless one or both already loves elsewhere, it is almost certain to do so sooner or later. And conversely, erotic love may lead to Friendship between the lovers. But this, so far from obliterating the distinction between the two loves, puts it in a clearer light. If one who was first, in the deep and full sense, your Friend, is then gradually or suddenly revealed as also your lover you will certainly not want to share the Beloved's erotic love with any third. But you will have no jealousy at all about sharing the Friendship. Nothing so enriches an erotic love as the discovery that the Beloved can deeply, truly and spontaneously enter into Friendship with the Friends you already had: to feel that not only are we two united by erotic love but we three or four or five are all travellers on the same quest, have all a common vision.

The co-existence of Friendship and Eros may also help some moderns to realise that Friendship is in reality a love, and even as great a love as Eros. Suppose you are fortunate enough to have "fallen in love with" and married your Friend. And now suppose it possible that you were offered the choice of two futures: "*Either* you two will cease to be lovers but remain forever joint seekers of the same God, the same beauty, the same truth, *or else*, losing all that, you will retain as long as you live the raptures and ardours, all the wonder and the wild desire of Eros. Choose which you please." Which should we choose? Which choice should we not regret after we had made it?

I have stressed the "unnecessary" character of Friendship, and this of course requires more justification than I have yet given it.

It could be argued that Friendships are of practical value to the Community. Every civilised religion began in a small group of friends. Mathematics effectively began when a few Greek friends got together to talk about numbers and lines and angles. What is now the Royal Society was originally a few gentlemen meeting in their spare time to discuss things which they (and not many others) had a fancy for. What we now call "the Romantic Movement" once *was* Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Coleridge talking incessantly (at least Mr. Coleridge was) about a secret vision of their own. Communism, Tractarianism, Methodism, the movement against slavery, the Reformation, the Renaissance, might perhaps be said, without much exaggeration, to have begun in the same way.

There is something in this. But nearly every reader would probably think some of these movements good for society and some bad. The whole list, if accepted, would tend to show, at best, that Friendship is both a possible benefactor and a possible danger to the community. And even as a benefactor it would have, not so much survival value, as what we may call "civilisation-value"; would be something (in Aristotelian phrase) which helps the community not to live but to live well. Survival value and civilisation value coincide at some periods and in some circumstances, but not in all. What at any rate seems certain is that when Friendship bears fruit which the community can use it has to do so accidentally, as a by-product. Religions devised for a social purpose, like Roman emperor-worship or modern attempts to "sell" Christianity as a means of "saving civilisation", do not come to much. The little knots of Friends who turn their backs on the "World" are those who really transform it. Egyptian and Babylonian

Mathematics were practical and social, pursued in the service of Agriculture and Magic. But the free Greek Mathematics, pursued by Friends as a leisure occupation, have mattered to us more.

Others again would say that Friendship is extremely useful, perhaps necessary for survival, to the individual. They could produce plenty of authority: “bare is back without brother behind it” and “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”. But when we speak thus we are using *friend* to mean “ally”. In ordinary usage *friend* means, or should mean, more than that. A Friend will, to be sure, prove himself to be also an ally when alliance becomes necessary; will lend or give when we are in need, nurse us in sickness, stand up for us among our enemies, do what he can for our widows and orphans. But such good offices are not the stuff of Friendship. The occasions for them are almost interruptions. They are in one way relevant to it, in another not. Relevant, because you would be a false friend if you would not do them when the need arose; irrelevant, because the role of benefactor always remains accidental, even a little alien, to that of Friend. It is almost embarrassing. For Friendship is utterly free from Affection’s need to be needed. We are sorry that any gift or loan or night-watching should have been necessary — and now, for heaven’s sake, let us forget all about it and go back to the things we really want to do or talk of together. Even gratitude is no enrichment to this love. The stereotyped “Don’t mention it” here expresses what we really feel. The mark of perfect Friendship is not that help will be given when the pinch comes (of course it will) but that, having been given, it makes no difference at all. It was a distraction, an anomaly. It was a horrible waste of the time, always too short, that we had together. Perhaps we had only a couple of hours in which to talk and, God bless us, twenty minutes of it has had to be devoted to *affairs*!

For of course we do not want to know our Friend’s affairs at all. Friendship, unlike Eros, is uninquisitive. You become a man’s Friend without knowing or caring whether he is married or single or how he earns his living. What have all these “unconcerning things, matters of fact” to do with the real question, *Do you see the same truth?* In a circle of true Friends each man is simply what he is: stands for nothing but himself. No one cares twopence about any one else’s family, profession, class, income, race, or previous history. Of course you will get to know about most of these in the end. But casually. They will come out bit by bit, to furnish an illustration or

an analogy, to serve as pegs for an anecdote; never for their own sake. That is the kingliness of Friendship. We meet like sovereign princes of independent states, abroad, on neutral ground, freed from our contexts. This love (essentially) ignores not only our physical bodies but that whole embodiment which consists of our family, job, past and connections. At home, besides being Peter or Jane, we also bear a general character; husband or wife, brother or sister, chief, colleague or subordinate. Not among our Friends. It is an affair of disentangled, or stripped, minds. Eros will have naked bodies; Friendship naked personalities.

Hence (if you will not misunderstand me) the exquisite arbitrariness and irresponsibility of this love. I have no duty to be anyone's Friend and no man in the world has a duty to be mine. No claims, no shadow of necessity. Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art, like the universe itself (for God did not need to create). It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things which give value to survival.

When I spoke of Friends as side by side or shoulder to shoulder I was pointing a necessary contrast between their posture and that of the lovers whom we picture face to face. Beyond that contrast I do not want the image pressed. The common quest or vision which unites Friends does not absorb them in such a way that they remain ignorant or oblivious of one another. On the contrary it is the very medium in which their mutual love and knowledge exist. One knows nobody so well as one's "fellow". Every step of the common journey tests his metal; and the tests are tests we fully understand because we are undergoing them ourselves. Hence, as he rings true time after time, our reliance, our respect and our admiration blossom into an Appreciative Love of a singularly robust and well-informed kind. If, at the outset, we had attended more to him and less to the thing our Friendship is "about", we should not have come to know or love him so well. You will not find the warrior, the poet, the philosopher or the Christian by staring in his eyes as if he were your mistress: better fight beside him, read with him, argue with him, pray with him.

In a perfect Friendship this Appreciative Love is, I think, often so great and so firmly based that each member of the circle feels, in his secret heart, humbled before all the rest. Sometimes he wonders what he is doing there among his betters. He is lucky beyond desert to be in such company. Especially when the whole group is together, each bringing out all that is best, wisest, or funniest in all the others. Those are the golden sessions;

when four or five of us after a hard day's walking have come to our inn; when our slippers are on, our feet spread out towards the blaze and our drinks at our elbows; when the whole world, and something beyond the world, opens itself to our minds as we talk; and no one has any claim on or any responsibility for another, but all are freemen and equals as if we had first met an hour ago, while at the same time an Affection mellowed by the years enfolds us. Life — natural life — has no better gift to give. Who could have deserved it?

From what has been said it will be clear that in most societies at most periods Friendships will be between men and men or between women and women. The sexes will have met one another in Affection and in Eros but not in this love. For they will seldom have had with each other the companionship in common activities which is the matrix of Friendship. Where men are educated and women not, where one sex works and the other is idle, or where they do totally different work, they will usually have nothing to be Friends about. But we can easily see that it is this lack, rather than anything in their natures, which excludes Friendship; for where they can be companions they can also become Friends. Hence in a profession (like my own) where men and women work side by side, or in the mission field, or among authors and artists, such Friendship is common. To be sure, what is offered as Friendship on one side may be mistaken for Eros on the other, with painful and embarrassing results. Or what begins as Friendship in both may become also Eros. But to say that something can be mistaken for, or turn into, something else is not to deny the difference between them. Rather it implies it; we should not otherwise speak of "turning into" or being "mistaken for".

In one respect our own society is unfortunate. A world where men and women never have common work or a common education can probably get along comfortably enough. In it men turn to each other, and only to each other, for Friendship, and they enjoy it very much. I hope the women enjoy their feminine Friends equally. Again, a world where all men and women had sufficient common ground for this relationship could also be comfortable. At present, however, we fall between two stools. The necessary common ground, the matrix, exists between the sexes in some groups but not in others. It is notably lacking in many residential suburbs. In a plutocratic neighbourhood where the men have spent their whole lives in acquiring money some at least of the women have used their leisure to

develop an intellectual life — have become musical or literary. In such places the men appear among the women as barbarians among civilised people. In another neighbourhood you will find the situation reversed. Both sexes have, indeed, “been to school”. But since then the men have had a much more serious education; they have become doctors, lawyers, clergymen, architects, engineers, or men of letters. The women are to them as children to adults. In neither neighbourhood is real Friendship between the sexes at all probable. But this, though an impoverishment, would be tolerable if it were admitted and accepted. The peculiar trouble of our own age is that men and women in this situation, haunted by rumours and glimpses of happier groups where no such chasm between the sexes exists, and bedevilled by the egalitarian idea that what is possible for some ought to be (and therefore is) possible to all, refuse to acquiesce in it. Hence, on the one hand, we get the wife as school-marm, the “cultivated” woman who is always trying to bring her husband “up to her level”. She drags him to concerts and would like him to learn morris-dancing and invites “cultivated” people to the house. It often does surprisingly little harm. The middle-aged male has great powers of passive resistance and (if she but knew) of indulgence; “women will have their fads.” Something much more painful happens when it is the men who are civilised and the women not, and when all the women, and many of the men too, simply refuse to recognise the fact.

When this happens we get a kind, polite, laborious and pitiful pretence. The women are “deemed” (as lawyers say) to be full members of the male circle. The fact — in itself not important — that they now smoke and drink like the men seems to simple-minded people a proof that they really are. No stag-parties are allowed. Wherever the men meet, the women must come too. The men have learned to live among ideas. They know what discussion, proof and illustration mean. A woman who has had merely school lessons and has abandoned soon after marriage whatever tinge of “culture” they gave her — whose reading is the Women’s Magazines and whose general conversation is almost wholly narrative — cannot really enter such a circle. She can be locally and physically present with it in the same room. What of that? If the men are ruthless, she sits bored and silent through a conversation which means nothing to her. If they are better bred, of course, they try to bring her in. Things are explained to her: people try to sublimate her irrelevant and blundering observations into some kind of

sense. But the efforts soon fail and, for manners' sake, what might have been a real discussion is deliberately diluted and peters out in gossip, anecdotes, and jokes. Her presence has thus destroyed the very thing she was brought to share. She can never really enter the circle because the circle ceases to be itself when she enters it — as the horizon ceases to be the horizon when you get there. By learning to drink and smoke and perhaps to tell *risqué* stories, she has not, for this purpose, drawn an inch nearer to the men than her grandmother. But her grandmother was far happier and more realistic. She was at home talking real women's talk to other women and perhaps doing so with great charm, sense and even wit. She herself might be able to do the same. She may be quite as clever as the men whose evening she has spoiled, or cleverer. But she is not really interested in the same things, nor mistress of the same methods. (We all appear as dunces when feigning an interest in things we care nothing about.)

The presence of such women, thousands strong, helps to account for the modern disparagement of Friendship. They are often completely victorious. They banish male companionship, and therefore male Friendship, from whole neighbourhoods. In the only world they know, an endless prattling "Jolly" replaces the intercourse of minds. All the men they meet talk like women while women are present.

This victory over Friendship is often unconscious. There is, however, a more militant type of women who plans it. I have heard one say "Never let two men sit together or they'll get talking about some *subject* and then there'll be no fun". Her point could not have been more accurately made. Talk, by all means; the more of it the better; unceasing cascades of the human voice; but not, please, a subject. The talk must not be about anything.

This gay lady — this lively, accomplished, "charming", unendurable bore — was seeking only each evening's amusement, making the meeting "go". But the conscious war against Friendship may be fought on a deeper level. There are women who regard it with hatred, envy and fear as the enemy of Eros and, perhaps even more, of Affection. A woman of that sort has a hundred arts to break up her husband's Friendships. She will quarrel with his Friends herself or, better still, with their wives. She will sneer, obstruct and lie. She does not realise that the husband whom she succeeds in isolating from his own kind will not be very well worth having; she has emasculated him. She will grow to be ashamed of him herself. Nor does she

remember how much of his life lies in places where she cannot watch him. New Friendships will break out, but this time they will be secret. Lucky for her, and lucky beyond her deserts, if there are not soon other secrets as well.

All these, of course, are silly women. The sensible women who, if they wanted, would certainly be able to qualify themselves for the world of discussion and ideas, are precisely those who, if they are not qualified, never try to enter it or to destroy it. They have other fish to fry. At a mixed party they gravitate to one end of the room and talk women's talk to one another. They don't want us, for this sort of purpose, any more than we want them. It is only the riff-raff of each sex that wants to be incessantly hanging on the other. Live and let live. They laugh at us a good deal. That is just as it should be. Where the sexes, having no real shared activities, can meet only in Affection and Eros — cannot be Friends — it is healthy that each should have a lively sense of the other's absurdity. Indeed it is always healthy. No one ever really appreciated the other sex — just as no one really appreciates children or animals — without at times feeling them to be funny. For both sexes are. Humanity is tragi-comical; but the division into sexes enables each to see in the other the joke that often escapes it in itself — and the pathos too.

I gave warning that this chapter would be largely a rehabilitation. The preceding pages have, I hope, made clear why to me at least it seems no wonder if our ancestors regarded Friendship as something that raised us almost above humanity. This love, free from instinct, free from all duties but those which love has freely assumed, almost wholly free from jealousy, and free without qualification from the need to be needed, is eminently spiritual. It is the sort of love one can imagine between angels. Have we here found a natural love which is Love itself?

Before we rush to any such conclusion let us beware of the ambiguity in the word *spiritual*. There are many New Testament contexts in which it means "pertaining to the (Holy) Spirit", and in such contexts the spiritual is, by definition, good. But when *spiritual* is used simply as the opposite of corporeal, or instinctive, or animal, this is not so. There is spiritual evil as well as spiritual good. There are unholy, as well as holy, angels. The worst sins of men are spiritual. We must not think that in finding Friendship to be *spiritual* we have found it to be in itself holy or inerrant. Three significant facts remain to be taken into account.

The first, already mentioned, is the distrust which Authorities tend to have of close Friendships among their subjects. It may be unjustified; or there may be some basis for it.

Secondly, there is the attitude of the majority towards all circles of close Friends. Every name they give such a circle is more or less derogatory. It is at best a “set”; lucky if not a *coterie*, a “gang”, a “little senate”, or a “mutual admiration society”. Those who in their own lives know only Affection, Companionship and Eros, suspect Friends to be “stuck-up prigs who think themselves too good for us”. Of course this is the voice of Envy. But Envy always brings the truest charge, or the charge nearest to the truth, that she can think up; it hurts more. This charge, therefore, will have to be considered.

Finally, we must notice that Friendship is very rarely the image under which Scripture represents the love between God and Man. It is not entirely neglected; but far more often, seeking a symbol for the highest love of all, Scripture ignores this seemingly almost angelic relation and plunges into the depth of what is most natural and instinctive. Affection is taken as the image when God is represented as our Father; Eros, when Christ is represented as the Bridegroom of the Church.

Let us begin with the suspicions of those in Authority. I think there is a ground for them and that a consideration of this ground brings something important to light. Friendship, I have said, is born at the moment when one man says to another “What! You too? I thought that no one but myself ...” But the common taste or vision or point of view which is thus discovered need not always be a nice one. From such a moment art, or philosophy, or an advance in religion or morals might well take their rise; but why not also torture, cannibalism, or human sacrifice? Surely most of us have experienced the ambivalent nature of such moments in our own youth? It was wonderful when we first met someone who cared for our favourite poet. What we had hardly understood before now took clear shape. What we had been half ashamed of we now freely acknowledged. But it was no less delightful when we first met someone who shared with us a secret evil. This too became far more palpable and explicit; of this too, we ceased to be ashamed. Even now, at whatever age, we all know the perilous charm of a shared hatred or grievance. (It is difficult not to hail as a Friend the only other man in College who really sees the faults of the Sub-Warden).

Alone among unsympathetic companions, I hold certain views and standards timidly, half ashamed to avow them and half doubtful if they can after all be right. Put me back among my Friends and in half an hour — in ten minutes — these same views and standards become once more indisputable. The opinion of this little circle, while I am in it, outweighs that of a thousand outsiders: as Friendship strengthens, it will do this even when my Friends are far away. For we all wish to be judged by our peers, by the men "after our own heart". Only they really know our mind and only they judge it by standards we fully acknowledge. Theirs is the praise we really covet and the blame we really dread. The little pockets of early Christians survived because they cared exclusively for the love of "the brethren" and stopped their ears to the opinion of the Pagan society all round them. But a circle of criminals, cranks, or perverts survives in just the same way; by becoming deaf to the opinion of the outer world, by discounting it as the chatter of outsiders who "don't understand", of the "conventional", "the bourgeois", the "Establishment", of prigs, prudes and humbugs.

It is therefore easy to see why Authority frowns on Friendship. Every real Friendship is a sort of secession, even a rebellion. It may be a rebellion of serious thinkers against accepted clap-trap or of faddists against accepted good sense; of real artists against popular ugliness or of charlatans against civilised taste; of good men against the badness of society or of bad men against its goodness. Whichever it is, it will be unwelcome to Top People. In each knot of Friends there is a sectional "public opinion" which fortifies its members against the public opinion of the community in general. Each therefore is a pocket of potential resistance. Men who have real Friends are less easy to manage or "get at"; harder for good Authorities to correct or for bad Authorities to corrupt. Hence if our masters, by force or by propaganda about "Togetherness" or by unobtrusively making privacy and unplanned leisure impossible, ever succeed in producing a world where all are Companions and none are Friends, they will have removed certain dangers, and will also have taken from us what is almost our strongest safeguard against complete servitude.

But the dangers are perfectly real. Friendship (as the ancients saw) can be a school of virtue; but also (as they did not see) a school of vice. It is ambivalent. It makes good men better and bad men worse. It would be a waste of time to elaborate the point. What concerns us is not to expatiate on the badness of bad Friendships but to become aware of the possible danger

in good ones. This love, like the other natural loves, has its congenital liability to a particular disease.

It will be obvious that the element of secession, of indifference or deafness (at least on some matters) to the voices of the outer world, is common to all Friendships, whether good, bad, or merely innocuous. Even if the common ground of the Friendship is nothing more momentous than stamp-collecting, the circle rightly and inevitably ignores the views of the millions who think it a silly occupation and of the thousands who have merely dabbled in it. The founders of meteorology rightly and inevitably ignored the views of the millions who still attributed storms to witchcraft. There is no offence in this. As I know that I should be an Outsider to a circle of golfers, mathematicians, or motorists, so I claim the equal right of regarding them as Outsiders to mine. People who bore one another should meet seldom; people who interest one another, often.

The danger is that this partial indifference or deafness to outside opinion, justified and necessary though it is, may lead to a wholesale indifference or deafness. The most spectacular instances of this can be seen not in a circle of friends but in a Theocratic or aristocratic class. We know what the Priests in Our Lord's time thought of the common people. The Knights in Froissart's chronicles had neither sympathy nor mercy for the "outsiders", the churls or peasantry. But this deplorable indifference was very closely intertwined with a good quality. They really had, among themselves, a very high standard of valour, generosity, courtesy and honour. This standard the cautious, close-fisted churl would have thought merely silly. The Knights, in maintaining it, were, and had to be, wholly indifferent to his views. They "didn't give a damn" what he thought. If they had, our own standard today would be the poorer and the coarser for it. But the habit of "not giving a damn" grows on a class. To discount the voice of the peasant where it really ought to be discounted makes it easier to discount his voice when he cries for justice or mercy. The partial deafness which is noble and necessary encourages the wholesale deafness which is arrogant and inhuman.

A circle of friends cannot of course oppress the outer world as a powerful social class can. But it is subject, on its own scale, to the same danger. It can come to treat as "outsiders" in a general (and derogatory) sense those who were quite properly outsiders for a particular purpose. Thus, like an aristocracy, it can create around it a vacuum across which no voice will carry. The literary or artistic circle which began by discounting,

perhaps rightly, the plain man's ideas about literature or art may come to discount equally his idea that they should pay their bills, cut their nails and behave civilly. Whatever faults the circle has — and no circle is without them — thus become incurable. But that is not all. The partial and defensible deafness was based on some kind of superiority — even if it were only a superior knowledge about stamps. The sense of superiority will then get itself attached to the total deafness. The group will disdain as well as ignore those outside it. It will, in effect, have turned itself into something very like a class. A *coterie* is a self-appointed aristocracy.

I said above that in a good Friendship each member often feels humility towards the rest. He sees that they are splendid and counts himself lucky to be among them. But unfortunately the *they* and *them* are also, from another point of view *we* and *us*. Thus the transition from individual humility to corporate pride is very easy.

I am not thinking of what we should call a social or snobbish pride: a delight in knowing, and being known to know, distinguished people. That is quite a different thing. The snob wishes to attach himself to some group because it is already regarded as an *élite*; friends are in danger of coming to regard themselves as an *élite* because they are already attached. We seek men after our own heart for their own sake and are then alarmingly or delightfully surprised by the feeling that we have become an aristocracy. Not that we'd call it that. Every reader who has known Friendship will probably feel inclined to deny with some heat that his own circle was ever guilty of such an absurdity. I feel the same. But in such matters it is best not to begin with ourselves. However it may be with us, I think we have all recognised some such tendency in those other circles to which we are the Outsiders.

I was once at some kind of conference where two clergymen, obviously close friends, began talking about "uncreated energies" other than God. I asked how there could be any uncreated things except God if the Creed was right in calling Him the "maker of all things visible and invisible". Their reply was to glance at one another and laugh. I had no objection to their laughter, but I wanted an answer in words as well. It was not at all a sneering or unpleasant laugh. It expressed very much what Americans would express by saying "Isn't he cute?" It was like the laughter of jolly grown-ups when an *enfant terrible* asks the sort of question that is never asked. You can hardly imagine how inoffensively it was done, nor how

clearly it conveyed the impression that they were fully aware of living habitually on a higher plane than the rest of us, that they came among us as Knights among churls or as grown-ups among children. Very possibly they had an answer to my question and knew that I was too ignorant to follow it. If they had said in so many words “I’m afraid it would take too long to explain”, I would not be attributing to them the pride of Friendship. The glance and the laugh are the real point — the audible and visible embodiment of a corporate superiority taken for granted and unconcealed. The almost complete inoffensiveness, the absence of any apparent wish to wound or exult (they were very nice young men) really underline the Olympian attitude. Here was a sense of superiority so secure that it could afford to be tolerant, urbane, unemphatic.

This sense of corporate superiority is not always Olympian; that is, tranquil and tolerant. It may be Titanic; restive, militant and embittered. Another time, when I had been addressing an undergraduate society and some discussion (very properly) followed my paper, a young man with an expression as tense as that of a rodent so dealt with me that I had to say, “Look, sir. Twice in the last five minutes you have as good as called me a liar. If you cannot discuss a question of criticism without that kind of thing I must leave.” I expected he would do one of two things; lose his temper and redouble his insults, or else blush and apologise. The startling thing is that he did neither. No new perturbation was added to the habitual *malaise* of his expression. He did not repeat the Lie Direct; but apart from that he went on just as before. One had come up against an iron curtain. He was forearmed against the risk of any strictly personal relation, either friendly or hostile, with such as me. Behind this, almost certainly, there lies a circle of the Titanic sort — self-dubbed Knights Templars perpetually in arms to defend a critical Baphomet. We — who are *they* to them — do not exist as persons at all. We are specimens; specimens of various Age Groups, Types, Climates of Opinion, or Interests, to be exterminated. Deprived of one weapon, they coolly take up another. They are not, in the ordinary human sense, meeting us at all; they are merely doing a job of work — spraying (I have heard one use that image) insecticide.

My two nice young clergymen and my not so nice Rodent were on a high intellectual level. So were that famous set who in Edwardian times reached the sublime fatuity of calling themselves “the Souls”. But the same feeling of corporate superiority can possess a group of much more

commonplace friends. It will then be flaunted in a cruder way. We have all seen this done by the “old hands” at school talking in the presence of a new boy, or two Regulars in the Army talking before a “Temporary”; sometimes by very loud and vulgar friends to impress mere strangers in a bar or a railway carriage. Such people talk very intimately and esoterically in order to be overheard. Everyone who is not in the circle must be shown that he is not in it. Indeed the Friendship may be “about” almost nothing except the fact that it excludes. In speaking to an Outsider each member of it delights to mention the others by their Christian names or nicknames; not although, but because, the Outsider won’t know who he means. A man I once knew was even subtler. He simply referred to his friends as if we all knew, certainly ought to know, who they were. “As Richard Button once said to me ...”, he would begin. We were all very young. We never dared to admit that we hadn’t heard of Richard Button. It seemed so obvious that to everyone who was anyone he must be a household word; “not to know him argued ourselves unknown.” Only much later did we come to realise that no one else had heard of him either. (Indeed I now have a suspicion that some of these Richard Buttons, Hezekiah Cromwells, and Eleanor Forsyths had no more existence than Mrs Harris. But for a year or so we were completely over-awed.)

We can thus detect the pride of Friendship — whether Olympian, Titanic, or merely vulgar — in many circles of Friends. It would be rash to assume that our own is safe from its danger; for of course it is in our own that we should be slowest to recognise it. The danger of such pride is indeed almost inseparable from Friendly love. Friendship must exclude. From the innocent and necessary act of excluding to the spirit of exclusiveness is an easy step; and thence to the degrading pleasure of exclusiveness. If that is once admitted the downward slope will grow rapidly steeper. We may never perhaps become Titans or plain cads; we might — which is in some ways worse — become “Souls”. The common vision which first brought us together may fade quite away. We shall be a *coterie* that exists for the sake of being a *coterie*; a little self-elected (and therefore absurd) aristocracy, basking in the moonshine of our collective self-approval.

Sometimes a circle in this condition begins to dabble in the world of practice. Judiciously enlarging itself to admit recruits whose share in the original common interest is negligible but who are felt to be (in some undefined sense) “sound men”, it becomes a power in the land. Membership

of it comes to have a sort of political importance, though the politics involved may be only those of a regiment, a college, or a cathedral close. The manipulation of committees, the capture of jobs (for sound men) and the united front against the Have-nots now become its principal occupation, and those who once met to talk about God or poetry now meet to talk about lectureships or livings. Notice the justice of their doom. “Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return,” said God to Adam. In a circle which has thus dwindled into a coven of wanglers Friendship has sunk back again into the mere practical Companionship which was its matrix. They are now the same sort of body as the primitive horde of hunters. Hunters, indeed, is precisely what they are; and not the kind of hunters I most respect.

The mass of the people, who are never quite right, are never quite wrong. They are hopelessly mistaken in their belief that every knot of friends came into existence for the sake of the pleasures of conceit and superiority. They are, I trust, mistaken in their belief that every Friendship actually indulges in these pleasures. But they would seem to be right in diagnosing pride as the danger to which Friendships are naturally liable. Just because this is the most spiritual of loves the danger which besets it is spiritual too. Friendship is even, if you like, angelic. But man needs to be triply protected by humility if he is to eat the bread of angels without risk.

Perhaps we may now hazard a guess why Scripture uses Friendship so rarely as an image of the highest love. It is already, in actual fact, too spiritual to be a good symbol of Spiritual things. The highest does not stand without the lowest. God can safely represent Himself to us as Father and Husband because only a lunatic would think that He is physically our sire or that His marriage with the Church is other than mystical. But if Friendship were used for this purpose we might mistake the symbol for the thing symbolised. The danger inherent in it would be aggravated. We might be further encouraged to mistake that nearness (by resemblance) to the heavenly life which Friendship certainly displays for a nearness of approach.

Friendship, then, like the other natural loves, is unable to save itself. In reality, because it is spiritual and therefore faces a subtler enemy, it must, even more whole-heartedly than they, invoke the divine protection if it hopes to remain sweet. For consider how narrow its true path is. It must not become what the people call a “mutual admiration society”; yet if it is not full of mutual admiration, of Appreciative love, it is not Friendship at all.

For unless our lives are to be miserably impoverished it must be for us in our Friendships as it was for Christiana and her party in *The Pilgrim's Progress*:

They seemed to be a terror one to the other, for that they could not see that glory each one on herself which they could see in each other. Now therefore they began to esteem each other better than themselves. For you are fairer than I am, said one; and you are more comely than I am, said another.

There is in the long run only one way in which we can taste this illustrious experience with safety. And Bunyan has indicated it in the same passage. It was in the House of the Interpreter, after they had been bathed, sealed and freshly clothed in "White Raiment" that the women saw one another in this light. If we remember the bathing, sealing and robing, we shall be safe. And the higher the common ground of the Friendship is, the more necessary the remembrance. In an explicitly religious Friendship, above all, to forget it would be fatal.

For then it will seem to us that we — we four or five — have chosen one another, the insight of each finding the intrinsic beauty of the rest, like to like, a voluntary nobility; that we have ascended above the rest of mankind by our native powers. The other loves do not invite the same illusion. Affection obviously requires kinships or at least proximities which never depended on our own choice. And as for Eros, half the love songs and half the love poems in the world will tell you that the Beloved is your fate or destiny, no more your choice than a thunderbolt, for "it is not in our power to love or hate". Cupid's archery, genes — anything but ourselves. But in Friendship, being free of all that, we think we have chosen our peers. In reality, a few years' difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another, posting to different regiments, the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting — any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of the Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you", can truly say to every group of Christian friends "You have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another". The Friendship is not a reward for our discrimination and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all the others. They are no greater than the

beauties of a thousand other men; by Friendship God opens our eyes to them. They are, like all beauties, derived from Him, and then, in a good Friendship, increased by Him through the Friendship itself, so that it is His instrument for creating as well as for revealing. At this feast it is He who has spread the board and it is He who has chosen the guests. It is He, we may dare to hope, who sometimes does, and always should, preside. Let us not reckon without our Host.

Not that we must always partake of it solemnly. “God who made good laughter” forbid. It is one of the difficult and delightful subtleties of life that we must deeply acknowledge certain things to be serious and yet retain the power and will to treat them often as lightly as a game. But there will be a time for saying more about this in the next chapter. For the moment I will only quote Dunbar’s beautifully balanced advice:

Man, please thy Maker, and be merry,
And give not for this world a cherry.

CHAPTER V

Eros

By *Eros* I mean of course that state which we call “being in love”; or, if you prefer, that kind of love which lovers are “in”. Some readers may have been surprised when, in an earlier chapter, I described Affection as the love in which our experience seems to come closest to that of the animals. Surely, it might be asked, our sexual functions bring us equally close? This is quite true as regards human sexuality in general. But I am not going to be concerned with human sexuality simply as such. Sexuality makes part of our subject only when it becomes an ingredient in the complex state of “being in love”. That sexual experience can occur without Eros, without being “in love”, and that Eros includes other things besides sexual activity, I take for granted. If you prefer to put it that way, I am inquiring not into the sexuality which is common to us and the beasts or even common to all men but into one uniquely human variation of it which develops within “love” — what I call Eros. The carnal or animally sexual element within Eros, I intend (following an old usage) to call Venus. And I mean by Venus what is sexual not in some cryptic or rarified sense — such as a depth-psychologist might explore — but in a perfectly obvious sense; what is known to be sexual by those who experience it; what could be proved to be sexual by the simplest observations.

Sexuality may operate without Eros or as part of Eros. Let me hasten to add that I make the distinction simply in order to limit our inquiry and without any moral implications. I am not at all subscribing to the popular idea that it is the absence or presence of Eros which makes the sexual act “impure” or “pure”, degraded or fine, unlawful or lawful. If all who lay together without being in the state of Eros were abominable, we all come of tainted stock. The times and places in which marriage depends on Eros are in a small minority. Most of our ancestors were married off in early youth to partners chosen by their parents on grounds that had nothing to do with Eros. They went to the act with no other “fuel”, so to speak, than plain animal desire. And they did right; honest Christian husbands and wives, obeying their fathers and mothers, discharging to one another their “marriage debt”, and bringing up families in the fear of the Lord. Conversely, this act, done under the influence of a soaring and iridescent

Eros which reduces the role of the senses to a minor consideration, may yet be plain adultery, may involve breaking a wife's heart, deceiving a husband, betraying a friend, polluting hospitality and deserting your children. It has not pleased God that the distinction between a sin and a duty should turn on fine feelings. This act, like any other, is justified (or not) by far more prosaic and definable criteria; by the keeping or breaking of promises, by justice or injustice, by charity or selfishness, by obedience or disobedience. My treatment rules out mere sexuality — sexuality without Eros — on grounds that have nothing to do with morals; because it is irrelevant to our purpose.

To the evolutionist Eros (the human variation) will be something that grows out of Venus, a late complication and development of the immemorial biological impulse. We must not assume, however, that this is necessarily what happens within the consciousness of the individual. There may be those who have first felt mere sexual appetite for a woman and then gone on at a later stage to "fall in love with her". But I doubt if this is at all common. Very often what comes first is simply a delighted pre-occupation with the Beloved — a general, unspecified pre-occupation with her in her totality. A man in this state really hasn't leisure to think of sex. He is too busy thinking of a person. The fact that she is a woman is far less important than the fact that she is herself. He is full of desire, but the desire may not be sexually toned. If you asked him what he wanted, the true reply would often be, "To go on thinking of her." He is love's contemplative. And when at a later stage the explicitly sexual element awakes, he will not feel (unless scientific theories are influencing him) that this had all along been the root of the whole matter. He is more likely to feel that the incoming tide of Eros, having demolished many sand-castles and made islands of many rocks, has now at last with a triumphant seventh wave flooded this part of his nature also — the little pool of ordinary sexuality which was there on his beach before the tide came in. Eros enters him like an invader, taking over and reorganising, one by one, the institutions of a conquered country. It may have taken over many others before it reaches the sex in him; and it will reorganise that too.

No one has indicated the nature of that reorganisation more briefly and accurately than George Orwell, who disliked it and preferred sexuality in its native condition, uncontaminated by Eros. In *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* his dreadful hero (how much less human than the four-footed heroes of his

excellent *Animal Farm*!), before towsing the heroine, demands a reassurance, “You like doing this?”, he asks, “I don’t mean simply me; I mean the thing in itself.” He is not satisfied till he gets the answer, “I adore it.” This little dialogue defines the reorganisation. Sexual desire, without Eros, wants *it*, the *thing in itself*; Eros wants the Beloved.

The *thing* is a sensory pleasure; that is, an event occurring within one’s own body. We use a most unfortunate idiom when we say, of a lustful man prowling the streets, that he “wants a woman”. Strictly speaking, a woman is just what he does not want. He wants a pleasure for which a woman happens to be the necessary piece of apparatus. How much he cares about the woman as such may be gauged by his attitude to her five minutes after fruition (one does not keep the carton after one has smoked the cigarettes). Now Eros makes a man really want, not a woman, but one particular woman. In some mysterious but quite indisputable fashion the lover desires the Beloved herself, not the pleasure she can give. No lover in the world ever sought the embraces of the woman he loved as the result of a calculation, however unconscious, that they would be more pleasurable than those of any other woman. If he raised the question he would, no doubt, expect that this would be so. But to raise it would be to step outside the world of Eros altogether. The only man I know of who ever did raise it was Lucretius, and he was certainly not in love when he did. It is interesting to note his answer. That austere voluptuary gave it as his opinion that love actually impairs sexual pleasure. The emotion was a distraction. It spoiled the cool and critical receptivity of his palate. (A great poet; but “Lord, what beastly fellows these Romans were!”)

The reader will notice that Eros thus wonderfully transforms what is *par excellence* a Need-pleasure into the most Appreciative of all pleasures. It is the nature of a Need-pleasure to show us the object solely in relation to our need, even our momentary need. But in Eros, a Need, at its most intense, sees the object most intensely as a thing admirable in herself, important far beyond her relation to the lover’s need.

If we had not all experienced this, if we were mere logicians, we might boggle at the conception of desiring a human being, as distinct from desiring any pleasure, comfort, or service that human being can give. And it is certainly hard to explain. Lovers themselves are trying to express part of it (not much) when they say they would like to “eat” one another. Milton has expressed more when he fancies angelic creatures with bodies made of

light who can achieve total interpenetration instead of our mere embraces. Charles Williams has said something of it in the words, “Love you? I *am* you.”

Without Eros sexual desire, like every other desire, is a fact about ourselves. Within Eros it is rather about the Beloved. It becomes almost a mode of perception, entirely a mode of expression. It feels objective; something outside us, in the real world. That is why Eros, though the king of pleasures, always (at his height) has the air of regarding pleasure as a by-product. To think about it would plunge us back in ourselves, in our own nervous system. It would kill Eros, as you can “kill” the finest mountain prospect by locating it all in your own retina and optic nerves. Anyway, whose pleasure? For one of the first things Eros does is to obliterate the distinction between giving and receiving.

Hitherto I have been trying merely to describe, not to evaluate. But certain moral questions now inevitably arise, and I must not conceal my own view of them. It is submitted rather than asserted, and of course open to correction by better men, better lovers and better Christians.

It has been widely held in the past, and is perhaps held by many unsophisticated people to-day, that the spiritual danger of Eros arises almost entirely from the carnal element within it; that Eros is “noblest” or “purest” when Venus is reduced to the minimum. The older moral theologians certainly seem to have thought that the danger we chiefly had to guard against in marriage was that of a soul-destroying surrender to the senses. It will be noticed, however, that this is not the Scriptural approach. St. Paul, dissuading his converts from marriage, says nothing about that side of the matter except to discourage prolonged abstinence from Venus (*I Cor.* VII, 5). What he fears is pre-occupation, the need of constantly “pleasing” — that is, considering — one’s partner, the multiple distractions of domesticity. It is marriage itself, not the marriage bed, that will be likely to hinder us from waiting uninterruptedly on God. And surely St. Paul is right? If I may trust my own experience, it is (within marriage as without) the practical and prudential cares of this world, and even the smallest and most prosaic of those cares, that are the great distraction. The gnat-like cloud of petty anxieties and decisions about the conduct of the next hour have interfered with my prayers more often than any passion or appetite whatever. The great, permanent temptation of marriage is not to sensuality but (quite bluntly) to avarice. With all proper respect to the medieval

guides, I cannot help remembering that they were all celibates, and probably did not know what Eros does to our sexuality; how, far from aggravating, he reduces the nagging and addictive character of mere appetite. And that not simply by satisfying it. Eros, without diminishing desire, makes abstinence easier. He tends, no doubt, to a pre-occupation with the Beloved which can indeed be an obstacle to the spiritual life; but not chiefly a sensual pre-occupation.

The real spiritual danger in Eros as a whole lies, I believe, elsewhere. I will return to the point. For the moment, I want to speak of the danger which at present, in my opinion, especially haunts the act of love. This is a subject on which I disagree, not with the human race (far from it), but with many of its gravest spokesmen. I believe we are all being encouraged to take Venus too seriously; at any rate, with a wrong kind of seriousness. All my life a ludicrous and portentous solemnisation of sex has been going on.

One author tells us that Venus should recur through the married life in "a solemn, sacramental rhythm". A young man to whom I had described as "pornographic" a novel that he much admired, replied with genuine bewilderment, "Pornographic? But how can it be? It treats the whole thing so seriously" — as if a long face were a sort of moral disinfectant. Our friends who harbour Dark Gods, the "pillar of blood" school, attempt seriously to restore something like the Phallic religion. Our advertisements, at their sexiest, paint the whole business in terms of the rapt, the intense, the swoony-devout; seldom a hint of gaiety. And the psychologists have so bedevilled us with the infinite importance of complete sexual adjustment and the all but impossibility of achieving it, that I could believe some young couples now go to it with the complete works of Freud, Kraft-Ebbing, Havelock Ellis and Dr. Stopes spread out on bed-tables all round them. Cheery old Ovid, who never either ignored a mole-hill or made a mountain of it, would be more to the point. We have reached the stage at which nothing is more needed than a roar of old-fashioned laughter.

But, it will be replied, the thing *is* serious. Yes; quadruply so. First, theologically, because this is the body's share in marriage which, by God's choice, is the mystical image of the union between God and Man. Secondly, as what I will venture to call a sub-Christian, or Pagan or natural sacrament, our human participation in, and exposition of, the natural forces of life and fertility — the marriage of Sky-Father and Earth-Mother. Thirdly, on the moral level, in view of the obligations involved and the incalculable

momentousness of being a parent and ancestor. Finally it has (sometimes, not always) a great emotional seriousness in the minds of the participants.

But eating is also serious; theologically, as the vehicle of the Blessed Sacrament; ethically in view of our duty to feed the hungry; socially, because the table is from time immemorial the place for talk; medically, as all dyspeptics know. Yet we do not bring bluebooks to dinner nor behave there as if we were in church. And it is *gourmets*, not saints, who come nearest to doing so. Animals are always serious about food.

We must not be totally serious about Venus. Indeed we can't be totally serious without doing violence to our humanity. It is not for nothing that every language and literature in the world is full of jokes about sex. Many of them may be dull or disgusting and nearly all of them are old. But we must insist that they embody an attitude to Venus which in the long run endangers the Christian life far less than a reverential gravity. We must not attempt to find an absolute in the flesh. Banish play and laughter from the bed of love and you may let in a false goddess. She will be even falser than the Aphrodite of the Greeks; for they, even while they worshipped her, knew that she was "laughter-loving". The mass of the people are perfectly right in their conviction that Venus is a partly comic spirit. We are under no obligation at all to sing all our love-duets in the throbbing, world-without-end, heart-breaking manner of Tristan and Isolde; let us often sing like Papageno and Papagena instead.

Venus herself will have a terrible revenge if we take her (occasional) seriousness at its face value. And that in two ways. One is most comically — though with no comic intention — illustrated by Sir Thomas Browne when he says that her service is "the foolishest act a wise man commits in all his life, nor is there anything that will more deject his cool'd imagination, when he shall consider what an odd and unworthy piece of folly he had committed". But if he had gone about that act with less solemnity in the first place he would not have suffered this "dejection". If his imagination had not been misled, its cooling would have brought no such revulsion. But Venus has another and worse revenge.

She herself is a mocking, mischievous spirit, far more elf than deity, and makes game of us. When all external circumstances are fittest for her service she will leave one or both the lovers totally indisposed for it. When every overt act is impossible and even glances cannot be exchanged — in trains, in shops, and at interminable parties — she will assail them with all

her force. An hour later, when time and place agree, she will have mysteriously withdrawn; perhaps from only one of them. What a pother this must raise — what resentments, self-pities, suspicions, wounded vanities and all the current chatter about “frustration” — in those who have deified her! But sensible lovers laugh. It is all part of the game; a game of catch-as-catch-can, and the escapes and tumbles and head-on collisions are to be treated as a romp.

For I can hardly help regarding it as one of God’s jokes that a passion so soaring, so apparently transcendent, as Eros, should thus be linked in incongruous symbiosis with a bodily appetite which, like any other appetite, tactlessly reveals its connections with such mundane factors as weather, health, diet, circulation, and digestion. In Eros at times we seem to be flying; Venus gives us the sudden twitch that reminds us we are really captive balloons. It is a continual demonstration of the truth that we are composite creatures, rational animals, akin on one side to the angels, on the other to tom-cats. It is a bad thing not to be able to take a joke. Worse, not to take a divine joke; made, I grant you, at our expense, but also (who doubts it?) for our endless benefit.

Man has held three views of his body. First there is that of those ascetic Pagans who called it the prison or the “tomb” of the soul, and of Christians like Fisher to whom it was a “sack of dung”, food for worms, filthy, shameful, a source of nothing but temptation to bad men and humiliation to good ones. Then there are the Neo-Pagans (they seldom know Greek), the nudists and the sufferers from Dark Gods, to whom the body is glorious. But thirdly we have the view which St. Francis expressed by calling his body “Brother Ass”. All three may be — I am not sure — defensible; but give me St. Francis for my money.

Ass is exquisitely right because no one in his senses can either revere or hate a donkey. It is a useful, sturdy, lazy, obstinate, patient, lovable and infuriating beast; deserving now the stick and now a carrot; both pathetically and absurdly beautiful. So the body. There’s no living with it till we recognise that one of its functions in our lives is to play the part of buffoon. Until some theory has sophisticated them, every man, woman and child in the world knows this. The fact that we have bodies is the oldest joke there is. Eros (like death, figure-drawing, and the study of medicine) may at moments cause us to take it with total seriousness. The error consists in concluding that Eros should always do so and permanently abolish the

joke. But this is not what happens. The very faces of all the happy lovers we know make it clear. Lovers, unless their love is very short-lived, again and again feel an element not only of comedy, not only of play, but even of buffoonery, in the body's expression of Eros. And the body would frustrate us if this were not so. It would be too clumsy an instrument to render love's music unless its very clumsiness could be felt as adding to the total experience its own grotesque charm — a sub-plot or antimasque miming with its own hearty rough-and-tumble what the soul enacts in statelier fashion. (Thus in old comedies the lyric loves of the hero and heroine are at once parodied and corroborated by some much more earthy affair between a Touchstone and an Audrey or a valet and a chambermaid). The highest does not stand without the lowest. There is indeed at certain moments a high poetry in the flesh itself; but also, by your leave, an irreducible element of obstinate and ludicrous un-poetry. If it does not make itself felt on one occasion, it will on another. Far better plant it foresquare within the drama of Eros as comic relief than pretend you haven't noticed it.

For indeed we require this relief. The poetry is there as well as the un-poetry; the gravity of Venus as well as her levity, the *gravis ardor* or burning weight of desire. Pleasure, pushed to its extreme, shatters us like pain. The longing for a union which only the flesh can mediate while the flesh, our mutually excluding bodies, renders it forever unattainable, can have the grandeur of a metaphysical pursuit. Amorousness as well as grief can bring tears to the eyes. But Venus does not always come thus "entire, fastened to her prey", and the fact that she sometimes does so is the very reason for preserving always a hint of playfulness in our attitude to her. When natural things look most divine, the demoniac is just round the corner.

This refusal to be quite immersed — this recollection of the levity even when, for the moment, only the gravity is displayed — is especially relevant to a certain attitude which Venus, in her intensity, evokes from most (I believe, not all) pairs of lovers. This act can invite the man to an extreme, though short-lived, masterfulness, to the dominance of a conqueror or a captor, and the woman to a correspondingly extreme abjection and surrender. Hence the roughness, even fierceness, of some erotic play; the "lover's pinch which hurts and is desired". How should a sane couple think of this? or a Christian couple permit it?

I think it is harmless and wholesome on one condition. We must recognise that we have here to do with what I called “the Pagan sacrament” in sex. In Friendship, as we noticed, each participant stands for precisely himself — the contingent individual he is. But in the act of love we are not merely ourselves. We are also representatives. It is here no impoverishment but an enrichment to be aware that forces older and less personal than we work through us. In us all the masculinity and femininity of the world, all that is assailant and responsive, are momentarily focused. The man does play the Sky-Father and the woman the Earth-Mother; he does play Form, and she Matter. But we must give full value to the word *play*. Of course neither “plays a part” in the sense of being a hypocrite. But each plays a part or role in — well, in something which is comparable to a mystery-play or ritual (at one extreme) and to a masque or even a charade (at the other).

A woman who accepted as literally her own this extreme self-surrender would be an idolatress offering to a man what belongs only to God. And a man would have to be the coxcomb of all coxcombs, and indeed a blasphemer, if he arrogated to himself, as the mere person he is, the sort of sovereignty to which Venus for a moment exalts him. But what cannot lawfully be yielded or claimed can be lawfully enacted. Outside this ritual or drama he and she are two immortal souls, two free-born adults, two citizens. We should be much mistaken if we supposed that those marriages where this mastery is most asserted and acknowledged in the act of Venus were those where the husband is most likely to be dominant in the married life as a whole; the reverse is perhaps more probable. But within the rite or drama they become a god and goddess between whom there is no equality — whose relations are asymmetrical.

Some will think it strange I should find an element of ritual or masquerade in that action which is often regarded as the most real, the most unmasked and sheerly genuine, we ever do. Are we not our true selves when naked? In a sense, no. The word *naked* was originally a past participle; the naked man was the man who had undergone a process of *naking*, that is, of stripping or peeling (you used the verb of nuts and fruit). Time out of mind the naked man has seemed to our ancestors not the natural but the abnormal man; not the man who has abstained from dressing but the man who has been for some reason undressed. And it is a simple fact — anyone can observe it at a men’s bathing place — that nudity emphasises common humanity and soft-pedals what is individual. In that way we are

“more ourselves” when clothed. By nudity the lovers cease to be solely John and Mary; the universal He and She are emphasised. You could almost say they *put on* nakedness as a ceremonial robe — or as the costume for a charade. For we must still beware — and never more than when we thus partake of the Pagan sacrament in our love-passages — of being serious in the wrong way. The Sky-Father himself is only a Pagan dream of One far greater than Zeus and far more masculine than the male. And a mortal man is not even the Sky-Father, and cannot really wear his crown. Only a copy of it, done in tinselled paper. I do not call it this in contempt. I like ritual; I like private theatricals; I even like charades. Paper crowns have their legitimate, and (in the proper context) their serious, uses. They are not in the last resort much flimsier (“if imagination mend them”) than all earthly dignities.

But I dare not mention this Pagan sacrament without turning aside to guard against any danger of confusing it with an incomparably higher mystery. As nature crowns man in that brief action, so the Christian law has crowned him in the permanent relationship of marriage, bestowing — or should I say, inflicting? — a certain “headship” on him. This is a very different coronation. And as we could easily take the natural mystery too seriously, so we might take the Christian mystery not seriously enough. Christian writers (notably Milton) have sometimes spoken of the husband’s headship with a complacency to make the blood run cold. We must go back to our Bibles. The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the Church. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church — read on — *and gave his life for her* (*Eph.* V, 25). This headship, then, is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion; whose wife receives most and gives least, is most unworthy of him, is — in her own mere nature — least lovable. For the Church has no beauty but what the Bridegroom gives her; he does not find, but makes her, lovely. The chrism of this terrible coronation is to be seen not in the joys of any man’s marriage but in its sorrows, in the sickness and sufferings of a good wife or the faults of a bad one, in his unwearying (never paraded) care or his inexhaustible forgiveness: forgiveness, not acquiescence. As Christ sees in the flawed, proud, fanatical or lukewarm Church on earth that Bride who will one day be without spot or wrinkle, and labours to produce the latter, so the husband whose headship is Christ-like (and he is allowed no other sort) never

despairs. He is a King Cophetua who after twenty years still hopes that the beggar-girl will one day learn to speak the truth and wash behind her ears.

To say this is not to say that there is any virtue or wisdom in making a marriage that involves such misery. There is no wisdom or virtue in seeking unnecessary martyrdom or deliberately courting persecution; yet it is, none the less, the persecuted or martyred Christian in whom the pattern of the Master is most unambiguously realised. So, in these terrible marriages, once they have come about, the "headship" of the husband, if only he can sustain it, is most Christ-like.

The sternest feminist need not grudge my sex the crown offered to it either in the Pagan or in the Christian mystery. For the one is of paper and the other of thorns. The real danger is not that husbands may grasp the latter too eagerly; but that they will allow or compel their wives to usurp it.

From Venus, the carnal ingredient within Eros, I now turn to Eros as a whole. Here we shall see the same pattern repeated. As Venus within Eros does not really aim at pleasure, so Eros does not aim at happiness. We may think he does, but when he is brought to the test it proves otherwise. Everyone knows that it is useless to try to separate lovers by proving to them that their marriage will be an unhappy one. This is not only because they will disbelieve you. They usually will, no doubt. But even if they believed, they would not be dissuaded. For it is the very mark of Eros that when he is in us we had rather share unhappiness with the Beloved than be happy on any other terms. Even if the two lovers are mature and experienced people who know that broken hearts heal in the end and can clearly foresee that, if they once steeled themselves to go through the present agony of parting, they would almost certainly be happier ten years hence than marriage is at all likely to make them — even then, they would not part. To Eros all these calculations are irrelevant — just as the coolly brutal judgment of Lucretius is irrelevant to Venus. Even when it becomes clear beyond all evasion that marriage with the Beloved cannot possibly lead to happiness — when it cannot even profess to offer any other life than that of tending an incurable invalid, of hopeless poverty, of exile, or of disgrace — Eros never hesitates to say, "Better this than parting. Better to be miserable with her than happy without her. Let our hearts break provided they break together." If the voice within us does not say this, it is not the voice of Eros.

This is the grandeur and terror of love. But notice, as before, side by side with this grandeur, the playfulness. Eros, as well as Venus, is the subject of countless jokes. And even when the circumstances of the two lovers are so tragic that no bystander could keep back his tears, they themselves — in want, in hospital wards, on visitors' days in jail — will sometimes be surprised by a merriment which strikes the onlooker (but not them) as unbearably pathetic. Nothing is falser than the idea that mockery is necessarily hostile. Until they have a baby to laugh at, lovers are always laughing at each other.

It is in the grandeur of Eros that the seeds of danger are concealed. He has spoken like a god. His total commitment, his reckless disregard of happiness, his transcendence of self-regard, sound like a message from the eternal world.

And yet it cannot, just as it stands, be the voice of God Himself. For Eros, speaking with that very grandeur and displaying that very transcendence of self, may urge to evil as well as to good. Nothing is shallower than the belief that a love which leads to sin is always qualitatively lower — more animal or more trivial — than one which leads to faithful, fruitful and Christian marriage. The love which leads to cruel and perjured unions, even to suicide-pacts and murder, is not likely to be wandering lust or idle sentiment. It may well be Eros in all his splendour; heartbreakingly sincere; ready for every sacrifice except renunciation.

There have been schools of thought which accepted the voice of Eros as something actually transcendent and tried to justify the absoluteness of his commands. Plato will have it that "falling in love" is the mutual recognition on earth of souls which have been singled out for one another in a previous and celestial existence. To meet the Beloved is to realise "We loved before we were born". As a myth to express what lovers feel this is admirable. But if one accepted it literally one would be faced by an embarrassing consequence. We should have to conclude that in that heavenly and forgotten life affairs were no better managed than here. For Eros may unite the most unsuitable yokefellows; many unhappy, and predictably unhappy, marriages were love-matches.

A theory more likely to be accepted in our own day is what we may call Shavian — Shaw himself might have said "metabiological" — Romanticism. According to Shavian Romanticism the voice of Eros is the voice of the *élan vital* or Life Force, the "evolutionary appetite". In

overwhelming a particular couple it is seeking parents (or ancestors) for the superman. It is indifferent both to their personal happiness and to the rules of morality because it aims at something which Shaw thinks very much more important: the future perfection of our species. But if all this were true it hardly makes clear whether — and if so, why — we should obey it. All pictures yet offered us of the superman are so unattractive that one might well vow celibacy at once to avoid the risk of begetting him. And secondly, this theory surely leads to the conclusion that the Life Force does not very well understand its (or her? or his?) own business. So far as we can see the existence or intensity of Eros between two people is no warrant that their offspring will be especially satisfactory, or even that they will have offspring at all. Two good "strains" (in the stockbreeders' sense), not two good lovers, is the recipe for fine children. And what on earth was the Life Force doing through all those countless generations when the begetting of children depended very little on mutual Eros and very much on arranged marriages, slavery, and rape? Has it only just thought of this bright idea for improving the species?

Neither the Platonic nor the Shavian type of erotic transcendentalism can help a Christian. We are not worshippers of the Life Force and we know nothing of previous existences. We must not give unconditional obedience to the voice of Eros when he speaks most like a god. Neither must we ignore or attempt to deny the god-like quality. This love is really and truly like Love Himself. In it there is a real nearness to God (by Resemblance); but not, therefore and necessarily, a nearness of Approach. Eros, honoured so far as love of God and charity to our fellows will allow, may become for us a means of Approach. His total commitment is a paradigm or example, built into our natures, of the love we ought to exercise towards God and Man. As Nature, for the Nature lover, gives a content to the word *glory*, so this gives a content to the word *Charity*. It is as if Christ said to us through Eros, "Thus — just like this — with this prodigality — not counting the cost — you are to love me and the least of my brethren." Our conditional honour to Eros will of course vary with our circumstances. Of some a total renunciation (but not a contempt) is required. Others, with Eros as their fuel and also as their model, can embark on the married life. Within which Eros, of himself, will never be enough — will indeed survive only in so far as he is continually chastened and corroborated by higher principles.

But Eros, honoured without reservation and obeyed unconditionally, becomes a demon. And this is just how he claims to be honoured and obeyed. Divinely indifferent to our selfishness, he is also demoniacally rebellious to every claim of God or Man that would oppose him. Hence as the poet says:

People in love cannot be moved by kindness,
And opposition makes them feel like martyrs.

Martyrs is exactly right. Years ago when I wrote about medieval love-poetry and described its strange, half make-believe, "religion of love," I was blind enough to treat this as an almost purely literary phenomenon. I know better now. Eros by his nature invites it. Of all loves he is, at his height, most god-like; therefore most prone to demand our worship. Of himself he always tends to turn "being in love" into a sort of religion.

Theologians have often feared, in this love, a danger of idolatry. I think they meant by this that the lovers might idolise one another. That does not seem to me to be the real danger; certainly not in marriage. The deliciously plain prose and business-like intimacy of married life render it absurd. So does the Affection in which Eros is almost invariably clothed. Even in courtship I question whether anyone who has felt the thirst for the Uncreated, or even dreamed of feeling it, ever supposed that the Beloved could satisfy it. As a fellow-pilgrim pierced with the very same desire, that is, as a Friend, the Beloved may be gloriously and helpfully relevant; but as an object for it — well (I would not be rude), ridiculous. The real danger seems to me not that the lovers will idolise each other but that they will idolise Eros himself.

I do not of course mean that they will build altars or say prayers to him. The idolatry I speak of can be seen in the popular misinterpretation of Our Lord's words "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much" (*Luke* VII, 47). From the context, and especially from the preceding parable of the debtors, it is clear that this must mean: "The greatness of her love for Me is evidence of the greatness of the sins I have forgiven her." (The *for* here is like the *for* in "He can't have gone out, *for* his hat is still hanging in the hall"; the presence of the hat is not the cause of his being in the house but a probable proof that he is). But thousands of people take it quite differently. They first assume, with no evidence, that her sins were

sins against chastity, though, for all we know, they may have been usury, dishonest shopkeeping, or cruelty to children. And they then take Our Lord to be saying, “I forgive her unchastity because she was so much in love.” The implication is that a great Eros extenuates — almost sanctions — almost sanctifies — any actions it leads to.

When lovers say of some act that we might blame, “Love made us do it,” notice the tone. A man saying, “I did it because I was frightened,” or “I did it because I was angry”, speaks quite differently. He is putting forward an excuse for what he feels to require excusing. But the lovers are seldom doing quite that. Notice how tremulously, almost how devoutly, they say the word *love*, not so much pleading an “extenuating circumstance” as appealing to an authority. The confession can be almost a boast. There can be a shade of defiance in it. They “feel like martyrs.” In extreme cases what their words really express is a demure yet unshakable allegiance to the god of love.

“These reasons in love’s law have passed for good,” says Milton’s Dalila. That is the point; *in love’s law*. “In love,” we have our own “law”, a religion of our own, our own god. Where a true Eros is present resistance to his commands feels like apostasy, and what are really (by the Christian standard) temptations speak with the voice of duties — quasi-religious duties, acts of pious zeal to Love. He builds his own religion round the lovers. Benjamin Constant has noticed how he creates for them, in a few weeks or months, a joint past which seems to them immemorial. They recur to it continually with wonder and reverence, as the Psalmists recur to the history of Israel. It is in fact the Old Testament of Love’s religion; the record of love’s judgments and mercies towards his chosen pair up to the moment when they first knew they were lovers. After that, its New Testament begins. They are now under a new law, under what corresponds (in this religion) to Grace. They are new creatures. The “spirit” of Eros supersedes all laws, and they must not “grieve” it.

It seems to sanction all sorts of actions they would not otherwise have dared. I do not mean solely, or chiefly, acts that violate chastity. They are just as likely to be acts of injustice or uncharity against the outer world. They will seem like proofs of piety and zeal towards Eros. The pair can say to one another in an almost sacrificial spirit, “It is for love’s sake that I have neglected my parents — left my children — cheated my partner — failed my friend at his greatest need.” These reasons in love’s law have passed for

good. The votaries may even come to feel a particular merit in such sacrifices; what costlier offering can be laid on love's altar than one's conscience?

And all the time the grim joke is that this Eros whose voice seems to speak from the eternal realm is not himself necessarily even permanent. He is notoriously the most mortal of our loves. The world rings with complaints of his fickleness. What is baffling is the combination of this fickleness with his protestations of permanency. To be in love is both to intend and to promise lifelong fidelity. Love makes vows unasked; can't be deterred from making them. "I will be ever true," are almost the first words he utters. Not hypocritically but sincerely. No experience will cure him of the delusion. We have all heard of people who are in love again every few years; each time sincerely convinced that "*this* time it's the real thing", that their wanderings are over, that they have found their true love and will themselves be true till death.

And yet Eros is in a sense right to make this promise. The event of falling in love is of such a nature that we are right to reject as intolerable the idea that it should be transitory. In one high bound it has overleaped the massive wall of our selfhood; it has made appetite itself altruistic, tossed personal happiness aside as a triviality and planted the interests of another in the centre of our being. Spontaneously and without effort we have fulfilled the law (towards one person) by loving our neighbour as ourselves. It is an image, a foretaste, of what we must become to all if Love Himself rules in us without a rival. It is even (well used) a preparation for that. Simply to relapse from it, merely to "fall out of" love again, is — if I may coin the ugly word — a sort of *disredemption*. Eros is driven to promise what Eros of himself cannot perform.

Can we be in this selfless liberation for a lifetime? Hardly for a week. Between the best possible lovers this high condition is intermittent. The old self soon turns out to be not so dead as he pretended — as after a religious conversion. In either he may be momentarily knocked flat; he will soon be up again; if not on his feet, at least on his elbow, if not roaring, at least back to his surly grumbling or his mendicant whine. And Venus will often slip back into mere sexuality.

But these lapses will not destroy a marriage between two "decent and sensible" people. The couple whose marriage will certainly be endangered by them, and possibly ruined, are those who have idolised Eros. They

thought he had the power and truthfulness of a god. They expected that mere feeling would do for them, and permanently, all that was necessary. When this expectation is disappointed they throw the blame on Eros or, more usually, on their partners. In reality, however, Eros, having made his gigantic promise and shown you in glimpses what its performance would be like, has “done his stuff”. He, like a godparent, makes the vows; it is we who must keep them. It is we who must labour to bring our daily life into even closer accordance with what the glimpses have revealed. We must do the works of Eros when Eros is not present. This all good lovers know, though those who are not reflective or articulate will be able to express it only in a few conventional phrases about “taking the rough along with the smooth”, not “expecting too much”, having “a little common sense”, and the like. And all good Christian lovers know that this programme, modest as it sounds, will not be carried out except by humility, charity and divine grace; that it is indeed the whole Christian life seen from one particular angle.

Thus Eros, like the other loves, but more strikingly because of his strength, sweetness, terror and high port, reveals his true status. He cannot of himself be what, nevertheless, he must be if he is to remain Eros. He needs help; therefore needs to be ruled. The god dies or becomes a demon unless he obeys God. It would be well if, in such case, he always died. But he may live on, mercilessly chaining together two mutual tormentors, each raw all over with the poison of hate-in-love, each ravenous to receive and implacably refusing to give, jealous, suspicious, resentful, struggling for the upper hand, determined to be free and to allow no freedom, living on “scenes”. Read *Anna Karenina*, and do not fancy that such things happen only in Russia. The lovers’ old hyperbole of “eating” each other can come horribly near to the truth.

CHAPTER VI

Charity

William Morris wrote a poem called *Love is Enough* and someone is said to have reviewed it briefly in the words “It isn’t”. Such has been the burden of this book. The natural loves are not self-sufficient. Something else, at first vaguely described as “decency and common sense”, but later revealed as goodness, and finally as the whole Christian life in one particular relation, must come to the help of the mere feeling if the feeling is to be kept sweet.

To say this is not to belittle the natural loves but to indicate where their real glory lies. It is no disparagement to a garden to say that it will not fence and weed itself, nor prune its own fruit trees, nor roll and cut its own lawns. A garden is a good thing but that is not the sort of goodness it has. It will remain a garden, as distinct from a wilderness, only if someone does all these things to it. Its real glory is of quite a different kind. The very fact that it needs constant weeding and pruning bears witness to that glory. It teems with life. It glows with colour and smells like heaven and puts forward at every hour of a summer day beauties which man could never have created and could not even, on his own resources, have imagined. If you want to see the difference between its contribution and the gardener’s, put the commonest weed it grows side by side with his hoes, rakes, shears, and packet of weed killer; you have put beauty, energy and fecundity beside dead, sterile things. Just so, our “decency and common sense” show grey and deathlike beside the geniality of love. And when the garden is in its full glory the gardener’s contributions to that glory will still have been in a sense paltry compared with those of nature. Without life springing from the earth, without rain, light and heat descending from the sky, he could do nothing. When he has done all, he has merely encouraged here and discouraged there, powers and beauties that have a different source. But his share, though small, is indispensable and laborious. When God planted a garden He set a man over it and set the man under Himself. When He planted the garden of our nature and caused the flowering, fruiting loves to grow there, He set our will to “dress” them. Compared with them it is dry and cold. And unless His grace comes down, like the rain and the sunshine, we shall use this tool to little purpose. But its laborious — and largely

negative — services are indispensable. If they were needed when the garden was still Paradisal, how much more now when the soil has gone sour and the worst weeds seem to thrive on it best? But heaven forbid we should work in the spirit of prigs and Stoics. While we hack and prune we know very well that what we are hacking and pruning is big with a splendour and vitality which our rational will could never of itself have supplied. To liberate that splendour, to let it become fully what it is trying to be, to have tall trees instead of scrubby tangles, and sweet apples instead of crabs, is part of our purpose.

But only part. For now we must face a topic that I have long postponed. Hitherto hardly anything has been said in this book about our natural loves as rivals to the love of God. Now the question can no longer be avoided. There were two reasons for my delay.

One — already hinted — is that this question is not the place at which most of us need begin. It is seldom, at the outset, "addressed to our condition." For most of us the true rivalry lies between the self and the human Other, not yet between the human Other and God. It is dangerous to press upon a man the duty of getting beyond earthly love when his real difficulty lies in getting so far. And it is no doubt easy enough to love the fellow-creature less and to imagine that this is happening because we are learning to love God more, when the real reason may be quite different. We may be only "mistaking the decays of nature for the increase of Grace". Many people do not find it really difficult to hate their wives or mothers. M. Mauriac, in a fine scene, pictures the other disciples stunned and bewildered by this strange command, but not Judas. He laps it up easily.

But to have stressed the rivalry earlier in this book would have been premature in another way also. The claim to divinity which our loves so easily make can be refuted without going so far as that. The loves prove that they are unworthy to take the place of God by the fact that they cannot even remain themselves and do what they promise to do without God's help. Why prove that some petty princeling is not the lawful Emperor when without the Emperor's support he cannot even keep his subordinate throne and make peace in his little province for half a year? Even for their own sakes the loves must submit to be second things if they are to remain the things they want to be. In this yoke lies their true freedom; they "are taller when they bow". For when God rules in a human heart, though He may sometimes have to remove certain of its native authorities altogether, He

often continues others in their offices and, by subjecting their authority to His, gives it for the first time a firm basis. Emerson has said, “When half-gods go, the gods arrive.” That is a very doubtful maxim. Better say, “When God arrives (and only then) the half-gods can remain.” Left to themselves they either vanish or become demons. Only in His name can they with beauty and security “wield their little tridents”. The rebellious slogan “All for love” is really love’s death warrant (date of execution, for the moment, left blank).

But the question of the Rivalry, for these reasons long postponed, must now be treated. In any earlier period, except the Nineteenth Century, it would have loomed large throughout a book on this subject. If the Victorians needed the reminder that love is not enough, older theologians were always saying very loudly that (natural) love is likely to be a great deal too much. The danger of loving our fellow creatures too little was less present to their minds than that of loving them idolatrously. In every wife, mother, child and friend they saw a possible rival to God. So of course does Our Lord (*Luke* XIV, 26).

There is one method of dissuading us from inordinate love of the fellow-creature which I find myself forced to reject at the very outset. I do so with trembling, for it met me in the pages of a great saint and a great thinker to whom my own glad debts are incalculable.

In words which can still bring tears to the eyes, St. Augustine describes the desolation in which the death of his friend Nebridius plunged him (*Confessions* IV, 10). Then he draws a moral. This is what comes, he says, of giving one’s heart to anything but God. All human beings pass away. Do not let your happiness depend on something you may lose. If love is to be a blessing, not a misery, it must be for the only Beloved who will never pass away.

Of course this is excellent sense. Don’t put your goods in a leaky vessel. Don’t spend too much on a house you may be turned out of. And there is no man alive who responds more naturally than I to such canny maxims. I am a safety-first creature. Of all arguments against love none makes so strong an appeal to my nature as “Careful! This might lead you to suffering”.

To my nature, my temperament, yes. Not to my conscience. When I respond to that appeal I seem to myself to be a thousand miles away from Christ. If I am sure of anything I am sure that His teaching was never meant to confirm my congenital preference for safe investments and limited

liabilities. I doubt whether there is anything in me that pleases Him less. And who could conceivably begin to love God on such a prudential ground — because the security (so to speak) is better? Who could even include it among the grounds for loving? Would you choose a wife or a Friend — if it comes to that, would you choose a dog — in this spirit? One must be outside the world of love, of all loves, before one thus calculates. Eros, lawless Eros, preferring the Beloved to happiness, is more like Love Himself than this.

I think that this passage in the *Confessions* is less a part of St. Augustine's Christendom than a hangover from the high-minded Pagan philosophies in which he grew up. It is closer to Stoic "apathy" or neo-Platonic mysticism than to charity. We follow One who wept over Jerusalem and at the grave of Lazarus, and, loving all, yet had one disciple whom, in a special sense, he "loved". St. Paul has a higher authority with us than St. Augustine — St. Paul who shows no sign that he would not have suffered like a man, and no feeling that he ought not so to have suffered, if Epaphroditus had died. (*Philem.* II, 27).

Even if it were granted that insurances against heartbreak were our highest wisdom, does God Himself offer them? Apparently not. Christ comes at last to say "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

There is no escape along the lines St. Augustine suggests. Nor along any other lines. There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.

I believe that the most lawless and inordinate loves are less contrary to God's will than a self-invited and self-protective lovelessness. It is like hiding the talent in a napkin and for much the same reason. "I knew thee that thou wert a hard man." Christ did not teach and suffer that we might become, even in the natural loves, more careful of our own happiness. If a man is not uncalculating towards the earthly beloveds whom he has seen, he

is none the more likely to be so towards God whom he has not. We shall draw nearer to God, not by trying to avoid the sufferings inherent in all loves, but by accepting them and offering them to Him; throwing away all defensive armour. If our hearts need to be broken, and if He chooses this as the way in which they should break, so be it.

It remains certainly true that all natural loves can be inordinate. *Inordinate* does not mean "insufficiently cautious". Nor does it mean "too big". It is not a quantitative term. It is probably impossible to love any human being simply "too much". We may love him too much *in proportion to* our love for God; but it is the smallness of our love for God, not the greatness of our love for the man, that constitutes the inordinacy. But even this must be refined upon. Otherwise we shall trouble some who are very much on the right road but alarmed because they cannot feel towards God so warm a sensible emotion as they feel for the earthly Beloved. It is much to be wished — at least I think so — that we all, at all times, could. We must pray that this gift should be given us. But the question whether we are loving God or the earthly Beloved "more" is not, so far as concerns our Christian duty, a question about the comparative intensity of two feelings. The real question is, which (when the alternative comes) do you serve, or choose, or put first? To which claim does your will, in the last resort, yield?

As so often, Our Lord's own words are both far fiercer and far more tolerable than those of the theologians. He says nothing about guarding against earthly loves for fear we might be hurt; He says something that cracks like a whip about trampling them all under foot the moment they hold us back from following Him. "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife ... and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (*Luke* XIV, 26).

But how are we to understand the word *hate*? That Love Himself should be commanding what we ordinarily mean by hatred — commanding us to cherish resentment, to gloat over another's misery, to delight in injuring him — is almost a contradiction in terms. I think Our Lord, in the sense here intended, "hated" St. Peter when he said, "Get thee behind me." To hate is to reject, to set one's face against, to make no concession to, the Beloved when the Beloved utters, however sweetly and however pitiably, the suggestions of the Devil. A man, said Jesus, who tries to serve two masters, will "hate" the one and "love" the other. It is not, surely, mere feelings of aversion and liking that are here in question. He will adhere to, consent to,

work for, the one and not for the other. Consider again, “I loved Jacob and I *hated* Esau” (*Malachi* I, 2-3). How is the thing called God’s “hatred” of Esau displayed in the actual story? Not at all as we might expect. There is of course no ground for assuming that Esau made a bad end and was a lost soul; the Old Testament, here as elsewhere, has nothing to say about such matters. And, from all we are told, Esau’s earthly life was, in every ordinary sense, a good deal more blessed than Jacob’s. It is Jacob who has all the disappointments, humiliations, terrors, and bereavements. But he has something which Esau has not. He is a patriarch. He hands on the Hebraic tradition, transmits the vocation and the blessing, becomes an ancestor of Our Lord. The “loving” of Jacob seems to mean the acceptance of Jacob for a high (and painful) vocation; the “hating” of Esau, his rejection. He is “turned down”, fails to “make the grade”, is found useless for the purpose. So, in the last resort, we must turn down or disqualify our nearest and dearest when they come between us and our obedience to God. Heaven knows, it will seem to them sufficiently like hatred. We must not act on the pity we feel; we must be blind to tears and deaf to pleadings.

I will not say that this duty is hard; some find it too easy; some, hard almost beyond endurance. What is hard for all is to know when the occasion for such “hating” has arisen. Our temperaments deceive us. The meek and tender — uxorious husbands, submissive wives, doting parents, dutiful children — will not easily believe that it has ever arrived. Self-assertive people, with a dash of the bully in them, will believe it too soon. That is why it is of such extreme importance so to order our loves that it is unlikely to arrive at all.

How this could come about we may see on a far lower level when the Cavalier poet, going to the wars, says to his mistress:

I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.

There are women to whom the plea would be meaningless. *Honour* would be just one of those silly things that Men talk about; a verbal excuse for, therefore an aggravation of, the offence against “love’s law” which the poet is about to commit. Lovelace can use it with confidence because his lady is a Cavalier lady who already admits, as he does, the claims of Honour. He does not need to “hate” her, to set his face against her, because

he and she acknowledge the same law. They have agreed and understood each other on this matter long before. The task of converting her to a belief in Honour is not now — now, when the decision is upon them — to be undertaken. It is this prior agreement which is so necessary when a far greater claim than that of Honour is at stake. It is too late, when the crisis comes, to begin telling a wife or husband or mother or friend, that your love all along had a secret reservation— "under God" or "so far as a higher Love permits". They ought to have been warned; not, to be sure, explicitly, but by the implication of a thousand talks, by the principle revealed in a hundred decisions upon small matters. Indeed, a real disagreement on this issue should make itself felt early enough to prevent a marriage or a Friendship from existing at all. The best love of either sort is not blind. Oliver Elton, speaking of Carlyle and Mill, said that they differed about justice, and that such a difference was naturally fatal "to any friendship worthy of the name". If "All" — quite seriously all— "for love" is implicit in the Beloved's attitude, his or her love is not worth having. It is not related in the right way to Love Himself.

And this brings me to the foot of the last steep ascent this book must try to make. We must try to relate the human activities called "loves" to that Love which is God a little more precisely than we have yet done. The precision can, of course, be only that of a model or a symbol, certain to fail us in the long run and, even while we use it, requiring correction from other models. The humblest of us, in a state of Grace, can have some "knowledge-by-acquaintance" (*connaître*), some "tasting", of Love Himself; but man even at his highest sanctity and intelligence has no direct "knowledge about" (*savoir*) the ultimate Being — only analogies. We cannot see light, though by light we can see things. Statements about God are extrapolations from the knowledge of other things which the divine illumination enables us to know. I labour these deprecations because, in what follows, my efforts to be clear (and not intolerably lengthy) may suggest a confidence which I by no means feel. I should be mad if I did. Take it as one man's reverie, almost one man's myth. If anything in it is useful to you, use it; if anything is not, never give it a second thought.

God is love. Again, "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us" (*I John* IV, 10). We must not begin with mysticism, with the creature's love for God, or with the wonderful forestates of the fruition of God vouchsafed to some in their earthly life. We begin at the real

beginning, with love as the Divine energy. This primal love is Gift-love. In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic speculation. It is essential. Without it we can hardly avoid the conception of what I can only call a “managerial” God; a Being whose function or nature is to “run” the universe, who stands to it as a headmaster to a school or a hotelier to a hotel. But to be sovereign of the universe is no great matter to God, In Himself, at home in “the land of the Trinity”, he is Sovereign of a far greater realm. We must keep always before our eyes that vision of Lady Julian’s in which God carried in His hand a little object like a nut, and that nut was “all that is made”. God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them. He creates the universe, already foreseeing — or should we say “seeing”? there are no tenses in God — the buzzing cloud of flies about the cross, the flayed back pressed against the uneven stake, the nails driven through the mesial nerves, the repeated incipient suffocation as the body droops, the repeated torture of back and arms as it is time after time, for breath’s sake, hitched up. If I may dare the biological image, God is a “host” who deliberately creates His own parasites; causes us to be that we may exploit and “take advantage of” Him. Herein is love. This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves.

God, as Creator of nature, implants in us both Gift-loves and Need-loves. The Gift-loves are natural images of Himself; proximities to Him by resemblance which are not necessarily and in all men proximities of approach. A devoted mother, a beneficent ruler or teacher, may give and give, continually exhibiting the likeness, without making the approach. The Need-loves, so far as I have been able to see, have no resemblance to the Love which God is. They are rather correlatives, opposites; not as evil is the opposite of good, of course, but as the form of the blancmange is an opposite to the form of the mould.

But in addition to these natural loves God can bestow a far better gift; or rather, since our minds must divide and pigeon-hole, two gifts.

He communicates to men a share of His own Gift-love. This is different from the Gift-loves He has built into their nature. These never quite seek simply the good of the loved object for the object’s own sake. They are biased in favour of those goods they can themselves bestow, or those which they would like best themselves, or those which fit in with a pre-conceived

picture of the life they want the object to lead. But Divine Gift-love — Love Himself working in a man — is wholly disinterested and desires what is simply best for the beloved. Again, natural Gift-love is always directed to objects which the lover finds in some way intrinsically lovable — objects to which Affection or Eros or a shared point of view attracts him, or, failing that, to the grateful and the deserving, or perhaps to those whose helplessness is of a winning and appealing kind. But Divine Gift-love in the man enables him to love what is not naturally lovable; lepers, criminals, enemies, morons, the sulky, the superior and the sneering. Finally, by a high paradox, God enables men to have a Gift-love towards Himself. There is of course a sense in which no one can give to God anything which is not already His; and if it is already His, what have you given? But since it is only too obvious that we can withhold ourselves, our wills and hearts, from God, we can, in that sense, also give them. What is His by right and would not exist for a moment if it ceased to be His (as the song is the singer's), He has nevertheless made ours in such a way that we can freely offer it back to Him. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine." And as all Christians know there is another way of giving to God; every stranger whom we feed or clothe is Christ. And this apparently is Gift-love to God whether we know it or not. Love Himself can work in those who know nothing of Him. The "sheep" in the parable had no idea either of the God hidden in the prisoner whom they visited or of the God hidden in themselves when they made the visit. (I take the whole parable to be about the judgment of the heathen. For it begins by saying, in the Greek, that the Lord will summon all "the nations" before Him — presumably, the Gentiles, the *Goyim*).

That such a Gift-love comes by Grace and should be called Charity, everyone will agree. But I have to add something which will not perhaps be so easily admitted. God, as it seems to me, bestows two other gifts; a supernatural Need-love of Himself and a supernatural Need-love of one another. By the first I do not mean the Appreciative love of Himself, the gift of adoration. What little I have to say on that higher — that highest — subject will come later. I mean a love which does not dream of disinterestedness, a bottomless indigence. Like a river making its own channel, like a magic wine which in being poured out should simultaneously create the glass that was to hold it, God turns our need of Him into Need-love of Him. What is stranger still is that he creates in us a more than natural receptivity of Charity from our fellow men. Need is so

near greed and we are so greedy already that it seems a strange grace. But I cannot get it out of my head that this is what happens.

Let us consider first this supernatural Need-love of Himself, bestowed by Grace. Of course the Grace does not create the need. That is there already; "given" (as the mathematicians say) in the mere fact of our being creatures, and incalculably increased by our being fallen creatures. What the Grace gives is the full recognition, the sensible awareness, the complete acceptance — even, with certain reservations, the glad acceptance — of this Need. For, without Grace, our wishes and our necessities are in conflict.

All those expressions of unworthiness which Christian practice puts into the believer's mouth seem to the outer world like the degraded and insincere grovellings of a sycophant before a tyrant, or at best a *façon de parler* like the self-depreciation of a Chinese gentleman when he calls himself "this coarse and illiterate person". In reality, however, they express the continually renewed, because continually necessary, attempt to negate that misconception of ourselves and of our relation to God which nature, even while we pray, is always recommending to us. No sooner do we believe that God loves us than there is an impulse to believe that He does so, not because He is Love, but because we are intrinsically lovable. The Pagans obeyed this impulse unabashed; a good man was "dear to the gods" because he was good. We, being better taught, resort to subterfuge. Far be it from us to think that we have virtues for which God could love us. But then, how magnificently we have repented! As Bunyan says, describing his first and illusory conversion, "I thought there was no man in England that pleased God better than I." Beaten out of this, we next offer our own humility to God's admiration. Surely He'll like *that*? Or if not that, our clear-sighted and humble recognition that we still lack humility. Thus, depth beneath depth and subtlety within subtlety, there remains some lingering idea of our own, our very own, attractiveness. It is easy to acknowledge, but almost impossible to realise for long, that we are mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright, is wholly derived from the sun that shines upon us. Surely we must have a little — however little — native luminosity? Surely we can't be *quite* creatures?

For this tangled absurdity of a Need, even a Need-love, which never fully acknowledges its own neediness, Grace substitutes a full, childlike and delighted acceptance of our Need, a joy in total dependence. We become "jolly beggars". The good man is sorry for the sins which have increased his

Need. He is not entirely sorry for the fresh Need they have produced. And he is not sorry at all for the innocent Need that is inherent in his creaturely condition. For all the time this illusion to which nature clings as her last treasure, this pretence that we have anything of our own or could for one hour retain by our own strength any goodness that God may pour into us, has kept us from being happy. We have been like bathers who want to keep their feet — or one foot — or one toe — on the bottom, when to lose that foothold would be to surrender themselves to a glorious tumble in the surf. The consequences of parting with our last claim to intrinsic freedom, power, or worth, are real freedom, power and worth, really ours just because God gives them and because we know them to be (in another sense) not "ours". Anodos has got rid of his shadow.

But God also transforms our Need-love for one another, and it requires equal transformation. In reality we all need at times, some of us at most times, that Charity from others which, being Love Himself in them, loves the unlovable. But this, though a sort of love we need, is not the sort we want. We want to be loved for our cleverness, beauty, generosity, fairness, usefulness. The first hint that anyone is offering us the highest love of all is a terrible shock. This is so well recognised that spiteful people will pretend to be loving us with Charity precisely because they know that it will wound us. To say to one who expects a renewal of Affection, Friendship, or Eros, "I forgive you as a Christian" is merely a way of continuing the quarrel. Those who say it are of course lying. But the thing would not be falsely said in order to wound unless, if it were true, it would be wounding.

How difficult it is to receive, and to go on receiving, from others a love that does not depend on our own attraction, can be seen from an extreme case. Suppose yourself a man struck down shortly after marriage by an incurable disease which may not kill you for many years; useless, impotent, hideous, disgusting; dependent on your wife's earnings; impoverishing where you hoped to enrich; impaired even in intellect and shaken by gusts of uncontrollable temper, full of unavoidable demands. And suppose your wife's care and pity to be inexhaustible. The man who can take this sweetly, who can receive all and give nothing without resentment, who can abstain even from those tiresome self-depreciations which are really only a demand for petting and reassurance, is doing something which Need-love in its merely natural condition could not attain. (No doubt such a wife will also be doing something beyond the reach of a natural Gift-love, but that is not the

point at present.) In such a case to receive is harder and perhaps more blessed than to give. But what the extreme example illustrates is universal. We are all receiving Charity. There is something in each of us that cannot be naturally loved. It is no one's fault if they do not so love it. Only the lovable can be naturally loved. You might as well ask people to like the taste of rotten bread or the sound of a mechanical drill. We can be forgiven, and pitied, and loved in spite of it, with Charity; no other way. All who have good parents, wives, husbands, or children, may be sure that at some times — and perhaps at all times in respect of some one particular trait or habit — they are receiving charity, are loved not because they are lovable but because Love Himself is in those who love them.

Thus God, admitted to the human heart, transforms not only Gift-love but Need-love; not only our Need-love of Him, but our Need-love of one another. This is of course not the only thing that can happen. He may come on what seems to us a more dreadful mission and demand that a natural love be totally renounced. A high and terrible vocation, like Abraham's, may constrain a man to turn his back on his own people and his father's house. Eros, directed to a forbidden object, may have to be sacrificed. In such instances, the process, though hard to endure, is easy to understand. What we are more likely to overlook is the necessity for a transformation even when the natural love is allowed to continue.

In such a case the Divine Love does not *substitute* itself for the natural — as if we had to throw away our silver to make room for the gold. The natural loves are summoned to become modes of Charity while also remaining the natural loves they were.

One sees here at once a sort of echo or rhyme or corollary to the Incarnation itself. And this need not surprise us, for the Author of both is the same. As Christ is perfect God and perfect Man, the natural loves are called to become perfect Charity and also perfect natural loves. As God becomes Man "Not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God", so here; Charity does not dwindle into merely natural love but natural love is taken up into, made the tuned and obedient instrument of, Love Himself.

How this can happen, most Christians know. All the activities (sins only excepted) of the natural loves can in a favoured hour become works of the glad and shameless and grateful Need-love or of the selfless, unofficious Gift-love, which are both Charity. Nothing is either too trivial or too animal

to be thus transformed. A game, a joke, a drink together, idle chat, a walk, the act of Venus — all these can be modes in which we forgive or accept forgiveness, in which we console or are reconciled, in which we “seek not our own”. Thus in our very instincts, appetites and recreations, Love has prepared for Himself “a body”.

But I said “in a favoured hour”. Hours soon pass. The total and secure transformation of a natural love into a mode of Charity is a work so difficult that perhaps no fallen man has ever come within sight of doing it perfectly. Yet the law that loves must be so transformed is, I suppose, inexorable.

One difficulty is that here, as usual, we can take a wrong turn. A Christian — a somewhat too vocally Christian — circle or family, having grasped this principle, can make a show, in their overt behaviour and especially in their words, of having achieved the thing itself — an elaborate, fussy, embarrassing and intolerable show. Such people make every trifle a matter of explicitly spiritual importance — out loud and to one another (to God, on their knees, behind a closed door, it would be another matter). They are always unnecessarily asking, or insufferably offering, forgiveness. Who would not rather live with those ordinary people who get over their tantrums (and ours) unemphatically, letting a meal, a night’s sleep, or a joke mend all? The real work must be, of all our works, the most secret. Even as far as possible secret from ourselves. Our right hand must not know what our left is doing. We have not got far enough if we play a game of cards with the children “merely” to amuse them or to show that they are forgiven. If this is the best we can do we are right to do it. But it would be better if a deeper, less conscious, Charity threw us into a frame of mind in which a little fun with the children was the thing we should at that moment like best.

We are, however, much helped in this necessary work by that very feature of our experience at which we most repine. The invitation to turn our natural loves into Charity is never lacking. It is provided by those frictions and frustrations that meet us in all of them; unmistakable evidence that (natural) love is not going to be “enough” — unmistakable, unless we are blinded by egotism. When we are, we use them absurdly. “If only I had been more fortunate in my children (that boy gets more like his father every day) I could have loved them perfectly.” But every child is sometimes infuriating; most children are not infrequently odious. “If only my husband were more considerate, less lazy, less extravagant” ... “If only my wife had fewer moods and more sense, and were less extravagant” ... “If my father

wasn’t so infernally prosy and close-fisted.” But in everyone, and of course in ourselves, there is that which requires forbearance, tolerance, forgiveness. The necessity of practising these virtues first sets us, forces us, upon the attempt to turn — more strictly, to let God turn — our love into Charity. These frets and rubs are beneficial. It may even be that where there are fewest of them the conversion of natural love is most difficult. When they are plentiful the necessity of rising above it is obvious. To rise above it when it is as fully satisfied and as little impeded as earthly conditions allow — to see that we must rise when all seems so well already — this may require a subtler conversion and a more delicate insight. In this way also it may be hard for “the rich” to enter the Kingdom.

And yet, I believe, the necessity for the conversion is inexorable; at least, if our natural loves are to enter the heavenly life. That they can enter it most of us in fact believe. We may hope that the resurrection of the body means also the resurrection of what may be called our “greater body”; the general fabric of our earthly life with its affections and relationships. But only on a condition; not a condition arbitrarily laid down by God, but one necessarily inherent in the character of Heaven: nothing can enter there which cannot become heavenly. “Flesh and blood,” mere nature, cannot inherit that Kingdom. Man can ascend to Heaven only because the Christ, who died and ascended to Heaven, is “formed in him”. Must we not suppose that the same is true of a man’s loves? Only those into which Love Himself has entered will ascend to Love Himself. And these can be raised with Him only if they have, in some degree and fashion, shared His death; if the natural element in them has submitted — year after year, or in some sudden agony — to transmutation. The fashion of this world passes away. The very name of nature implies the transitory. Natural loves can hope for eternity only in so far as they have allowed themselves to be taken into the eternity of Charity; have at least allowed the process to begin here on earth, before the night comes when no man can work. And the process will always involve a kind of death. There is no escape. In my love for wife or friend the only eternal element is the transforming presence of Love Himself. By that presence, if at all, the other elements may hope, as our physical bodies hope, to be raised from the dead. For this only is holy in them, this only is the Lord.

Theologians have sometimes asked whether we shall “know one another” in Heaven, and whether the particular love-relations worked out on earth would then continue to have any significance. It seems reasonable to

reply: “It may depend what kind of love it had become, or was becoming, on earth.” For, surely, to meet in the eternal world someone for whom your love in this, however strong, had been merely natural, would not be (on that ground) even interesting. Would it not be like meeting in adult life someone who had seemed to be a great friend at your preparatory school solely because of common interests and occupations? If there was nothing more, if he was not a kindred soul, he will now be a total stranger. Neither of you now plays conkers. You no longer want to swop your help with his French exercise for his help with your arithmetic. In Heaven, I suspect, a love that had never embodied Love Himself would be equally irrelevant. For Nature has passed away. All that is not eternal is eternally out of date.

But I must not end on this note, I dare not — and all the less because longings and terrors of my own prompt me to do so — leave any bereaved and desolate reader confirmed in the widespread illusion that reunion with the loved dead is the goal of the Christian life. The denial of this may sound harsh and unreal in the ears of the broken hearted, but it must be denied.

“Thou hast made us for thyself,” said St. Augustine, “and our heart has no rest till it comes to Thee.” This, so easy to believe for a brief moment before the altar or, perhaps, half-praying, half-meditating in an April wood, sounds like mockery beside a deathbed. But we shall be far more truly mocked if, casting this way, we pin our comfort on the hope — perhaps even with the aid of *séance* and necromancy — of some day, this time forever, enjoying the earthly Beloved again, and no more. It is hard not to imagine that such an endless prolongation of earthly happiness would be completely satisfying.

But, if I may trust my own experience, we get at once a sharp warning that there is something wrong. The moment we attempt to use our faith in the other world for this purpose, that faith weakens. The moments in my life when it was really strong have all been moments when God Himself was central in my thoughts. Believing in Him, I could then believe in Heaven as a corollary. But the reverse process — believing first in reunion with the Beloved, and then, for the sake of that reunion, believing in Heaven, and finally, for the sake of Heaven, believing in God — this will not work. One can of course imagine things. But a self-critical person will soon be increasingly aware that the imagination at work is his own; he knows he is only weaving a fantasy. And simpler souls will find the phantoms they try to feed on void of all comfort and nourishment, only to be stimulated into

some semblance of reality by pitiful efforts of self-hypnotism, and perhaps by the aid of ignoble pictures and hymns and (what is worse) witches.

We find thus by experience that there is no good applying to Heaven for earthly comfort. Heaven can give heavenly comfort; no other kind. And earth cannot give earthly comfort either. There is no earthly comfort in the long run.

For the dream of finding our end, the thing we were made for, in a Heaven of purely human love could not be true unless our whole Faith were wrong. We were made for God. Only by being in some respect like Him, only by being a manifestation of His beauty, lovingkindness, wisdom or goodness, has any earthly Beloved excited our love. It is not that we have loved them too much, but that we did not quite understand what we were loving. It is not that we shall be asked to turn from them, so dearly familiar, to a Stranger. When we see the face of God we shall know that we have always known it. He has been a party to, has made, sustained and moved moment by moment within, all our earthly experiences of innocent love. All that was true love in them was, even on earth, far more His than ours, and ours only because His. In Heaven there will be no anguish and no duty of turning away from our earthly Beloveds. First, because we shall have turned already; from the portraits to the Original, from the rivulets to the Fountain, from the creatures He made lovable to Love Himself. But secondly, because we shall find them all in Him. By loving Him more than them we shall love them more than we now do.

But all that is far away in “the land of the Trinity”, not here in exile, in the weeping valley. Down here it is all loss and renunciation. The very purpose of the bereavement (so far as it affects ourselves) may have been to force this upon us. We are then compelled to try to believe, what we cannot yet feel, that God is our true Beloved. That is why bereavement is in some ways easier for the unbeliever than for us. He can storm and rage and shake his fist at the universe, and (if he is a genius) write poems like Housman’s or Hardy’s. But we, at our lowest ebb, when the least effort seems too much for us, must begin to attempt what seem impossibilities.

“Is it easy to love God?” asks an old author. “It is easy,” he replies, “to those who do it.” I have included two Graces under the word Charity. But God can give a third. He can awake in man, towards Himself, a supernatural Appreciative Love. This is of all gifts the most to be desired. Here, not in

our natural loves, nor even in ethics, lies the true centre of all human and angelic life. With this all things are possible.

And with this, where a better book would begin, mine must end. I dare not proceed. God knows, not I, whether I have ever tasted this love. Perhaps I have only imagined the tasting. Those like myself whose imagination far exceeds their obedience are subject to a just penalty; we easily imagine conditions far higher than any we have really reached. If we describe what we have imagined we may make others, and make ourselves, believe that we have really been there. And if I have only imagined it, is it a further delusion that even the imagining has at some moments made all other objects of desire — yes, even peace, even to have no more fears — look like broken toys and faded flowers? Perhaps. Perhaps, for many of us, all experience merely defines, so to speak, the shape of that gap where our love of God ought to be. It is not enough. It is something. If we cannot “practice the presence of God”, it is something to practice the absence of God, to become increasingly aware of our unawareness till we feel like men who should stand beside a great cataract and hear no noise, or like a man in a story who looks in a mirror and finds no face there, or a man in a dream who stretches out his hand to visible objects and gets no sensation of touch. To know that one is dreaming is to be no longer perfectly asleep. But for news of the fully waking world you must go to my betters.

A GRIEF OBSERVED



From The Guardian, 1961

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Part I

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing.

At other times it feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. It is so uninteresting. Yet I want the others to be about me. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me.

There are moments, most unexpectedly, when something inside me tries to assure me that I don't really mind so much, not so very much, after all. Love is not the whole of a man's life. I was happy before I ever met H. I've plenty of what are called 'resources'. People get over these things. Come, I shan't do so badly. One is ashamed to listen to this voice but it seems for a little to be making out a good case. Then comes a sudden jab of red-hot memory and all this 'commonsense' vanishes like an ant in the mouth of a furnace.

On the rebound one passes into tears and pathos. Maudlin tears. I almost prefer the moments of agony. These are at least clean and honest. But the bath of self-pity, the wallow, the loathsome sticky-sweet pleasure of indulging it — that disgusts me. And even while I'm doing it I know it leads me to misrepresent H. herself. Give that mood its head and in a few minutes I shall have substituted for the real woman a mere doll to be blubbered over. Thank God the memory of her is still too strong (will it always be too strong?) to let me get away with it.

For H. wasn't like that at all. Her mind was lithe and quick and muscular as a leopard. Passion, tenderness and pain were all equally unable to disarm it. It scented the first whiff of cant or slush; then sprang, and knocked you over before you knew what was happening. How many bubbles of mine she pricked! I soon learned not to talk rot to her unless I did it for the sheer pleasure — and there's another red-hot jab — of being exposed and laughed at. I was never less silly than as H's lover.

And no one ever told me about the laziness of grief. Except at my job — where the machine seems to run on much as usual — I loathe the slightest

effort. Not only writing but even reading a letter is too much. Even shaving. What does it matter now whether my cheek is rough or smooth? They say an unhappy man wants distractions — something to take him out of himself. Only as a dog-tired man wants an extra blanket on a cold night; he'd rather lie there shivering than get up and find one. It's easy to see why the lonely become untidy; finally, dirty and disgusting.

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be — or so it feels — welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once. And that seeming was as strong as this. What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?

I tried to put some of these thoughts to C. this afternoon. He reminded me that the same thing seems to have happened to Christ: 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' I know. Does that make it easier to understand?

Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God's really like. Deceive yourself no longer.'

Our elders submitted and said 'Thy will be done.' How often had bitter resentment been stifled through sheer terror and an act of love — yes, in every sense, an act — put on to hide the operation?

Of course it's easy enough to say that God seems absent at our greatest need because He *is* absent — non-existent. But then why does He seem so present when, to put it quite frankly, we don't ask for Him?

One thing, however, marriage has done for me. I can never again believe that religion is manufactured out of our unconscious, starved desires and is a substitute for sex. For those few years H. and I feasted on love; every mode of it — solemn and merry, romantic and realistic, sometimes as dramatic as a thunderstorm, sometimes as comfortable and unemphatic as

putting on your soft slippers. No cranny of heart or body remained unsatisfied. If God were a substitute for love we ought to have lost all interest in Him. Who'd bother about substitutes when he has the thing itself? But that isn't what happens. We both knew we wanted something besides one another — quite a different kind of something, a quite different kind of want. You might as well say that when lovers have one another they will never want to read, or eat — or breathe.

After the death of a friend, years ago, I had for some time a most vivid feeling of certainty about his continued life; even his enhanced life. I have begged to be given even one hundredth part of the same assurance about H. There is no answer. Only the locked door, the iron curtain, the vacuum, absolute zero. 'Them as asks don't get.' I was a fool to ask. For now, even if that assurance came I should distrust it. I should think it a self-hypnosis induced by my own prayers.

At any rate I must keep clear of the spiritualists. I promised H. I would. She knew something of those circles.

Keeping promises to the dead, or to anyone else, is very well. But I begin to see that 'respect for the wishes of the dead' is a trap. Yesterday I stopped myself only in time from saying about some trifle 'H. wouldn't have liked that.' This is unfair to the others. I should soon be using 'what H. would have liked' as an instrument of domestic tyranny; with her supposed likings becoming a thinner and thinner disguise for my own.

I cannot talk to the children about her. The moment I try, there appears on their faces neither grief, nor love, nor fear, nor pity, but the most fatal of all non-conductors, embarrassment. They look as if I were committing an indecency. They are longing for me to stop. I felt just the same after my own mother's death when my father mentioned her. I can't blame them. It's the way boys are.

I sometimes think that shame, mere awkward, senseless shame, does as much towards preventing good acts and straightforward happiness as any of our vices can do. And not only in boyhood.

Or are the boys right? What would H. herself think of this terrible little notebook to which I come back and back? Are these jottings morbid? I once read the sentence 'I lay awake all night with toothache, thinking about toothache and about lying awake.' That's true to life. Part of every misery is, so to speak, the misery's shadow or reflection: the fact that you don't merely suffer but have to keep on thinking about the fact that you suffer. I

not only live each endless day in grief, but live each day thinking about living each day in grief. Do these notes merely aggravate that side of it? Merely confirm the monotonous, tread-mill march of the mind round one subject? But what am I to do? I must have some drug, and reading isn't a strong enough drug now. By writing it all down (all? — no: one thought in a hundred) I believe I get a little outside it. That's how I'd defend it to H. But ten to one she'd see a hole in the defence.

It isn't only the boys either. An odd by-product of my loss is that I'm aware of being an embarrassment to everyone I meet. At work, at the club, in the street, I see people, as they approach me, trying to make up their minds whether they'll 'say something about it' or not. I hate it if they do, and if they don't. Some funk it altogether. R. has been avoiding me for a week. I like best the well brought-up young men, almost boys, who walk up to me as if I were a dentist, turn very red, get it over, and then edge away to the bar as quickly as they decently can. Perhaps the bereaved ought to be isolated in special settlements like lepers.

To some I'm worse than an embarrassment. I am a death's head. Whenever I meet a happily married pair I can feel them both thinking. 'One or other of us must some day be as he is now.'

At first I was very afraid of going to places where H. and I had been happy — our favourite pub, our favourite wood. But I decided to do it at once — like sending a pilot up again as soon as possible after he's had a crash. Unexpectedly, it makes no difference. Her absence is no more emphatic in those places than anywhere else. It's not local at all. I suppose that if one were forbidden all salt one wouldn't notice it much more in any one food than in another. Eating in general would be different, every day, at every meal. It is like that. The act of living is different all through. Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything.

But no, that is not quite accurate. There is one place where her absence comes locally home to me, and it is a place I can't avoid. I mean my own body. It had such a different importance while it was the body of H's lover. Now it's like an empty house. But don't let me deceive myself. This body would become important to me again, and pretty quickly, if I thought there was anything wrong with it.

Cancer, and cancer, and cancer. My mother, my father, my wife. I wonder who is next in the queue.

Yet H. herself, dying of it, and well knowing the fact, said that she had lost a great deal of her old horror at it. When the reality came, the name and the idea were in some degree disarmed. And up to a point I very nearly understood. This is important. One never meets just Cancer, or War, or Unhappiness (or Happiness). One only meets each hour or moment that comes. All manner of ups and downs. Many bad spots in our best times, many good ones in our worst. One never gets the total impact of what we call ‘the thing itself’. But we call it wrongly. The thing itself is simply all these ups and downs: the rest is a name or an idea.

It is incredible how much happiness, even how much gaiety, we sometimes had together after all hope was gone. How long, how tranquilly, how nourishingly, we talked together that last night!

And yet, not quite together. There’s a limit to the ‘one flesh’. You can’t really share someone else’s weakness, or fear or pain. What you feel may be bad. It might conceivably be as bad as what the other felt, though I should distrust anyone who claimed that it was. But it would still be quite different. When I speak of fear, I mean the merely animal fear, the recoil of the organism from its destruction; the smothery feeling; the sense of being a rat in a trap. It can’t be transferred. The mind can sympathize; the body, less. In one way the bodies of lovers can do it least. All their love passages have trained them to have, not identical, but complementary, correlative, even opposite, feelings about one another.

We both knew this. I had my miseries, not hers; she had hers, not mine. The end of hers would be the coming-of-age of mine. We were setting out on different roads. This cold truth, this terrible traffic-regulation (‘You, Madam, to the right — you, Sir, to the left’) is just the beginning of the separation which is death itself.

And this separation, I suppose, waits for all. I have been thinking of H. and myself as peculiarly unfortunate in being torn apart. But presumably all lovers are. She once said to me, ‘Even if we both died at exactly the same moment, as we lie here side by side, it would be just as much a separation as the one you’re so afraid of.’ Of course she didn’t *know*, any more than *I* do. But she was near death; near enough to make a good shot. She used to quote ‘lone into the Alone.’ She said it felt like that. And how immensely improbable that it should be otherwise! Time and space and body were the very things that brought us together; the telephone wires by which we

communicated. Cut one off, or cut both off simultaneously. Either way, mustn’t the conversation stop?

Unless you assume that some other means of communication — utterly different, yet doing the same work, would be immediately substituted. But then, what conceivable point could there be in severing the old ones? Is God a clown who whips away your bowl of soup one moment in order, next moment, to replace it with another bowl of the same soup? Even nature isn’t such a clown as that. She never plays exactly the same tune twice.

It is hard to have patience with people who say ‘There is no death’ or ‘Death doesn’t matter’. There is death. And whatever is matters. And whatever happens has consequences, and it and they are irrevocable and irreversible. You might as well say that birth doesn’t matter. I look up at the night sky. Is anything more certain than that in all those vast times and spaces, if I were allowed to search them, I should nowhere find her face, her voice, her touch? She died. She is dead. Is the word so difficult to learn?

I have no photograph of her that’s any good. I cannot even see her face distinctly in my imagination. Yet the odd face of some stranger seen in a crowd this morning may come before me in vivid perfection the moment I close my eyes tonight. No doubt, the explanation is simple enough. We have seen the faces of those we know best so variously, from so many angles, in so many lights, with so many expressions — waking, sleeping, laughing, crying, eating, talking, thinking — that all the impressions crowd into our memory together and cancel out into a mere blur. But her voice is still vivid. The remembered voice — that can turn me at any moment to a whimpering child.

Part II

For the first time I have looked back and read these notes. They appal me. From the way I've been talking anyone would think that H's death mattered chiefly for its effect on myself. Her point of view seems to have dropped out of sight. Have I forgotten the moment of bitterness when she cried out 'And there was so much to live for'? Happiness had not come to her early in life. A thousand years of it would not have made her *blasée*. Her palate for all the joys of sense and intellect and spirit was fresh and unspoiled. Nothing would have been wasted on her. She liked more things and liked them more than anyone I have known. A noble hunger, long unsatisfied, met at last its proper food, and almost instantly the food was snatched away. Fate (or whatever it is) delights to produce a great capacity and then frustrate it. Beethoven went deaf. By our standards a mean joke; the monkey trick of a spiteful imbecile.

I must think more about H. and less about myself.

Yes, that sounds very well. But there's a snag. I am thinking about her nearly always. Thinking of the H. facts — real words, looks, laughs, and actions of hers. But it is my own mind that selects and groups them. Already, less than a month after her death, I can feel the slow, insidious beginning of a process that will make the H. I think of into a more and more imaginary woman. Founded on fact, no doubt. I shall put in nothing fictitious (or I hope I shan't). But won't the composition inevitably become more and more my own? The reality is no longer there to check me, to pull me up short, as the real H. so often did, so unexpectedly, by being so thoroughly herself and not me.

The most precious gift that marriage gave me was this constant impact of something very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant — in a word, real. Is all that work to be undone? Is what I shall still call H. to sink back horribly into being not much more than one of my old bachelor pipe-dreams? Oh my dear, my dear, come back for one moment and drive that miserable phantom away. Oh God, God, why did you take such trouble to force this creature out of its shell if it is now doomed to crawl back — to be sucked back — into it?

Today I had to meet a man I haven't seen for ten years. And all that time I had thought I was remembering him well — how he looked and spoke and

the sort of things he said. The first five minutes of the real man shattered the image completely. Not that he had changed. On the contrary. I kept on thinking, ‘Yes, of course, of course. I’d forgotten that he thought that — or disliked this, or knew so-and-so — or jerked his head back that way.’ I had known all these things once and I recognized them the moment I met them again. But they had all faded out of my mental picture of him, and when they were all replaced by his actual presence the total effect was quite astonishingly different from the image I had carried about with me for those ten years. How can I hope that this will not happen to my memory of H? That it is not happening already? Slowly, quietly, like snow-flakes — like the small flakes that come when it is going to snow all night — little flakes of me, my impressions, my selections, are settling down on the image of her. The real shape will be quite hidden in the end. Ten minutes — ten seconds — of the real H. would correct all this. And yet, even if those ten seconds were allowed me, one second later the little flakes would begin to fall again. The rough, sharp, cleansing tang of her otherness is gone.

What pitiable cant to say ‘She will live forever in my memory!’ *Live?* That is exactly what she won’t do. You might as well think like the old Egyptians that you can keep the dead by embalming them. Will nothing persuade us that they are gone? What’s left? A corpse, a memory, and (in some versions) a ghost. All mockeries or horrors. Three more ways of spelling the word *dead*. It was H. I loved. As if I wanted to fall in love with my memory of her, an image in my own mind! It would be a sort of incest.

I remember being rather horrified one summer morning long ago when a burly, cheerful labouring man, carrying a hoe and a watering pot came into our churchyard and, as he pulled the gate behind him, shouted over his shoulder to two friends, ‘See you later, I’m just going to visit Mum.’ He meant he was going to weed and water and generally tidy up her grave. It horrified me because this mode of sentiment, all this churchyard stuff, was and is simply hateful, even inconceivable, to me. But in the light of my recent thoughts I am beginning to wonder whether, if one could take that man’s line (I can’t), there isn’t a good deal to be said for it. A six-by-three foot flower-bed had become Mum. That was his symbol for her, his link with her. Caring for it was visiting her. May this not be in one way better than preserving and caressing an image in one’s own memory? The grave and the image are equally links with the irrecoverable and symbols for the unimaginable. But the image has the added disadvantage that it will do

whatever you want. It will smile or frown, be tender, gay, ribald, or argumentative just as your mood demands. It is a puppet of which you hold the strings. Not yet of course. The reality is still too fresh; genuine and wholly involuntary memories can still, thank God, at any moment rush in and tear the strings out of my hands. But the fatal obedience of the image, its insipid dependence on me, is bound to increase. The flower-bed on the other hand is an obstinate, resistant, often intractable bit of reality, just as Mum in her lifetime doubtless was. As H. was.

Or as H. is. Can I honestly say that I believe she now is anything? The vast majority of the people I meet, say, at work, would certainly think she is not. Though naturally they wouldn't press the point on me. Not just now anyway. What do I really think? I have always been able to pray for the other dead, and I still do, with some confidence. But when I try to pray for H., I halt. Bewilderment and amazement come over me. I have a ghastly sense of unreality, of speaking into a vacuum about a nonentity.

The reason for the difference is only too plain. You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong and sound as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice. Wouldn't you then first discover how much you really trusted it? The same with people. For years I would have said that I had perfect confidence in B.R. Then came the moment when I had to decide whether I would or would not trust him with a really important secret. That threw quite a new light on what I called my 'confidence' in him. I discovered that there was no such thing. Only a real risk tests the reality of a belief. Apparently the faith — I thought it faith — which enables me to pray for the other dead has seemed strong only because I have never really cared, not desperately, whether they existed or not. Yet I thought I did.

But there are other difficulties. 'Where is she now?' That is, *in what place* is she *at the present time*. But if H. is not a body — and the body I loved is certainly no longer she — she is in no place at all. And 'the present time' is a date or point in our time series. It is as if she were on a journey without me and I said, looking at my watch, 'I wonder is she at Euston now.' But unless she is proceeding at sixty seconds a minute along this same time-line that all we living people travel by, what does *now* mean? If

the dead are not in time, or not in our sort of time, is there any clear difference, when we speak of them, between *was* and *is* and *will be*?

Kind people have said to me ‘She is with God.’ In one sense that is most certain. She is, like God, incomprehensible and unimaginable.

But I find that this question, however important it may be in itself, is not after all very important in relation to grief. Suppose that the earthly lives she and I shared for a few years are in reality only the basis for, or prelude to, or earthly appearance of, two unimaginable, super-cosmic, eternal somethings. Those somethings could be pictured as spheres or globes. Where the plane of Nature cuts through them — that is, in earthly life — they appear as two circles (circles are slices of spheres). Two circles that touched. But those two circles, above all the point at which they touched, are the very thing I am mourning for, homesick for, famished for. You tell me ‘she goes on’. But my heart and body are crying out, come back, come back. Be a circle, touching my circle on the plane of Nature. But I know this is impossible. I know that the thing I want is exactly the thing I can never get. The old life, the jokes, the drinks, the arguments, the love-making, the tiny, heartbreaking commonplace. On any view whatever, to say ‘H. is dead’, is to say ‘All that is gone’. It is a part of the past. And the past is the past and that is what time means, and time itself is one more name for death, and Heaven itself is a state where ‘the former things have passed away’.

Talk to me about the truth of religion and I’ll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion and I’ll listen submissively. But don’t come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect that you don’t understand.

Unless, of course, you can literally believe all that stuff about family reunions ‘on the further shore’, pictured in entirely earthly terms. But that is all unscriptural, all out of bad hymns and lithographs. There’s not a word of it in the Bible. And it rings false. We *know* it couldn’t be like that. Reality never repeats. The exact same thing is never taken away and given back. How well the Spiritualists bait their hook! ‘Things on this side are not so different after all.’ There are cigars in Heaven. For that is what we should all like. The happy past restored.

And that, just that, is what I cry out for, with mad, midnight endearments and entreaties spoken into the empty air.

And poor C. quotes to me ‘Do not mourn like those that have no hope’. It astonishes me, the way we are invited to apply to ourselves words so obviously addressed to our betters. What St. Paul says can comfort only those who love God better than the dead, and the dead better than themselves. If a mother is mourning not for what she has lost but for what her dead child has lost, it is a comfort to believe that the child has not lost the end for which it was created. And it is a comfort to believe that she herself, in losing her chief or only natural happiness, has not lost a greater thing, that she may still hope to ‘glorify God and enjoy Him forever’. A comfort to the God-aimed, eternal spirit within her. But not to her motherhood. The specifically maternal happiness must be written off. Never, in any place or time, will she have her son on her knees, or bath him, or tell him a story, or plan for his future, or see her grandchild.

They tell me H. is happy now, they tell me she is at peace. What makes them so sure of this? I don’t mean that I fear the worst of all. Nearly her last words were ‘I am at peace with God’. She had not always been. And she never lied. And she wasn’t easily deceived; least of all, in her own favour. I don’t mean that. But why are they so sure that all anguish ends with death? More than half the Christian world, and millions in the East, believe otherwise. How do they know she is ‘at rest’. Why should the separation (if nothing else) which so agonizes the lover who is left behind be painless to the lover who departs?

‘Because she is in God’s hands.’ But if so, she was in God’s hands all the time, and I have seen what they did to her here. Do they suddenly become gentler to us the moment we are out of the body? And if so, why? If God’s goodness is inconsistent with hurting us, then either God is not good or there is no God: for in the only life we know He hurts us beyond our worst fears and beyond all we can imagine. If it is consistent with hurting us, then He may hurt us after death as unendurably as before it.

Sometimes it is hard not to say ‘God forgive God’. Sometimes it is hard to say so much. But if our faith is true, He didn’t. He crucified Him.

Come, what do we gain by evasions? We are under the harrow and can’t escape. Reality, looked at steadily, is unbearable. And how or why did such a reality blossom (or fester) here and there into the terrible phenomenon called consciousness? Why did it produce things like us who can see it and, seeing it, recoil in loathing? Who (stranger still) want to see it and take pains to find it out, even when no need compels them and even though the

sight of it makes an incurable ulcer in their hearts? People like H. herself, who would have truth at any price.

If H. ‘is not’, then she never was. I mistook a cloud of atoms for a person. There aren’t, and never were, any people. Death only reveals the vacuity that was always there. What we call the living are simply those who have not yet been unmasked. All equally bankrupt, but some not yet declared.

But this must be nonsense; vacuity revealed to whom? bankruptcy declared to whom? To other boxes of fireworks or clouds of atoms. I will never believe — more strictly I can’t believe — that one set of physical events could be, or make, a mistake about other sets.

No, my real fear is not of materialism. If it were true, we — or what we mistake for ‘we’ — could get out, get from under the harrow. An overdose of sleeping pills would do it. I am more afraid that we are really rats in a trap. Or, worse still, rats in a laboratory. Someone said, I believe, ‘God always geometrizes’. Supposing the truth were ‘God always vivisects?’

Sooner or later I must face the question in plain language. What reason have we, except our own desperate wishes, to believe that God is, by any standard we can conceive, ‘good’? Doesn’t all the *prima facie* evidence suggest exactly the opposite? What have we to set against it?

We set Christ against it. But how if He were mistaken? Almost His last words may have a perfectly clear meaning. He had found that the Being He called Father was horribly and infinitely different from what He had supposed. The trap, so long and carefully prepared and so subtly baited, was at last sprung, on the cross. The vile practical joke had succeeded.

What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers H. and I offered and all the false hopes we had. Not hopes raised merely by our own wishful thinking; hopes encouraged, even forced upon us, by false diagnoses, by X-ray photographs, by strange remissions, by one temporary recovery that might have ranked as a miracle. Step by step we were ‘led up the garden path’. Time after time, when He seemed most gracious He was really preparing the next torture.

I wrote that last night. It was a yell rather than a thought. Let me try it over again. Is it rational to believe in a bad God? Anyway, in a God so bad as all that? The Cosmic Sadist, the spiteful imbecile?

I think it is, if nothing else, too anthropomorphic. When you come to think of it, it is far more anthropomorphic than picturing Him as a grave old

king with a long beard. That image is a Jungian archetype. It links God with all the wise old kings in the fairy-tales, with prophets, sages, magicians. Though it is (formally) the picture of a man, it suggests something more than humanity. At the very least it gets in the idea of something older than yourself, something that knows more, something you can't fathom. It preserves mystery. Therefore room for hope. Therefore room for a dread or awe that needn't be mere fear of mischief from a spiteful potentate. But the picture I was building up last night is simply the picture of a man like S.C. — who used to sit next to me at dinner and tell me what he'd been doing to the cats that afternoon. Now a being like S.C., however magnified, couldn't invent or create or govern anything. He would set traps and try to bait them. But he'd never have thought of baits like love, or laughter, or daffodils, or a frosty sunset. *He* make a universe? He couldn't make a joke, or a bow, or an apology, or a friend.

Or could one seriously introduce the idea of a bad God, as it were by the back door, through a sort of extreme Calvinism? You could say we are fallen and depraved. We are so depraved that our ideas of goodness count for nothing; or worse than nothing — the very fact that we think something good is presumptive evidence that it is really bad. Now God has in fact — our worst fears are true — all the characteristics we regard as bad: unreasonableness, vanity, vindictiveness, injustice, cruelty. But all these blacks (as they seem to us) are really whites. It's only our depravity makes them look black to us.

And so what? This, for all practical (and speculative) purposes sponges God off the slate. The word *good*, applied to Him, becomes meaningless: like abracadabra. We have no motive for obeying Him. Not even fear. It is true we have His threats and promises. But why should we believe them? If cruelty is from His point of view 'good', telling lies may be 'good' too. Even if they are true, what then? If His ideas of good are so very different from ours, what He calls 'Heaven' might well be what we should call Hell, and vice-versa. Finally, if reality at its very root is so meaningless to us — or, putting it the other way round, if we are such total imbeciles — what is the point of trying to think either about God or about anything else? This knot comes undone when you try to pull it tight.

Why do I make room in my mind for such filth and nonsense? Do I hope that if feeling disguises itself as thought I shall feel less? Aren't all these notes the senseless writhings of a man who won't accept the fact that there

is nothing we can do with suffering except to suffer it? Who still thinks there is some device (if only he could find it) which will make pain not to be pain. It doesn't really matter whether you grip the arms of the dentist's chair or let your hands lie in your lap. The drill drills on.

And grief still feels like fear. Perhaps, more strictly, like suspense. Or like waiting; just hanging about waiting for something to happen. It gives life a permanently provisional feeling. It doesn't seem worth starting anything. I can't settle down. I yawn, I fidget, I smoke too much. Up till this I always had too little time. Now there is nothing but time. Almost pure time, empty successiveness.

One flesh. Or, if you prefer, one ship. The starboard engine has gone. I, the port engine, must chug along somehow till we make harbour. Or rather, till the journey ends. How can I assume a harbour? A lee shore, more likely, a black night, a deafening gale, breakers ahead — and any lights shown from the land probably being waved by wreckers. Such was H's landfall. Such was my mother's. I say their landfalls; not their arrivals.

Part III

It’s not true that I’m always thinking of H. Work and conversation make that impossible. But the times when I’m not are perhaps my worst. For then, though I have forgotten the reason, there is spread over everything a vague sense of wrongness, of something amiss. Like in those dreams where nothing terrible occurs — nothing that would sound even remarkable if you told it at breakfast-time — but the atmosphere, the taste, of the whole thing is deadly. So with this. I see the rowan berries reddening and don’t know for a moment why they, of all things, should be depressing. I hear a clock strike and some quality it always had before has gone out of the sound. What’s wrong with the world to make it so flat, shabby, worn-out looking? Then I remember.

This is one of the things I’m afraid of. The agonies, the mad midnight moments, must, in the course of nature, die away. But what will follow? Just this apathy, this dead flatness? Will there come a time when I no longer ask why the world is like a mean street, because I shall take the squalor as normal? Does grief finally subside into boredom tinged by faint nausea?

Feelings, and feelings, and feelings. Let me try thinking instead. From the rational point of view, what new factor has H’s death introduced into the problem of the universe? What grounds has it given me for doubting all that I believe? I knew already that these things, and worse, happened daily. I would have said that I had taken them into account. I had been warned — I had warned myself — not to reckon on worldly happiness. We were even promised sufferings. They were part of the programme. We were even told ‘Blessed are they that mourn’ and I accepted it. I’ve got nothing that I hadn’t bargained for. Of course it is different when the thing happens to oneself, not to others, and in reality, not in imagination. Yes; but should it, for a sane man, make quite such a difference as this? No. And it wouldn’t for a man whose faith had been real faith and whose concern for other people’s sorrows had been real concern. The case is too plain. If my house has collapsed at one blow, that is because it was a house of cards. The faith which ‘took these things into account’ was not faith but imagination. The taking them into account was not real sympathy. If I had really cared, as I thought I did, about the sorrows of the world, I should not have been so overwhelmed when my own sorrow came. It has been an imaginary faith

playing with innocuous counters labelled ‘Illness’, ‘Pain’, ‘Death’ and ‘Loneliness’. I thought I trusted the rope until it mattered to me whether it would bear me. Now it matters, and I find I didn’t.

Bridge-players tell me that there must be some money on the game ‘or else people won’t take it seriously’. Apparently it’s like that. Your bid — for God or no God, for a good God or the Cosmic Sadist, for eternal life or nonentity — will not be serious if nothing much is staked on it. And you will never discover how serious it was until the stakes are raised horribly high; until you find that you are playing not for counters or for sixpences but for every penny you have in the world. Nothing less will shake a man — or at any rate a man like me — out of his merely verbal thinking and his merely notional beliefs. He has to be knocked silly before he comes to his senses. Only torture will bring out the truth. Only under torture does he discover it himself.

And I must surely admit — H. would have forced me to admit in a few passes — that, if my house was a house of cards, the sooner it was knocked down the better. And only suffering could do it. But then the Cosmic Sadist and Eternal Vivisector becomes an unnecessary hypothesis.

Is this last note a sign that I’m incurable, that when reality smashes my dream to bits, I mope and snarl while the first shock lasts, and then patiently, idiotically, start putting it together again? And so always? However often the house of cards falls, shall I set about rebuilding it? Is that what I’m doing now?

Indeed it’s likely enough that what I shall call, if it happens, a ‘restoration of faith’ will turn out to be only one more house of cards. And I shan’t know whether it is or not until the next blow comes — when, say, fatal disease is diagnosed in my body too, or war breaks out, or I have ruined myself by some ghastly mistake in my work. But there are two questions here. In which sense may it be a house of cards? Because the things I am believing are only a dream, or because I only dream that I believe them?

As for the things themselves, why should the thoughts I had a week ago be any more trustworthy than the better thoughts I have now? I am surely, in general, a saner man than I was then. Why should the desperate imaginings of a man dazed — I said it was like being concussed — be especially reliable?

Because there was no wishful thinking in them? Because, being so horrible, they were therefore all the more likely to be true? But there are fear-fulfilment as well as wish-fulfilment dreams. And were they wholly distasteful? No. In a way I liked them. I am even aware of a slight reluctance to accept the opposite thoughts. All that stuff about the Cosmic Sadist was not so much the expression of thought as of hatred. I was getting from it the only pleasure a man in anguish can get; the pleasure of hitting back. It was really just Billingsgate — mere abuse; 'telling God what I thought of Him'. And of course, as in all abusive language, 'what I thought' didn't mean what I thought true. Only what I thought would offend Him (and His worshippers) most. That sort of thing is never said without some pleasure. Gets it 'off your chest'. You feel better for a moment.

But the mood is no evidence. Of course the cat will growl and spit at the operator and bite him if she can. But the real question is whether he is a vet or a vivisector. Her bad language throws no light on it one way or the other.

And I can believe He is a vet when I think of my own suffering. It is harder when I think of hers. What is grief compared with physical pain? Whatever fools may say, the body can suffer twenty times more than the mind. The mind has always some power of evasion. At worst, the unbearable thought only comes back and back, but the physical pain can be absolutely continuous. Grief is like a bomber circling round and dropping its bombs each time the circle brings it overhead; physical pain is like the steady barrage on a trench in World War One, hours of it with no let-up for a moment. Thought is never static; pain often is.

What sort of a lover am I to think so much about my affliction and so much less about hers? Even the insane call, 'Come back', is all for my own sake. I never even raised the question whether such a return, if it were possible, would be good for her. I want her back as an ingredient in the restoration of *my* past. Could I have wished her anything worse? Having got once through death, to come back and then, at some later date, have all her dying to do over again? They call Stephen the first martyr. Hadn't Lazarus the rawer deal?

I begin to see. My love for H. was of much the same quality as my faith in God. I won't exaggerate, though. Whether there was anything but imagination in the faith, or anything but egoism in the love, God knows. I don't. There may have been a little more; especially in my love for H. But

neither was the thing I thought it was. A good deal of the card-castle about both.

What does it matter how this grief of mine evolves or what I do with it? What does it matter how I remember her or whether I remember her at all? None of these alternatives will either ease or aggravate her past anguish.

Her past anguish. How do I know that all her anguish is past? I never believed before — I thought it immensely improbable — that the faithfulest soul could leap straight into perfection and peace the moment death has rattled in the throat. It would be wishful thinking with a vengeance to take up that belief now. H. was a splendid thing; a soul straight, bright, and tempered like a sword. But not a perfected saint. A sinful woman married to a sinful man; two of God's patients, not yet cured. I know there are not only tears to be dried but stains to be scoured. The sword will be made even brighter.

But oh God, tenderly, tenderly. Already, month by month and week by week you broke her body on the wheel whilst she still wore it. Is it not yet enough?

The terrible thing is that a perfectly good God is in this matter hardly less formidable than a Cosmic Sadist. The more we believe that God hurts only to heal, the less we can believe that there is any use in begging for tenderness. A cruel man might be bribed — might grow tired of his vile sport — might have a temporary fit of mercy, as alcoholics have fits of sobriety. But suppose that what you are up against is a surgeon whose intentions are wholly good. The kinder and more conscientious he is, the more inexorably he will go on cutting. If he yielded to your entreaties, if he stopped before the operation was complete, all the pain up to that point would have been useless. But is it credible that such extremities of torture should be necessary for us? Well, take your choice. The tortures occur. If they are unnecessary, then there is no God or a bad one. If there is a good God, then these tortures are necessary. For no even moderately good Being could possibly inflict or permit them if they weren't.

Either way, we're for it.

What do people mean when they say 'I am not afraid of God because I know He is good?' Have they never even been to a dentist?

Yet this is unendurable. And then one babbles— 'If only I could bear it, or the worst of it, or any of it, instead of her.' But one can't tell how serious that bid is, for nothing is staked on it. If it suddenly became a real

possibility, then, for the first time, we should discover how seriously we had meant it. But is it ever allowed?

It was allowed to One, we are told, and I find I can now believe again, that He has done vicariously whatever can be so done. He replies to our babble, ‘You cannot and you dare not. I could and dared.’

Something quite unexpected has happened. It came this morning early. For various reasons, not in themselves at all mysterious, my heart was lighter than it had been for many weeks. For one thing, I suppose I am recovering physically from a good deal of mere exhaustion. And I’d had a very tiring but very healthy twelve hours the day before, and a sounder night’s sleep; and after ten days of low-hung grey skies and motionless warm dampness, the sun was shining and there was a light breeze. And suddenly at the very moment when, so far, I mourned H. least, I remembered her best. Indeed it was something (almost) better than memory; an instantaneous, unanswerable impression. To say it was like a meeting would be going too far. Yet there was that in it which tempts one to use those words. It was as if the lifting of the sorrow removed a barrier.

Why has no one told me these things? How easily I might have misjudged another man in the same situation? I might have said, ‘He’s got over it. He’s forgotten his wife,’ when the truth was, ‘He remembers her better *because* he has partly got over it.’

Such was the fact. And I believe I can make sense out of it. You can’t see anything properly while your eyes are blurred with tears. You can’t, in most things, get what you want if you want it too desperately: anyway, you can’t get the best out of it. ‘Now! Let’s have a real good talk’ reduces everyone to silence, ‘I *must* get a good sleep tonight’ ushers in hours of wakefulness. Delicious drinks are wasted on a really ravenous thirst. Is it similarly the very intensity of the longing that draws the iron curtain, that makes us feel we are staring into a vacuum when we think about our dead? ‘Them as asks’ (at any rate ‘as asks too importunately’) don’t get. Perhaps can’t.

And so, perhaps, with God. I have gradually been coming to feel that the door is no longer shut and bolted. Was it my own frantic need that slammed it in my face? The time when there is nothing at all in your soul except a cry for help may be just the time when God can’t give it: you are like the drowning man who can’t be helped because he clutches and grabs. Perhaps your own reiterated cries deafen you to the voice you hoped to hear.

On the other hand, ‘Knock and it shall be opened.’ But does knocking mean hammering and kicking the door like a maniac? And there’s also ‘To him that hath shall be given.’ After all, you must have a capacity to receive, or even omnipotence can’t give. Perhaps your own passion temporarily destroys the capacity.

For all sorts of mistakes are possible when you are dealing with Him. Long ago, before we were married, H. was haunted all one morning as she went about her work with the obscure sense of God (so to speak) ‘at her elbow’, demanding her attention. And of course, not being a perfected saint, she had the feeling that it would be a question, as it usually is, of some unrepented sin or tedious duty. At last she gave in — I know how one puts it off — and faced Him. But the message was, ‘I want to *give* you something’ and instantly she entered into joy.

I think I am beginning to understand why grief feels like suspense. It comes from the frustration of so many impulses that had become habitual. Thought after thought, feeling after feeling, action after action, had H. for their object. Now their target is gone. I keep on through habit fitting an arrow to the string; then I remember and have to lay the bow down. So many roads lead thought to H. I set out on one of them. But now there’s an impassable frontier-post across it. So many roads once; now so many *culs de sac*.

For a good wife contains so many persons in herself. What was H. not to me? She was my daughter and my mother, my pupil and my teacher, my subject and my sovereign; and always, holding all these in solution, my trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow-soldier. My mistress; but at the same time all that any man friend (and I have good ones) has ever been to me. Perhaps more. If we had never fallen in love we should have none the less been always together, and created a scandal. That’s what I meant when I once praised her for her ‘masculine virtues’. But she soon put a stop to that by asking how I’d like to be praised for my feminine ones. It was a good *riposte*, dear. Yet there was something of the Amazon, something of Penthesileia and Camilla. And you, as well as I, were glad it should be there. You were glad I should recognize it.

Solomon calls his bride Sister. Could a woman be a complete wife unless, for a moment, in one particular mood, a man felt almost inclined to call her Brother?

‘It was too perfect to last,’ so I am tempted to say of our marriage. But it can be meant in two ways. It may be grimly pessimistic — as if God no sooner saw two of His creatures happy than He stopped it (‘None of that here!’). As if He were like the Hostess at the sherry-party who separates two guests the moment they show signs of having got into a real conversation. But it could also mean ‘This had reached its proper perfection. This had become what it had in it to be. Therefore of course it would not be prolonged.’ As if God said, ‘Good; you have mastered that exercise. I am very pleased with it. And now you are ready to go on to the next.’ When you have learned to do quadratics and enjoy doing them you will not be set them much longer. The teacher moves you on.

For we did learn and achieve something. There is, hidden or flaunted, a sword between the sexes till an entire marriage reconciles them. It is arrogance in us to call frankness, fairness, and chivalry ‘masculine’ when we see them in a woman; it is arrogance in them, to describe a man’s sensitiveness or tact or tenderness as ‘feminine’. But also what poor, warped fragments of humanity most mere men and mere women must be to make the implications of that arrogance plausible. Marriage heals this. Jointly the two become fully human. ‘In the image of God created He *them*.’ Thus, by a paradox, this carnival of sexuality leads us out beyond our sexes.

And then one or other dies. And we think of this as love cut short; like a dance stopped in mid career or a flower with its head unluckily snapped off — something truncated and therefore, lacking its due shape. I wonder. If, as I can’t help suspecting, the dead also feel the pains of separation (and this may be one of their purgatorial sufferings), then for both lovers, and for all pairs of lovers without exception, bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love. It follows marriage as normally as marriage follows courtship or as autumn follows summer. It is not a truncation of the process but one of its phases; not the interruption of the dance, but the next figure. We are ‘taken out of ourselves’ by the loved one while she is here. Then comes the tragic figure of the dance in which we must learn to be still taken out of ourselves though the bodily presence is withdrawn, to love the very Her, and not fall back to loving our past, or our memory, or our sorrow, or our relief from sorrow, or our own love.

Looking back, I see that only a very little time ago I was greatly concerned about my memory of H. and how false it might become. For

some reason — the merciful good sense of God is the only one I can think of — I have stopped bothering about that. And the remarkable thing is that since I stopped bothering about it, she seems to meet me everywhere. *Meet* is far too strong a word. I don't mean anything remotely like an apparition or a voice. I don't mean even any strikingly emotional experience at any particular moment. Rather, a sort of unobtrusive but massive sense that she is, just as much as ever, a fact to be taken into account.

'To be taken into account' is perhaps an unfortunate way of putting it. It sounds as if she were rather a battle-axe. How can I put it better? Would 'momentously real' or 'obstinately real' do? It is as if the experience said to me 'You are, as it happens, extremely glad that H. is still a fact. But remember she would be equally a fact whether you liked it or not. Your preferences have not been considered.'

How far have I got? Just as far, I think, as a widower of another sort who would stop, leaning on his spade, and say in answer to our inquiry, 'Thank 'ee. Mustn't grumble. I do miss her something dreadful. But they say these things are sent to try us.' We have come to the same point; he with his spade, and I, who am not now much good at digging, with my own instrument. But of course one must take 'sent to try us' the right way. God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down.

Getting over it so soon? But the words are ambiguous. To say the patient is getting over it after an operation for appendicitis is one thing; after he's had his leg off it is quite another. After that operation either the wounded stump heals or the man dies. If it heals, the fierce, continuous pain will stop. Presently he'll get back his strength and be able to stump about on his wooden leg. He has 'got over it'. But he will probably have recurrent pains in the stump all his life, and perhaps pretty bad ones; and he will always be a one-legged man. There will be hardly any moment when he forgets it. Bathing, dressing, sitting down and getting up again, even lying in bed, will all be different. His whole way of life will be changed. All sorts of pleasures and activities that he once took for granted will have to be simply written off. Duties too. At present I am learning to get about on crutches.

Perhaps I shall presently be given a wooden leg. But I shall never be a biped again.

Still, there's no denying that in some sense I 'feel better', and with that comes at once a sort of shame, and a feeling that one is under a sort of obligation to cherish and foment and prolong one's unhappiness. I've read about that in books, but I never dreamed I should feel it myself. I am sure H. wouldn't approve of it. She'd tell me not to be a fool. So I'm pretty certain, would God. What is behind it?

Partly, no doubt, vanity. We want to prove to ourselves that we are lovers on the grand scale, tragic heroes; not just ordinary privates in the huge army of the bereaved, slogging along and making the best of a bad job. But that's not the whole of the explanation.

I think there is also a confusion. We don't really want grief, in its first agonies, to be prolonged: nobody could. But we want something else of which grief is a frequent symptom, and then we confuse the symptom with the thing itself. I wrote the other night that bereavement is not the truncation of married love but one of its regular phases — like the honeymoon. What we want is to live our marriage well and faithfully through that phase too. If it hurts (and it certainly will) we accept the pains as a necessary part of this phase. We don't want to escape them at the price of desertion or divorce. Killing the dead a second time. We were one flesh. Now that it has been cut in two, we don't want to pretend that it is whole and complete. We will be still married, still in love. Therefore we shall still ache. But we are not at all — if we understand ourselves — seeking the aches for their own sake. The less of them the better, so long as the marriage is preserved. And the more joy there can be in the marriage between dead and living, the better.

The better in every way. For, as I have discovered, passionate grief does not link us with the dead but cuts us off from them. This become clearer and clearer. It is just at those moments when I feel least sorrow — getting into my morning bath is usually one of them — that H. rushes upon my mind in her full reality, her otherness. Not, as in my worst moments, all foreshortened and patheticized and solemnized by my miseries, but as she is in her own right. This is good and tonic.

I seem to remember — though I couldn't quote one at the moment — all sorts of ballads and folk-tales in which the dead tell us that our mourning does them some kind of wrong. They beg us to stop it. There may be far more depth in this than I thought. If so, our grandfather's generation went

very far astray. All that (sometimes lifelong) ritual of sorrow — visiting graves, keeping anniversaries, leaving the empty bedroom exactly as ‘the departed’ used to keep it, mentioning the dead either not at all or always in a special voice, or even (like Queen Victoria) having the dead man’s clothes put out for dinner every evening — this was like mummification. It made the dead far more dead.

Or was that (unconsciously) its purpose? Something very primitive may be at work here. To keep the dead thoroughly dead, to make sure that they won’t come sidling back among the living, is a main pre-occupation of the savage mind. At all costs make them ‘stay put’. Certainly these rituals do in fact emphasize their deadness. Perhaps this result was not really so unwelcome, not always, as the ritualists believed.

But I’ve no business to judge them. All guess-work; I’d better keep my breath to cool my own porridge. For me at any rate the programme is plain. I will turn to her as often as possible in gladness. I will even salute her with a laugh. The less I mourn her the nearer I seem to her.

An admirable programme. Unfortunately it can’t be carried out. Tonight all the hells of young grief have opened again; the mad words, the bitter resentment, the fluttering in the stomach, the nightmare unreality, the wallowed-in tears. For in grief nothing ‘stays put’. One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral?

But if a spiral, am I going up or down it?

How often — will it be for always? — how often will the vast emptiness astonish me like a complete novelty and make me say, ‘I never realized my loss till this moment’? The same leg is cut off time after time. The first plunge of the knife into the flesh is felt again and again.

They say ‘The coward dies many times’; so does the beloved. Didn’t the eagle find a fresh liver to tear in Prometheus every time it dined?

Part IV

This is the fourth — and the last — empty MS. book I can find in the house; at least nearly empty, for there are some pages of very ancient arithmetic at the end by J. I resolve to let this limit my jottings. I *will not* start buying books for the purpose. In so far as this record was a defence against total collapse, a safety-valve, it has done some good. The other end I had in view turns out to have been based on a misunderstanding. I thought I could describe a *state*; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history, and if I don't stop writing that history at some quite arbitrary point, there's no reason why I should ever stop. There is something new to be chronicled every day. Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape. As I've already noted, not every bend does. Sometimes the surprise is the opposite one; you are presented with exactly the same sort of country you thought you had left behind miles ago. That is when you wonder whether the valley isn't a circular trench. But it isn't. There are partial recurrences, but the sequence doesn't repeat.

Here, for instance, is a new phase, a new loss. I do all the walking I can, for I'd be a fool to go to bed not tired. Today I have been revisiting old haunts, taking one of the long rambles that made me so happy in my bachelor days. And this time the face of nature was not emptied of its beauty and the world didn't look (as I complained some days ago) like a mean street. On the contrary, every horizon, every stile or clump of trees, summoned me into a past kind of happiness, my pre-H. happiness. But the invitation seemed to me horrible. The happiness into which it invited me was insipid. I find that I don't want to go back again and be happy in *that* way. It frightens me to think that a mere going back should even be possible. For this fate would seem to me the worst of all; to reach a state in which my years of love and marriage should appear in retrospect a charming episode — like a holiday — that had briefly interrupted my interminable life and returned me to normal, unchanged. And then it would come to seem unreal — something so foreign to the usual texture of my history that I could almost believe it had happened to someone else. Thus H. would die to me a second time; a worse bereavement than the first. Anything but that.

Did you ever know, dear, how much you took away with you when you left? You have stripped me even of my past, even of the things we never shared. I was wrong to say the stump was recovering from the pain of the amputation. I was deceived because it has so many ways to hurt me that I discover them only one by one.

Still, there are the two enormous gains — I know myself too well now to call them ‘lasting’. Turned to God, my mind no longer meets that locked door; turned to H., it no longer meets that vacuum — nor all that fuss about my mental image of her. My jottings show something of the process, but not so much as I’d hoped. Perhaps both changes were really not observable. There was no sudden, striking, and emotional transition. Like the warming of a room or the coming of daylight. When you first notice them they have already been going on for some time.

The notes have been about myself, and about H., and about God. In that order. The order and the proportions exactly what they ought not to have been. And I see that I have nowhere fallen into that mode of thinking about either which we call praising them. Yet that would have been best for me. Praise is the mode of love which always has some element of joy in it. Praise in due order; of Him as the giver, of her as the gift. Don’t we in praise somehow enjoy what we praise, however far we are from it? I must do more of this. I have lost the fruition I once had of H. And I am far, far away in the valley of my unlikeness, from the fruition which, if His mercies are infinite, I may some time have of God. But by praising I can still, in some degree, enjoy her, and already, in some degree, enjoy Him. Better than nothing.

But perhaps I lack the gift. I see I’ve described H. as being like a sword. That’s true as far as it goes. But utterly inadequate by itself, and misleading. I ought to have balanced it. I ought to have said ‘But also like a garden. Like a nest of gardens, wall within wall, hedge within hedge, more secret, more full of fragrant and fertile life, the further you entered.’

And then, of her, and of every created thing I praise, I should say ‘In some way, in its unique way, like Him who made it’.

Thus up from the garden to the Gardener, from the sword to the Smith. To the life-giving Life and the Beauty that makes beautiful.

‘She is in God’s hand.’ That gains a new energy when I think of her as a sword. Perhaps the earthly life I shared with her was only part of the

tempering. Now perhaps He grasps the hilt; weighs the new weapon; makes lightnings with it in the air. ‘A right Jerusalem blade.’

One moment last night can be described in similes; otherwise it won’t go into language at all. Imagine a man in total darkness. He thinks he is in a cellar or dungeon. Then there comes a sound. He thinks it might be a sound from far off — waves or wind-blown trees or cattle half a mile away. And if so, it proves he’s not in a cellar, but free, in the open air. Or it may be a much smaller sound close at hand — a chuckle of laughter. And if so, there is a friend just beside him in the dark. Either way, a good, good sound. I’m not mad enough to take such an experience as evidence for anything. It is simply the leaping into imaginative activity of an idea which I would always have theoretically admitted — the idea that I, or any mortal at any time, may be utterly mistaken as to the situation he is really in.

Five senses; an incurably abstract intellect; a haphazardly selective memory; a set of preconceptions and assumptions so numerous that I can never examine more than a minority of them — never become even conscious of them all. How much of total reality can such an apparatus let through?

I will not, if I can help it, shin up either the feathery or the prickly tree. Two widely different convictions press more and more on my mind. One is that the Eternal Vet is even more inexorable and the possible operations even more painful than our severest imaginings can forbode. But the other, that ‘all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well’.

It doesn’t matter that all the photographs of H. are bad. It doesn’t matter — not much — if my memory of her is imperfect. Images, whether on paper or in the mind, are not important for themselves. Merely links. Take a parallel from an infinitely higher sphere. Tomorrow morning a priest will give me a little round, thin, cold, tasteless wafer. Is it a disadvantage — is it not in some ways an advantage — that it can’t pretend the least *resemblance* to that with which it unites me?

I need Christ, not something that resembles Him. I want H., not something that is like her. A really good photograph might become in the end a snare, a horror, and an obstacle.

Images, I must suppose, have their use or they would not have been so popular. (It makes little difference whether they are pictures and statues outside the mind or imaginative constructions within it.) To me, however,

their danger is more obvious. Images of the Holy easily become holy images — sacrosanct. My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great iconoclast. Could we not almost say that this shattering is one of the marks of His presence? The Incarnation is the supreme example; it leaves all previous ideas of the Messiah in ruins. And most are ‘offended’ by the iconoclasm; and blessed are those who are not. But the same thing happens in our private prayers.

All reality is iconoclastic. The earthly beloved, even in this life, incessantly triumphs over your mere idea of her. And you want her to; you want her with all her resistances, all her faults, all her unexpectedness. That is, in her foursquare and independent reality. And this, not any image or memory, is what we are to love still, after she is dead.

But ‘this’ is not now imaginable. In that respect H. and all the dead are like God. In that respect loving her has become, in its measure, like loving Him. In both cases I must stretch out the arms and hands of love — its eyes cannot here be used — to the reality, through — across — all the changeful phantasmagoria of my thoughts, passions, and imaginings. I mustn’t sit down content with the phantasmagoria itself and worship that for Him, or love that for her.

Not my idea of God, but God. Not my idea of H., but H. Yes, and also not my idea of my neighbour, but my neighbour. For don’t we often make this mistake as regards people who are still alive — who are with us in the same room? Talking and acting not to the man himself but to the picture — almost the *précis* — we’ve made of Him in our own minds? And he has to depart from it pretty widely before we even notice the fact. In real life — that’s one way it differs from novels — his words and acts are, if we observe closely, hardly ever quite ‘in character’, that is, in what we call his character. There’s always a card in his hand we didn’t know about.

My reason for assuming that I do this to other people is the fact that so often I find them obviously doing it to me. We all think we’ve got one another taped.

And all this time I may, once more, be building with cards. And if I am He will once more knock the building flat. He will knock it down as often as proves necessary. Unless I have to be finally given up as hopeless, and left building pasteboard palaces in Hell forever; ‘free among the dead’.

Am I, for instance, just sidling back to God because I know that if there's any road to H., it runs through Him? But then of course I know perfectly well that He can't be used as a road. If you're approaching Him not as the goal but as a road, not as the end but as a means, you're not really approaching Him at all. That's what was really wrong with all those popular pictures of happy re-unions 'on the further shore'; not the simple-minded and very earthly images, but the fact that they make an End of what we can get only as a bye-product of the true End.

Lord, are these your real terms? Can I meet H. again only if I learn to love you so much that I don't care whether I meet her or not? Consider, Lord, how it looks to us. What would anyone think of me if I said to the boys, 'No toffee now. But when you've grown up and don't really want toffee you shall have as much of it as you choose?'

If I knew that to be eternally divided from H. and eternally forgotten by her would add a greater joy and splendour to her being, of course I'd say 'Fire ahead'. Just as if, on earth, I could have cured her cancer by never seeing her again, I'd have arranged never to see her again. I'd have had to. Any decent person would. But that's quite different. That's not the situation I'm in.

When I lay these questions before God I get no answer. But a rather special sort of 'No answer'. It is not the locked door. It is more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze. As though He shook His head not in refusal but waiving the question. Like, 'Peace, child; you don't understand.'

Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable. How many hours are there in a mile? Is yellow square or round? Probably half the questions we ask — half our great theological and metaphysical problems — are like that.

And now that I come to think of it, there's no practical problem before me at all. I know the two great commandments, and I'd better get on with them. Indeed, H's death has ended the practical problem. While she was alive I could, in practice, have put her before God; that is, could have done what she wanted instead of what He wanted; if there'd been a conflict. What's left is not a problem about anything I could *do*. It's all about weights of feelings and motives and that sort of thing. It's a problem I'm setting myself. I don't believe God set it me at all.

The fruition of God. Re-union with the dead. These can't figure in my thinking except as counters. Blank cheques. My idea — if you can call it an idea — of the first is a huge, risky extrapolation from a very few and short experiences here on earth. Probably not such valuable experiences as I think. Perhaps even of less value than others that I take no account of. My idea of the second is also an extrapolation. The reality of either — the cashing of either cheque — would probably blow all one's ideas about both (how much more one's ideas about their relations to each other) into smithereens.

The mystical union on the one hand. The resurrection of the body, on the other. I can't reach the ghost of an image, a formula, or even a feeling, that combines them. But the reality, we are given to understand, does. Reality the iconoclast once more. Heaven will solve our problems, but not, I think, by showing us subtle reconciliations between all our apparently contradictory notions. The notions will all be knocked from under our feet. We shall see that there never was any problem.

And, more than once, that impression which I can't describe except by saying that it's like the sound of a chuckle in the darkness. The sense that some shattering and disarming simplicity is the real answer.

It is often thought that the dead see us. And we assume, whether reasonably or not, that if they see us at all they see us more clearly than before. Does H. now see exactly how much froth or tinsel there was in what she called, and I call, my love? So be it. Look your hardest, dear. I wouldn't hide if I could. We didn't idealize each other. We tried to keep no secrets. You knew most of the rotten places in me already. If you now see anything worse, I can take it. So can you. Rebuke, explain, mock, forgive. For this is one of the miracles of love; it gives — to both, but perhaps especially to the woman — a power of seeing through its own enchantments and yet not being disenchanted.

To see, in some measure, like God. His love and His knowledge are not distinct from one another, nor from Him. We could almost say He sees because He loves, and therefore loves although He sees.

Sometimes, Lord, one is tempted to say that if you wanted us to behave like the lilies of the field you might have given us an organization more like theirs. But that, I suppose, is just your grand experiment. Or no; not an experiment, for you have no need to find things out. Rather your grand enterprise. To make an organism which is also a spirit; to make that terrible

oxymoron, a ‘spiritual animal’. To take a poor primate, a beast with nerve-endings all over it, a creature with a stomach that wants to be filled, a breeding animal that wants its mate, and say, ‘Now get on with it. Become a god.’

I said, several notebooks ago, that even if I got what seemed like an assurance of H’s presence, I wouldn’t believe it. Easier said than done. Even now, though, I won’t treat anything of that sort as evidence. It’s the *quality* of last night’s experience — not what it proves but what it was — that makes it worth putting down. It was quite incredibly unemotional. Just the impression of her *mind* momentarily facing my own. Mind, not ‘soul’ as we tend to think of soul. Certainly the reverse of what is called ‘soulful’. Not at all like a rapturous re-union of lovers. Much more like getting a telephone call or a wire from her about some practical arrangement. Not that there was any ‘message’ — just intelligence and attention. No sense of joy or sorrow. No love even, in our ordinary sense. No un-love. I had never in any mood imagined the dead as being so — well, so business-like. Yet there was an extreme and cheerful intimacy. An intimacy that had not passed through the senses or the emotions at all.

If this was a throw-up from my unconscious, then my unconscious must be a far more interesting region than the depth psychologists have led me to expect. For one thing, it is apparently much less primitive than my consciousness.

Wherever it came from, it has made a sort of spring cleaning in my mind. The dead could be like that; sheer intellects. A Greek philosopher wouldn’t have been surprised at an experience like mine. He would have expected that if anything of us remained after death it would be just that. Up to now this always seemed to me a most arid and chilling idea. The absence of emotion repelled me. But in this contact (whether real or apparent) it didn’t do anything of the sort. One didn’t need emotion. The intimacy was complete — sharply bracing and restorative too — without it. Can that intimacy be love itself — always in this life attended with emotion, not because it is itself an emotion, or needs an attendant emotion, but because our animal souls, our nervous systems, our imaginations, have to respond to it in that way? If so, how many preconceptions I must scrap! A society, a communion, of pure intelligences would not be cold, drab and comfortless. On the other hand it wouldn’t be very like what people usually mean when they use such words as ‘spiritual’, or ‘mystical’, or ‘holy’. It would, if I

have had a glimpse, be — well, I'm almost scared at the adjectives I'd have to use. Brisk? cheerful? keen? alert? intense? wide-awake? Above all, solid. Utterly reliable. Firm. There is no nonsense about the dead.

When I say 'intellect' I include will. Attention is an act of will. Intelligence in action is will *par excellence*. What seemed to meet me was full of resolution.

Once very near the end I said, 'If you can — if it is allowed — come to me when I too am on my death bed.' 'Allowed!' she said. 'Heaven would have a job to hold me; and as for Hell, I'd break it into bits.' She knew she was speaking a kind of mythological language, with even an element of comedy in it. There was a twinkle as well as a tear in her eye. But there was no myth and no joke about the will, deeper than any feeling, that flashed through her.

But I mustn't, because I have come to misunderstand a little less completely what a pure intelligence might be, lean over too far. There is also, whatever it means, the resurrection of the body. We cannot understand. The best is perhaps what we understand least.

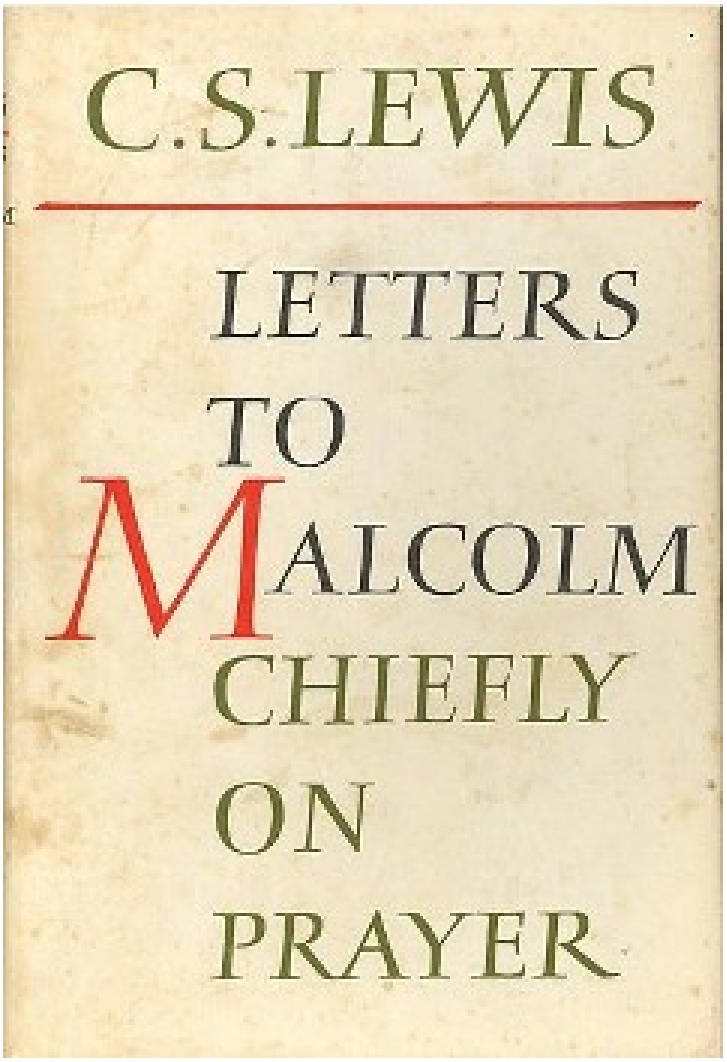
Didn't people dispute once whether the final vision of God was more an act of intelligence or of love? That is probably another of the nonsense questions.

How wicked it would be, if we could, to call the dead back! She said not to me but to the chaplain, 'I am at peace with God.' She smiled, but not at me. *Poi si tornò all' eterna fontana.*

LETTERS TO MALCOLM: CHIEFLY ON PRAYER



This book was posthumously published in 1964 and takes the form of a series of letters to a fictional friend, “Malcolm”, in which Lewis meditates on prayer as an intimate dialogue between man and God. Beginning with a discussion of “corporate prayer” and the liturgical service, Lewis goes on to consider practical and metaphysical aspects of private prayer, such as when to pray and where, ready-made prayer, petitionary prayer, prayer as worship, penitential prayer and prayer for the dead. The concluding letter discusses “liberal” Christians, the soul and resurrection.



The first edition

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Letter 1

I am all in favour of your idea that we should go back to our old plan of having a more or less set subject — an *agendum* — for our letters. When we were last separated the correspondence languished for lack of it. How much better we did in our undergraduate days with our interminable letters on the *Republic*, and classical metres, and what was then the "new" psychology! Nothing makes an absent friend so present as a disagreement.

Prayer, which you suggest, is a subject that is a good deal in my mind. I mean, private prayer. If you were thinking of corporate prayer, I won't play. There is no subject in the world (always excepting sport) on which I have less to say than liturgiology. And the almost nothing which I have to say may as well be disposed of in this letter.

I think our business as laymen is to take what we are given and make the best of it. And I think we should find this a great deal easier if what we were given was always and everywhere the same.

To judge from their practice, very few Anglican clergymen take this view. It looks as if they believed people can be lured to go to church by incessant brightenings, lightenings, lengthenings, abridgements, simplifications and complications of the service. And it is probably true that a new, keen vicar will usually be able to form within his parish a minority who are in favour of his innovations. The majority, I believe, never are. Those who remain — many give up churchgoing altogether — merely endure.

Is this simply because the majority are hide-bound? I think not. They have a good reason for their conservatism. Novelty, simply as such, can have only an entertainment value. And they don't go to church to be entertained. They go to *use* the service, or, if you prefer, to *enact* it. Every service is a structure of acts and words through which we receive a sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore. And it enables us to do these things best — if you like, it "works" best — when, through long familiarity, we don't have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don't notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect

church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.

But every novelty prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself; and thinking about worship is a different thing from worshipping. The important question about the Grail was "for what does it serve?" "'Tis mad idolatry that makes the service greater than the god."

A still worse thing may happen. Novelty may fix our attention not even on the service but on the celebrant. You know what I mean. Try as one may to exclude it, the question, "What on earth is he up to now?" will intrude. It lays one's devotion waste. There is really some excuse for the man who said, "I wish they'd remember that the charge to Peter was Feed my sheep; not Try experiments on my rats, or even, Teach my performing dogs new tricks."

Thus my whole liturgiological position really boils down to an entreaty for permanence and uniformity. I can make do with almost any kind of service whatever, if only it will stay put. But if each form is snatched away just when I am beginning to feel at home in it, then I can never make any progress in the art of worship. You give me no chance to acquire the trained habit — *habito dell' arte*.

It may well be that some variations which seem to me merely matters of taste really involve grave doctrinal differences. But surely not all? For if grave doctrinal differences are really as numerous as variations in practice, then we shall have to conclude that no such thing as the Church of England exists. And anyway, the Liturgical Fidget is not a purely Anglican phenomenon; I have heard Roman Catholics complain of it too.

And that brings me back to my starting point. The business of us laymen is simply to endure and make the best of it. Any tendency to a passionate preference for one type of service must be regarded simply as a temptation. Partisan "Churchmanships" are my *bête noire*. And if we avoid them, may we not possibly perform a very useful function? The shepherds go off, "every one to his own way" and vanish over diverse points of the horizon. If the sheep huddle patiently together and go on bleating, might they finally recall the shepherds? (Haven't English victories sometimes been won by the rank and file in spite of the generals?)

As to the words of the service — liturgy in the narrower sense — the question is rather different. If you have a vernacular liturgy you must have a changing liturgy; otherwise it will finally be vernacular only in name. The

ideal of “timeless English” is sheer nonsense. No living language can be timeless. You might as well ask for a motionless river.

I think it would have been best, if it were possible, that necessary change should have occurred gradually and (to most people) imperceptibly; here a little and there a little; one obsolete word replaced in a century — like the gradual change of spelling in successive editions of Shakespeare. As things are we must reconcile ourselves, if we can also reconcile government, to a new Book.

If we were — I thank my stars I’m not — in a position to give its authors advice, would you have any advice to give them? Mine could hardly go beyond unhelpful cautions: “Take care. It is so easy to break eggs without making omelettes.”

Already our liturgy is one of the very few remaining elements of unity in our hideously divided Church. The good to be done by revision needs to be very great and very certain before we throw that away. Can you imagine any new Book which will not be a source of new schism?

Most of those who press for revision seem to wish that it should serve two purposes: that of modernising the language in the interests of intelligibility, and that of doctrinal improvement. Ought the two operations — each painful and each dangerous — to be carried out at the same time? Will the patient survive?

What are the agreed doctrines which are to be embodied in the new Book and how long will agreement on them continue? I ask with trepidation because I read a man the other day who seemed to wish that everything in the old Book which was inconsistent with orthodox Freudianism should be deleted.

For whom are we to cater in revising the language? A country parson I know asked his sexton what he understood by *indifferently* in the phrase “truly and indifferently administer justice”. The man replied, “It means making no difference between one chap and another.” “And what would it mean if it said *impartially*?” asked the parson. “Don’t know. Never heard of it,” said the sexton. Here, you see, we have a change intended to make things easier. But it does so neither for the educated, who understand *indifferently* already, nor for the wholly uneducated, who don’t understand *impartially*. It helps only some middle area of the congregation which may not even be a majority. Let us hope the revisers will prepare for their work by a prolonged empirical study of popular speech as it actually is, not as we

(*a priori*) assume it to be. How many scholars know (what I discovered by accident) that when uneducated people say *impersonal* they sometimes mean *incorporeal*?

What of expressions which are archaic but not unintelligible? (“Be ye lift up”). I find that people re-act to archaism most diversely. It antagonises some: makes what is said unreal. To others, not necessarily more learned, it is highly numinous and a real aid to devotion. We can’t please both.

I know there must be change. But is this the right moment? Two signs of the right moment occur to me. One would be a unity among us which enabled the Church — not some momentarily triumphant party — to speak through the new work with a united voice. The other would be the manifest presence, somewhere in the Church, of the specifically literary talent needed for composing a good prayer. Prose needs to be not only very good but very good in a very special way, if it is to stand up to reiterated reading aloud. Cranmer may have his defects as a theologian; as a stylist, he can play all the moderns, and many of his predecessors, off the field. I don’t see either sign at the moment.

Yet we all want to be tinkering. Even I would gladly see “Let your light so shine before men” removed from the offertory. It sounds, in that context, so like an exhortation to do our alms that they may be seen by men.

I’d meant to follow up what you say about Rose Macaulay’s letters, but that must wait till next week.

Letter 2

I can't understand why you say that my view of church services is "man-centred" and too concerned with "mere edification". How does this follow from anything I said? Actually my ideas about the sacrament would probably be called "magical" by a good many modern theologians. Surely, the more fully one believes that a strictly supernatural event takes place, the less one can attach any great importance to the dress, gestures, and position of the priest? I agree with you that he is there not only to edify the people but to glorify God. But how can a man glorify God by placing obstacles in the way of the people? Especially if the slightest element of "clerical one-upmanship" — I owe the phrase to a cleric — underlies some of his eccentricities? How right is that passage in the *Imitation* where the celebrant is told, "Consult not your own devotion but the edification of your flock." I've forgotten how the Latin runs.

Now about the Rose Macaulay *Letters*. Like you, I was staggered by this continual search for more and more prayers. If she were merely collecting them as *objets d'art* I could understand it; she was a born collector. But I get the impression that she collected them in order to use them; that her whole prayer-life depended on what we may call "ready-made" prayers — prayers written by other people.

But though, like you, staggered, I was not, like you, repelled. One reason is that I had — and you hadn't — the luck to meet her. Make no mistake. She was the right sort; one of the most fully civilised people I ever knew. The other reason, as I have so often told you, is that you are a bigot. Broaden your mind, Malcolm, broaden your mind! It takes all sorts to make a world; or a church. This may be even truer of a church. If grace perfects nature it must expand all our natures into the full richness of the diversity which God intended when He made them, and heaven will display far more variety than hell. "One fold" doesn't mean "one pool". Cultivated roses and daffodils are no more alike than wild roses and daffodils. What pleased me most about a Greek Orthodox mass I once attended was that there seemed to be no prescribed behaviour for the congregation. Some stood, some knelt, some sat, some walked; one crawled about the floor like a caterpillar. And the beauty of it was that nobody took the slightest notice of what anyone else was doing. I wish we Anglicans would follow their example. One

meets people who are perturbed because someone in the next pew does, or does not, cross himself. They oughtn't even to have seen, let alone censured. "Who art thou that judgest Another's servant?"

I don't doubt, then, that Rose Macaulay's method was the right one for her. It wouldn't be for me, any more than for you.

All the same, I am not quite such a purist in this matter as I used to be. For many years after my conversion I never used any ready-made forms except the Lord's Prayer. In fact I tried to pray without words at all — not to verbalise the mental acts. Even in praying for others I believe I tended to avoid their names and substituted mental images of them. I still think the prayer without words is the best — if one can really achieve it. But I now see that in trying to make it my daily bread I was counting on a greater mental and spiritual strength than I really have. To pray successfully without words one needs to be "at the top of one's form." Otherwise the mental acts become merely imaginative or emotional acts — and a fabricated emotion is a miserable affair. When the golden moments come, when God enables one really to pray without words, who but a fool would reject the gift? But He does not give it — anyway not to me — day in, day out. My mistake was what Pascal, if I remember rightly, calls "Error of Stoicism": thinking we can do always what we can do sometimes.

And this, you see, makes the choice between ready-made prayers and one's own words rather less important for me than it apparently is for you. For me words are in any case secondary. They are only an anchor. Or, shall I say, they are the movements of a conductor's baton: not the music. They serve to canalise the worship or penitence or petition which might without them — such are our minds — spread into wide and shallow puddles. It does not matter very much who first put them together. If they are our own words they will soon, by unavoidable repetition, harden into a formula. If they are someone else's, we shall continually pour into them our own meaning.

At present — for one's practice changes and, I think, ought to change — I find it best to make "my own words" the staple but introduce a modicum of the ready-made.

Writing to you, I need not stress the importance of the home-made staple. As Solomon said at the dedication of the temple, each man who prays knows "the plague of his own heart". Also, the comforts of his own heart. No other creature is identical with me; no other situation identical

with mine. Indeed, I myself and my situation are in continual change. A ready-made form can't serve for my intercourse with God any more than it could serve for my intercourse with you.

This is obvious. Perhaps I shan't find it so easy to persuade you that the ready-made modicum has also its use: for me, I mean — I'm not suggesting rules for any one else in the whole world.

First, it keeps me in touch with "sound doctrine". Left to oneself, one could easily slide away from "the faith once given" into a phantom called "my religion".

Secondly, it reminds me "what things I ought to ask" (perhaps especially when I am praying for other people). The crisis of the present moment, like the nearest telegraph-post, will always loom largest. Isn't there a danger that our great, permanent, objective necessities — often more important — may get crowded out? By the way, that's another thing to be avoided in a revised Prayer Book. "Contemporary problems" may claim an undue share. And the more "up to date" the Book is, the sooner it will be dated.

Finally, they provide an element of the ceremonial. On your view, that is just what we don't want. On mine, it is part of what we want. I see what you mean when you say that using ready-made prayers would be like "making love to your own wife out of Petrarch or Donne". (Incidentally might you not *quote* them — to such a literary wife as Betty?) The parallel won't do.

I fully agree that the relationship between God and a man is more private and intimate than any possible relation between two fellow creatures. Yes, but at the same time there is, in another way, a greater distance between the participants. We are approaching — well I won't say "the Wholly Other", for I suspect that is meaningless, but the Unimaginably and Insupportably Other. We ought to be — sometimes I hope one is — simultaneously aware of closest proximity and infinite distance. You make things far too snug and confiding. Your erotic analogy needs to be supplemented by "I fell at His feet as one dead."

I think the "low" church *milieu* that I grew up in did tend to be too cosily at ease in Sion. My grandfather, I'm told, used to say that he "looked forward to having some very interesting conversations with St. Paul when he got to heaven." Two clerical gentlemen talking at ease in a club! It never seemed to cross his mind that an encounter with St. Paul might be rather an overwhelming experience even for an Evangelical clergyman of good family. But when Dante saw the great apostles in heaven they affected him

like *mountains*. There's lots to be said against devotions to saints; but at least they keep on reminding us that we are very small people compared with them. How much smaller before their Master?

A few formal, ready-made, prayers serve me as a corrective of — well, let's call it "cheek". They keep one side of the paradox alive. Of course it is only one side. It would be better not to be reverent at all than to have a reverence which denied the proximity.

Letter 3

Oh for mercy's sake. Not you too! Why, just because I raise an objection to your parallel between prayer and a man making love to his own wife, must you trot out all the old rigmarole about the "holiness" of sex and start lecturing me as if I were a Manichaean? I know that in most circles now-a-days one need only mention sex to set everyone in the room emitting this gas. But, I did hope, not you. Didn't I make it plain that I objected to your image solely on the ground of its nonchalance, or presumption?

I'm not saying anything against (or for) "sex". Sex in itself cannot be moral or immoral any more than gravitation or nutrition. The sexual behaviour of human beings can. And like their economic, or political, or agricultural, or parental, or filial behaviour, it is sometimes good and sometimes bad. And the sexual act, when lawful — which means chiefly when consistent with good faith and charity — can, like all other merely natural acts ("whether we eat or drink etc." as the apostle says) be done to the glory of God, and will then be holy. And like other natural acts it is sometimes so done, and sometimes not. This may be what the poor Bishop of Woolwich was trying to say. Anyway, what more is there to be said? And can we now get this red herring out of the way? I'd be glad if we could; for the moderns have achieved the feat, which I should have thought impossible, of making the whole subject a bore. Poor Aphrodite! They have sandpapered most of the Homeric laughter off her face.

Apparently I have been myself guilty of introducing another red herring by mentioning devotions to saints. I didn't in the least want to go off into a discussion on that subject. There is clearly a theological defence for it; if you can ask for the prayers of the living, why should you not ask for the prayers of the dead? There is clearly also a great danger. In some popular practice we see it leading off into an infinitely silly picture of heaven as an earthly court where applicants will be wise to pull the right wires, discover the best "channels", and attach themselves to the most influential pressure groups. But I have nothing to do with all this. I am not thinking of adopting the practice myself; and who am I to judge the practices of others? I only hope there'll be no scheme for canonisations in the Church of England. Can you imagine a better hot-bed for yet more divisions between us?

The consoling thing is that while Christendom is divided about the rationality, and even the lawfulness, of praying *to* the saints, we are all agreed about praying *with* them. “With angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.” Will you believe it? It is only quite recently I made that quotation a part of my private prayers — I festoon it round “hallowed be Thy name”. This, by the way, illustrates what I was saying last week about the uses of ready-made forms. They remind one. And I have found this quotation a great enrichment. One always accepted this *with* theoretically. But it is quite different when one brings it into consciousness at an appropriate moment and wills the association of one’s own little twitter with the voice of the great saints and (we hope) of our own dear dead. They may drown some of its uglier qualities and set off any tiny value it has.

You may say that the distinction between the communion of the saints as I find it in that act and full-fledged prayer to saints is not, after all, very great. All the better if so. I sometimes have a bright dream of re-union engulfing us unawares, like a great wave from behind our backs, perhaps at the very moment when our official representatives are still pronouncing it impossible. Discussions usually separate us; actions sometimes unite us.

When I spoke of prayer without words I don’t think I meant anything so exalted as what mystics call the “prayer of silence”. And when I spoke of being “at the top of one’s form” I didn’t mean it purely in a spiritual sense. The condition of the body comes in; for I suppose a man may be in a state of grace and yet very sleepy.

And, talking of sleepiness, I entirely agree with you that no one in his senses, if he has any power of ordering his own day, would reserve his chief prayers for bed-time — obviously the worst possible hour for any action which needs concentration. The trouble is that thousands of unfortunate people can hardly find any other. Even for us, who are the lucky ones, it is not always easy. My own plan, when hard pressed, is to seize any time, and place, however unsuitable, in preference to the last waking moment. On a day of travelling — with, perhaps, some ghastly meeting at the end of it — I’d rather pray sitting in a crowded train than put it off till midnight when one reaches a hotel bedroom with aching head and dry throat and one’s mind partly in a stupor and partly in a whirl. On other, and slightly less crowded, days a bench in a park, or a back street where one can pace up and down, will do.

A man to whom I was explaining this said, “But why don’t you turn into a church?” Partly because, for nine months of the year, it will be freezingly cold but also because I have bad luck with churches. No sooner do I enter one and compose my mind than one or other of two things happens. Either someone starts practising the organ. Or else, with resolute tread, there appears from nowhere a pious woman in elastic-side boots, carrying mop, bucket, and dust-pan, and begins beating hassocks and rolling up carpets and doing things to flower vases. Of course (blessings on her) “work is prayer,” and her enacted *oratio* is probably worth ten times my spoken one. But it doesn’t help mine to become worth more.

When one prays in strange places and at strange times one can’t kneel, to be sure. I won’t say this doesn’t matter. The body ought to pray as well as the soul. Body and soul are both the better for it. Bless the body. Mine has led me into many scrapes, but I’ve led it into far more. If the imagination were obedient the appetites would give us very little trouble. And from how much it has saved me! And but for our body one whole realm of God’s glory — all that we receive through the senses — would go unpraised. For the beasts can’t appreciate it and the angels are, I suppose, pure intelligences. They *understand* colours and tastes better than our greatest scientists; but have they retinas or palates? I fancy the “beauties of nature” are a secret God has shared with us alone. That may be one of the reasons why we were made — and why the resurrection of the body is an important doctrine.

But I’m being led into a digression; perhaps because I am still smarting under the charge of being a Manichee! The relevant point is that kneeling does matter, but other things matter even more. A concentrated mind and a sitting body make for better prayer than a kneeling body and a mind half asleep. Sometimes these are the only alternatives. (Since the osteoporosis I can hardly kneel at all in most places, myself.)

A clergyman once said to me that a railway compartment, if one has it to oneself, is an extremely good place to pray in “because there is just the right amount of distraction.” When I asked him to explain, he said that perfect silence and solitude left one more open to the distractions which come from within, and that a moderate amount of external distraction was easier to cope with. I don’t find this so myself, but I can imagine it.

The Jones boy’s name is Cyril — though why you find it so important to pray for people by their Christian names I can’t imagine. I always assume

God knows their surnames as well. I am afraid many people appear in my prayers only as “that old man at Crewe” or “the waitress” or even “that man”. One may have lost, or may never have known, their names and yet remember how badly they need to be prayed for.

No letter next week. I shall be in the thick of exams.

Letter 4

Of the two difficulties you mention I think that only one is often a practical problem for believers. The other is in my experience usually raised by people who are attacking Christianity.

The ideal opening for their attacks — if they know the Bible — is the phrase in Philippians about “making your requests known to God”. I mean, the words *making known* bring out most clearly the apparent absurdity with which they charge us. We say that we believe God to be omniscient; yet a great deal of prayer seems to consist of giving Him information. And indeed we have been reminded by Our Lord too not to pray as if we forgot the omniscience— “for your heavenly Father knows you need all these things”.

This is final against one very silly sort of prayer. I have heard a man offer a prayer for a sick person which really amounted to a diagnosis followed by advice as to how God should treat the patient. And I have heard prayers nominally for peace, but really so concerned for various devices which the petitioner believed to be means to peace, that they were open to the same criticism.

But even when that kind of thing is ruled out, the unbeliever’s objection remains. To confess our sins before God is certainly to tell Him what He knows much better than we. And also, any petition is a kind of telling. If it does not strictly exclude the belief that God knows our need, it at least seems to solicit His attention. Some traditional formulae make that implication very clear: “*Hear* us, good Lord”— “O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint.” As if, though God does not need to be informed, He does need, and even rather frequently, to be reminded. But we cannot really believe that degrees of attention, and therefore of inattention, and therefore of something like forgetfulness, exist in the Absolute Mind. I presume that only God’s attention keeps me (or anything else) in existence at all.

What, then, are we really doing? Our whole conception of, so to call it, the prayer-situation depends on the answer.

We are always completely, and therefore equally, known to God. That is our destiny whether we like it or not. But though this knowledge never varies, the quality of our being known can. A school of thought holds that

“freedom is willed necessity”. Never mind if they are right or not. I want this idea only as an analogy. Ordinarily, to be known by God is to be, for this purpose, in the category of things. We are, like earthworms, cabbages, and nebulae, objects of Divine knowledge. But when we (a) become aware of the fact — the present fact, not the generalisation — and (b) assent with all our will to be so known, then we treat ourselves, in relation to God, not as things but as persons. We have unveiled. Not that any veil could have baffled His sight. The change is in us. The passive changes to the active. Instead of merely being known, we show, we tell, we offer ourselves to view.

To put ourselves thus on a personal footing with God could, in itself and without warrant, be nothing but presumption and illusion. But we are taught that it is not; that it is God who gives us that footing. For it is by the Holy Spirit that we cry “Father”. By unveiling, by confessing our sins and “making known” our requests, we assume the high rank of persons before Him. And He, descending, becomes a Person to us.

But I should not have said “becomes”. In Him there is no becoming. He reveals Himself as Person: or reveals that in Him which is Person. For — dare one say it? in a book it would need pages of qualification and insurance — God is in some measure to a man as that man is to God. The door in God that opens is the door he knocks at. (At least, I think so, usually.) The Person in Him — He is more than a person — meets those who can welcome or at least face it. He speaks as “I” when we truly call Him “Thou”. (How good Buber is!)

This talk of “meeting” is, no doubt, anthropomorphic; as if God and I could be face to face, like two fellow-creatures, when in reality He is above me and within me and below me and all about me. That is why it must be balanced by all manner of metaphysical and theological abstractions. But never, here or anywhere else, let us think that while anthropomorphic images are a concession to our weakness, the abstractions are the literal truth. Both are equally concessions; each singly misleading, and the two together mutually corrective. Unless you sit to it very lightly, continually murmuring “Not thus, not thus, neither is this Thou”, the abstraction is fatal. It will make the life of lives inanimate and the love of loves impersonal. The naïf image is mischievous chiefly in so far as it holds unbelievers back from conversion. It does believers, even at its crudest, no harm. What soul ever perished for believing that God the Father really has a beard?

Your other question is one which, I think, really gets in pious people's way. It was, you remember, "How important must a need or desire be before we can properly make it the subject of a petition?" *Properly*, I take it, here means either "Without irreverence" or "Without silliness", or both.

When I'd thought about it for a bit, it seemed to me that there are really two questions involved.

1. How important must an object be before we can, without sin and folly, allow our desire for it to become a matter of serious concern to us? This, you see, is a question about what old writers call our "frame"; that is, our "frame of mind".

2. Granted the existence of such a serious concern in our minds, can it always be properly laid before God in prayer?

We all know the answer to the first of these in theory. We must aim at what St. Augustine (is it?) calls "ordinate loves". Our deepest concern should be for first things, and our next deepest for second things, and so on down to zero — to total absence of concern for things that are not really good, nor means to good, at all.

Meantime, however, we want to know not how we should pray if we were perfect but how we should pray being as we now are. And if my idea of prayer as "unveiling" is accepted, we have already answered this. It is no use to ask God with factitious earnestness for A when our whole mind is in reality filled with the desire for B. We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.

Even an intimate human friend is ill-used if we talk to him about one thing while our mind is really on another, and even a human friend will soon become aware when we are doing so. You yourself came to see me a few years ago when the great blow had fallen upon me. I tried to talk to you as if nothing were wrong. You saw through it in five minutes. Then I confessed. And you said things which made me ashamed of my attempt at concealment.

It may well be that the desire can be laid before God only as a sin to be repented; but one of the best ways of learning this is to lay it before God. Your problem, however, was not about sinful desires in that sense; rather about desires, intrinsically innocent and sinning, if at all, only by being stronger than the triviality of their object warrants. I have no doubt at all that if they are the subject of our thoughts they must be the subject of our

prayers — whether in penitence or in petition or in a little of both: penitence for the excess, yet petition for the thing we desire.

If one forcibly excludes them, don't they wreck all the rest of our prayers? If we lay all the cards on the table, God will help us to moderate the excesses. But the pressure of things we are trying to keep out of our mind is a hopeless distraction. As someone said, "No noise is so emphatic as one you are trying not to listen to."

The ordinate frame of mind is one of the blessings we must pray for, not a fancy-dress we must put on when we pray.

And perhaps, as those who do not turn to God in petty trials will have no *habit* or such resort to help them when the great trials come, so those who have not learned to ask Him for childish things will have less readiness to ask Him for great ones. We must not be too high-minded. I fancy we may sometimes be deterred from small prayers by a sense of our own dignity rather than of God's.

Letter 5

I don't very much like the job of telling you "more about my festoonings" — the private overtones I give to certain petitions. I make two conditions: (a) That you will in return tell me some of yours. (b) That you will understand I am not in the least *recommending* mine either to you or to anyone else. There could be many better; and my present festoons will very probably change.

I call them "festoons", by the way, because they don't (I trust) obliterate the plain, public sense of the petition but are merely hung on it.

What I do about "hallowed be Thy name" I told a fortnight ago.

Thy kingdom come. That is, may your reign be realised here, as it is realised there. But I tend to take *there* on three levels. First, as in the sinless world beyond the horrors of animal and human life; in the behaviour of stars and trees and water, in sunrise and wind. May there be *here* (in my heart) the beginning of a like beauty. Secondly, as in the best human lives I have known: in all the people who really bear the burdens and ring true, the people we call bricks, and in the quiet, busy, ordered life of really good families and really good religious houses. May that too be "here". Finally, of course, in the usual sense: as in heaven, as among the blessed dead.

And *here* can of course be taken not only for "in my heart", but for "in this college" — in England — in the world in general. But prayer is not the time for pressing our own favourite social or political panacea. Even Queen Victoria didn't like "being talked to as if she were a public meeting".

Thy will be done. My festoons on this have been added gradually. At first I took it exclusively as an act of submission, attempting to do with it what Our Lord did in Gethsemane. I thought of God's will purely as something that would come upon me, something of which I should be the patient. And I also thought of it as a will which would be embodied in pains and disappointments. Not, to be sure, that I suppose God's will for me to consist entirely of disagreeables. But I thought it was only the disagreeables that called for this preliminary submission — the agreeables could look after themselves for the present. When they turned up, one could give thanks.

This interpretation is, I expect, the commonest. And so it must be. And such are the miseries of human life that it must often fill our whole mind. But at other times other meanings can be added. So I added one more.

The peg for it is, I admit, much more obvious in the English version than in the Greek or Latin. No matter: this is where the liberty of festooning comes in. “Thy will *be done*”. But a great deal of it is to be done by God’s creatures; including me. The petition, then, is not merely that I may patiently suffer God’s will but also that I may vigorously do it. I must be an agent as well as a patient. I am asking that I may be enabled to do it. In the long run I am asking to be given “the same mind which was also in Christ”.

Taken this way, I find the words have a more regular daily application. For there isn’t always — or we don’t always have reason to suspect that there is — some great affliction looming in the near future, but there are always duties to be done; usually, for me, neglected duties to be caught up with. “Thy will be *done* — by me — now” brings one back to brass tacks.

But more than that, I am at this very moment contemplating a new festoon. Tell me if you think it a vain subtlety. I am beginning to feel that we need a preliminary act of submission not only towards possible future afflictions but also towards possible future blessings. I know it sounds fantastic; but think it over. It seems to me that we often, almost sulkily, reject the good that God offers us because, at that moment, we expected some other good. Do you know what I mean? On every level of our life — in our religious experience, in our gastronomic, erotic, aesthetic and social experience — we are always harking back to some occasion which seemed to us to reach perfection, setting that up as a norm, and depreciating all other occasions by comparison. But these other occasions, I now suspect, are often full of their own new blessings if only we would lay ourselves open to it. God shows us a new facet of the glory, and we refuse to look at it because we’re still looking for the old one. And of course we don’t get that. You can’t, at the twentieth reading, get again the experience of reading *Lycidas* for the first time. But what you do get can be in its own way as good.

This applies especially to the devotional life. Many religious people lament that the first fervours of their conversion have died away. They think — sometimes rightly, but not, I believe always — that their sins account for this. They may even try by pitiful efforts of will to revive what now seem to have been the golden days. But were those fervours — the operative word is *those* — ever intended to last?

It would be rash to say that there is any prayer which God *never* grants. But the strongest candidate is the prayer we might express in the single

word *encore*. And how should the Infinite repeat Himself? All space and time are too little for Him to utter Himself in them *once*.

And the joke, or tragedy, of it all is that these golden moments in the past, which are so tormenting if we erect them into a norm, are entirely nourishing, wholesome, and enchanting if we are content to accept them for what they are, for memories. Properly bedded down in a past which we do not miserably try to conjure back, they will send up exquisite growths. Leave the bulbs alone, and the new flowers will come up. Grub them up and hope, by fondling and sniffing, to get last year's blooms, and you will get nothing. "Unless a seed die..."

I expect we all do much the same with the prayer for *our daily bread*. It means, doesn't it, all we need for the day— "things requisite and necessary as well for the body as for the soul." I should hate to make this clause "purely religious" by thinking of "spiritual" needs alone. One of its uses, to me, is to remind us daily that what Burnaby calls the naïf view of prayer is firmly built into Our Lord's teaching.

Forgive us... as we forgive. Unfortunately there's no need to do any festooning here. To forgive for the moment is not difficult. But to go on forgiving, to forgive the same offence again every time it recurs to the memory — there's the real tussle. My resource is to look for some action of my own which is open to the same charge as the one I'm resenting. If I still smart to remember how A let me down, I must still remember how I let B down. If I find it difficult to forgive those who bullied me at school, let me, at that very moment, remember, and pray for, those I bullied. (Not that we called it *bullying* of course. That is where prayer without words can be so useful. In it there are no names; therefore no *aliases*.)

I was never worried myself by the words *lead us not into temptation*, but a great many of my correspondents are. The words suggest to them what some one has called "a fiend-like conception of God," as one who first forbids us certain fruits and then lures us to taste them. But the Greek word ([Greek: peirasmos]) means "trial"— "trying circumstances" — of every sort; a far larger word than English "temptation". So that the petition essentially is, "Make straight our paths. Spare us, where possible, from all crises, whether of temptation or affliction." By the way, you yourself, though you've doubtless forgotten it, gave me an excellent gloss on it: years ago in the pub at Coton. You said it added a sort of reservation to all our preceding prayers. As if we said, "In my ignorance I have asked for A, B

and C. But don’t give me them if you foresee that they would in reality be to me either snares or sorrows.” And you quoted Juvenal, *numinibus vota exaudita malignis*, “enormous prayers which heaven in vengeance grants”. For we make plenty of such prayers. If God had granted all the silly prayers I’ve made in my life, where should I be now?

I don’t often use *the kingdom, the power, and the glory*. When I do, I have an idea of the *kingdom* as sovereignty *de jure*; God, as good, would have a claim on my obedience even if He had no power. The *power* is the sovereignty *de facto* — He is omnipotent. And the *glory* is — well, the glory; the “beauty so old and new”, the “light from behind the sun.”

Letter 6

I can't remember exactly what I said about not making the petition for our daily bread too "religious", and I'm not quite sure what you mean — nor how ironically — by asking if I've become "one of Vidler's young men."!

About Vidler. I never heard the programme which created all that scandal, and naturally one wouldn't condemn a dog on newspaper extracts. But I have now read his essay in *Soundings* and I believe I go a good deal further with him than you would. Much of what he quotes from F. D. Maurice and Bonhoeffer seems to me very good; and so, I think, are his own arguments for the Establishment.

At any rate I can well understand how a man who is trying to love God and his neighbour should come to dislike the very word *religion*; a word, by the way, which hardly ever appears in the New Testament. Newman makes my blood run cold, when he says in one of the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* that Heaven is like a church because in both, "one single sovereign subject — religion — is brought before us". He forgets that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem.

He has substituted *religion* for God — as if navigation were substituted for arrival, or battle for victory, or wooing for marriage, or in general the means for the end. But even in this present life, there is danger in the very concept of *religion*. It carries the suggestion that this is one more department of life, an extra department added to the economic, the social, the intellectual, the recreational, and all the rest. But that whose claims are infinite can have no standing as a department. Either it is an illusion or else our whole life falls under it. We have no non-religious activities; only religious and irreligious.

Religion, nevertheless, appears to exist as a department, and, in some ages, to thrive as such. It thrives partly because there exists in many people a "love of religious observances", which I think Simone Weil is quite right in regarding as a merely natural taste. There exists also — Vidler is rather good on this — the delight in religious (as in any other) organisation. Then all sorts of aesthetic, sentimental, historical, political interests are drawn in. Finally sales of work, the parish magazine, and bell-ringing, and Santa Claus.

None of them bad things. But none of them is necessarily of more spiritual value than the activities we call secular. And they are infinitely dangerous when this is not understood. This department of life, labelled "sacred", can become an end in itself; an idol that hides both God and my neighbours. ("When the means are autonomous they are deadly".) It may even come about that a man's most genuinely Christian actions fall entirely outside that part of his life which he calls *religious*.

I read in a religious paper, "Nothing is more important than to teach children to use the sign of the cross." Nothing? Not compassion, nor veracity, nor justice? *Voilà l'ennemi*.

One must, however, walk warily, for the truth that *religion* as a department has really no right to exist can be misunderstood. Some will conclude that this illegitimate department ought to be abolished. Others will think, coming nearer to the truth, that it ought to cease to be departmental by being extended to the whole of life, but will misinterpret this. They will think it means that more and more of our secular transactions should be "opened with prayer", that a wearisomely explicit pietism should infest our talk, that there should be no more cakes and ale. A third sort, well aware that God still rules a very small part of their lives, and that "a departmental religion" is no good, may despair. It would have to be carefully explained to them that to be "still only a part" is not the same as being a permanent department. In all of us God "still" holds only a part. D-Day is only a week ago. The bite so far taken out of Normandy shows small on the map of Europe. The resistance is strong, the casualties heavy, and the event uncertain. There is, we have to admit, a line of demarcation between God's part in us and the enemy's region. But it is, we hope, a fighting line; not a frontier fixed by agreement.

But I suspect the real misunderstanding of Vidler's talk lay elsewhere. We have been speaking of *religion* as a pattern of behaviour — which, if contentedly departmental, cannot really be Christian behaviour. But people also, and more often, use *religion* to mean a system of beliefs. When they heard that Vidler wanted a church with "less religion", they thought he meant that the little — the very little — which liberal theology has still left of the "faith once given" was to be emptied out. Hence some one asked, "Is he a Theist?"

Well, he certainly is. He wants — I think he wants very earnestly — to retain some Christian doctrines. But he is prepared to scrap a good deal.

“Traditional doctrines” are to be tested. Many things will have to be “outgrown” or “survive chiefly as venerable archaisms or as fairy-stories”. He feels quite happy about this undefined programme of jettison because he trusts in the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit. A noble faith; provided, of course, there is any such being as the Holy Spirit. But I suppose His existence is itself one of the “traditional doctrines” which, on Vidler’s premises, we might any day find we had outgrown. So with the doctrine — Vidler calls it “the fact” — that man is “a two-fold creature — not only a political creature, but also a spiritual being”. Vidler and you and I (and Plato) think it a fact. Tens of thousands, perhaps millions, think it a fantasy. The neutral description of it is “a traditional doctrine”. Do you think he means that these two doctrines — and why just these two? — are the hard core of his belief, exempt from the threat of rejection which overhangs all other doctrines? Or would he say that, as the title of the book implies, he is only “taking soundings” — and if the line is not long enough to reach bottom, soundings can yield only negative information to the navigator?

I was interested in the things you said about *forgive us our trespasses*. Often, to be sure, there is something definite for which to ask forgiveness. This is plain sailing. But, like you, I often find one or other of two less manageable states: either a vague feeling of guilt or a sly, and equally vague, self-approval. What are we to do with these?

Many modern psychologists tell us always to distrust this vague feeling of guilt, as something purely pathological. And if they had stopped at that, I might believe them. But when they go on, as some do, to apply the same treatment to all guilt-feelings whatever, to suggest that one’s feeling about a particular unkind act or a particular insincerity is also and equally untrustworthy — I can’t help thinking they are talking nonsense. One sees this the moment one looks at other people. I have talked to some who felt guilt when they jolly well ought to have felt it; they have behaved like brutes and know it. I’ve also met others who felt guilty and weren’t guilty by any standard I can apply. And thirdly, I’ve met people who were guilty and didn’t seem to feel guilt. And isn’t this what we should expect? People can be *malades imaginaires* who are well and think they are ill; and others, especially consumptives, are ill and think they are well; and thirdly — far the largest class — people are ill and know they are ill. It would be very odd if there were any region in which all mistakes were in one direction.

Some Christians would tell us to go on rummaging and scratching till we find something specific. We may be sure, they say, that there are real sins enough to justify the guilt-feeling or to overthrow the feeling that all is well. I think they are right in saying that if we hunt long enough we shall find, or think we have found, something. But that is just what wakens suspicion. A theory which could never by any experience be falsified can for that reason hardly be verified. And just as, when we are yielding to temptation, we make ourselves believe that what we have always thought a sin will on this occasion, for some strange reason, not be a sin, shan't we persuade ourselves that something we have always (rightly) thought to be innocent was really wrong? We may create scruples. And scruples are always a bad thing — if only because they usually distract us from real duties.

I don't at all know whether I'm right or not, but I have, on the whole, come to the conclusion that one can't directly *do* anything about either feeling. One is not to believe either — indeed, how can one believe a fog? I come back to St. John: "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." And equally, if our heart flatter us, God is greater than our heart. I sometimes pray not for self-knowledge in general but for just so much self-knowledge at the moment as I can bear and use at the moment; the little daily dose.

Have we any reason to suppose that total self-knowledge, if it were given us, would be for our good? Children and fools, we are told, should never look at half-done work; and we are not yet, I trust, even half-done. You and I wouldn't, at all stages, think it wise to tell a pupil exactly what we thought of his quality. It is much more important that he should know what to do next.

If one said this in public one would have all the Freudians on one's back. And, mind you, we are greatly indebted to them. They did expose the cowardly evasions of really useful self-knowledge which we had all been practising from the beginning of the world. But there is also a merely morbid and fidgety curiosity about one's self — the slop-over from modern psychology — which surely does no good? The unfinished picture would so like to jump off the easel and have a look at itself! And analysis doesn't cure that. We all know people who have undergone it and seem to have made themselves a lifelong subject of research ever since.

If I am right, the conclusion is that when our conscience won't come down to brass-tacks but will only vaguely accuse or vaguely approve, we

must say to it, like Herbert, “Peace, prattler” — and get on.

Letter 7

If you meant in your last letter that we can scrap the whole idea of petitionary prayer — prayer which, as you put it, calls upon God to "engineer" particular events in the objective world — and confine ourselves to acts of penitence and adoration, I disagree with you. It may be true that Christianity would be, intellectually, a far easier religion if it told us to do this. And I can understand the people who think it would also be a more high-minded religion. But remember the psalm: "Lord, I am not high minded." Or better still, remember the New Testament. The most unblushingly petitionary prayers are there recommended to us both by precept and example. Our Lord in Gethsemane made a petitionary prayer (and did not get what He asked for).

You'll remind me that He asked with a reservation— "nevertheless, not my will but thine." This makes an enormous difference. But the difference which it precisely does not make is that of removing the prayer's petitionary character. When poor Bill, on a famous occasion, asked us to advance him £100, he said, "If you are sure you can spare it," and, "I shall quite understand if you'd rather not." This made his request very different from the nagging or even threatening request which a different sort of man might have made. But it was still a request.

The servant is not greater, and must not be more high-minded than the master. Whatever the theoretical difficulties are, we must continue to make requests of God. And on this point we can get no help from those who keep on reminding us that this is the lowest and least essential kind of prayer. They may be right; but so what? Diamonds are more precious than cairngorms, but the cairngorms still exist and must be taken into account like anything else.

But don't let us be too easily brow-beaten. Some of the popular objections to petitionary prayer, if they are valid against it, are equally valid against other things which we all do whether we are Christians or not, and have done ever since the world began, and shall certainly continue to do. I don't think the burden of answering these rests especially on us.

There is, for example, the Determinism which, whether under that name or another, seems to be implicit in a scientific view of the world. Determinism does not deny the existence of human behaviour. It rejects as

an illusion our spontaneous conviction that our behaviour has its ultimate origin in ourselves. What I call “my act” is the conduit-pipe through which the torrent of the universal process passes, and was bound to pass, at a particular time and place. The distinction between what we call the “voluntary” and the “involuntary” movements of our own bodies is not obliterated, but turns out (on this view) to be not exactly the sort of difference we supposed. What I call the “involuntary” movements necessarily — and, if we know enough, predictably — result from mechanical causes outside my body or from pathological or organic processes within it. The “voluntary” ones result from conscious psychological factors which themselves result from unconscious psychological factors dependent on my economic situation, my infantile and prenatal experience, my heredity... and so on back to the beginnings of organic life and beyond. I am a conductor, not a source. I never make an original contribution to the world-process. I move with that process not even as a floating log moves with the river but as a particular pint of the water itself moves.

But even those who believe this will, like anyone else, ask you to hand them the salt. Every form of behaviour, including speech, can go on just the same, and will. If a strict Determinist believed in God (and I think he might) petitionary prayer would be no more irrational in him than in anyone else.

Another argument, put up (but not accepted) by Burnaby in *Soundings*, is this. If man’s freedom is to be of any value, if he is to have any power of planning and of adapting means to ends, he must live in a predictable world. But if God alters the course of events in answer to prayer, then the world will be unpredictable. Therefore, if man is to be effectively free, God must be in this respect un-free.

But is it not plain that this predictable world, whether it is necessary to our freedom or no, is not the world we live in? This is a world of bets and insurance policies, of hopes and anxieties, where “nothing is certain but the unexpected” and prudence lies in “the masterly administration of the unforeseen”. Nearly all the things people pray about are unpredictable: the result of a battle or an operation, the losing or getting of a job, the reciprocation of a love. We don’t pray about eclipses.

But, you will reply, we once did. Every advance of science makes predictable something that was formerly unpredictable. It is only our ignorance that makes petitionary prayer possible. Would it not be rational to

assume that all those events we now pray about are in principle just as predictable — though we don't yet know enough to predict them — as things like eclipses? But that is no answer to the point I'm making. I am not now trying to refute Determinism. I am only arguing that a world where the future is unknown cannot be inconsistent with planned and purposive action since we are actually planning and purposing in such a world now and have been doing so for thousands of years.

Also, between ourselves, I think this objection involves a false idea of what the sciences do. You are here a better judge than I, but I give it for what it may be worth. It is true in one sense that the mark of a genuine science is its power to predict. But does this mean that a perfected science, or a perfected synthesis of all the sciences, would be able to write reliable histories of the future? And would the scientists even want to do so? Doesn't science predict a future event only in so far as, and only because, that event is the instance of some universal law? Everything that makes the event unique — in other words, everything that makes it a concrete historical event — is deliberately ruled out; not only as something which science can't, or can't yet, include, but also as something in which science, as such, has no interest. No one sunrise has ever been exactly like another. Take away from the sunrises that in which they differ and what is left will be identical. Such abstracted identicals are what science predicts. But life as we live it is not reducible to such identities. Every real physical event, much more every human experience, has behind it, in the long run, the whole previous history of the real universe — which is not itself an "instance" of anything — and is therefore always festooned with those particularities which science for her own purposes quite rightly discounts. Doesn't the whole art of contriving a good experiment consist in devising means whereby the irrelevancies — that is, the historical particularities — can be reduced to the minimum?

Later in his essay Burnaby seems to suggest that human wills are the only radically unpredictable factor in history. I'm not happy about this. Partly because I don't see how the gigantic negative which it involves could be proved; partly because I agree with Bradley that unpredictability is not the essence, nor even a symptom, of freedom. (Did you see they've reprinted *Ethical Studies*? The baiting of Arnold, wholly just and in Arnold's own manner, is exquisite.) But suppose it were true. Even then, it would make such a huge rent in the predictability of events that the whole

idea of predictability as somehow necessary to human life would be in ruins. Think of the countless human acts, acts of copulation, spread over millennia, that led to the birth of Plato, Attila, or Napoleon. Yet it is on these unpredictables that human history largely depends. Twenty-five years ago you asked Betty to marry you. And now, as a result, we have young George, (I hope he’s got over his gastric flu?) A thousand years hence he might have a good many descendants, and only modesty could conceal from you the possibility that one of these might have as huge a historical effect as Aristotle — or Hitler!

Letter 8

What froth and bubble my last letter must have seemed to you! I had hardly posted it when I got Betty's card with the disquieting news about George — turning my jocular reference to his descendants into a stab (at least I suppose it did) and making our whole discussion on prayer seem to you, as it now does to me, utterly unreal. The distance between the abstract, "Does God hear petitionary prayers?" and the concrete, "Will He — can He — grant our prayers for George?" is apparently infinite.

Not of course that I can pretend for a moment to be able to feel it as you do. If I did, you would say to yourself (like the man in *Macbeth*) "He has no children." A few years ago when I was in my own trouble you said as much to me. You wrote, "I know I'm outside. My voice can hardly reach you." And that was one reason why your letter was more like the real grasp of a real hand than any other I got.

The temptation is to attempt reassurances: to remind you how often a G.P.'s preliminary diagnosis is wrong, that the symptoms are admittedly ambiguous, that threatened men sometimes live to a ripe old age. And it would all in fact be true. But what, in that way, could I say which you are not saying to yourself every hour? And you would know my motive. You'd know how little real scientific candour — or knowledge — lay behind my words. And if, which God forbid, your suspense ended as terribly as mine did, these reassurances would sound like mockeries. So at least I found. The memory of the false hopes was an additional torment. Even now certain remembered moments of fallacious comfort twist my heart more than the remembered moment of despair.

All may yet be well. This is true. Meanwhile you have the waiting — waiting till the X-rays are developed and till the specialist has completed his observations. And while you wait, you still have to go on living — if only one could go underground, hibernate, sleep it out. And then (for me — I believe you are stronger) the horrible by-products of anxiety; the incessant, circular movement of the thoughts, even the Pagan temptation to keep watch for irrational omens. And one prays; but mainly such prayers as are themselves a form of anguish.

Some people feel guilty about their anxieties and regard them as a defect of faith. I don't agree at all. They are afflictions, not sins. Like all

afflictions, they are, if we can so take them, our share in the Passion of Christ. For the beginning of the Passion — the first move, so to speak — is in Gethsemane. In Gethsemane a very strange and significant thing seems to have happened.

It is clear from many of His sayings that Our Lord had long foreseen His death. He knew what conduct such as His, in a world such as we have made of this, must inevitably lead to. But it is clear that this knowledge must somehow have been withdrawn from Him before He prayed in Gethsemane. He could not, with whatever reservation about the Father's will, have prayed that the cup might pass and simultaneously known that it would not. That is both a logical and a psychological impossibility. You see what this involves? Lest any trial incident to humanity should be lacking, the torments of hope — of suspense, anxiety — were at the last moment loosed upon Him — the supposed possibility that, after all, He might, He just conceivably might, be spared the supreme horror. There was precedent. Isaac had been spared: he too at the last moment, he also against all apparent probability. It was not quite impossible... and doubtless He had seen other men crucified... a sight very unlike most of our religious pictures and images.

But for this last (and erroneous) hope against hope, and the consequent tumult of the soul, the sweat of blood, perhaps He would not have been very Man. To live in a fully predictable world is not to be a man.

At the end, I know, we are told that an angel appeared "comforting" him. But neither *comforting* in Sixteenth Century English nor [Greek: ennischyon] in Greek means "consoling". "Strengthening" is more the word. May not the strengthening have consisted in the renewed certainty — cold comfort this — that the thing must be endured and therefore could be?

We all try to accept with some sort of submission our afflictions when they actually arrive. But the prayer in Gethsemane shows that the preceding anxiety is equally God's will and equally part of our human destiny. The perfect Man experienced it. And the servant is not greater than the master. We are Christians, not Stoics.

Does not every movement in the Passion write large some common element in the sufferings of our race? First, the prayer of anguish; not granted. Then He turns to His friends. They are asleep — as ours, or we, are so often, or busy, or away, or preoccupied. Then He faces the Church; the very Church that He brought into existence. It condemns Him. This is also

characteristic. In every Church, in every institution, there is something which sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence. But there seems to be another chance. There is the State; in this case, the Roman state. Its pretensions are far lower than those of the Jewish church, but for that very reason it may be free from local fanaticisms. It claims to be just, on a rough, worldly level. Yes, but only so far as is consistent with political expediency and *raison d'état*. One becomes a counter in a complicated game. But even now all is not lost. There is still an appeal to the People — the poor and simple whom He had blessed, whom He had healed and fed and taught, to whom He himself belongs. But they have become over-night (it is nothing unusual) a murderous rabble shouting for His blood. There is, then, nothing left but God. And to God, God's last words are, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

You see how characteristic, how representative, it all is. The human situation writ large. These are among the things it means to be a man. Every rope breaks when you seize it. Every door is slammed shut as you reach it. To be like the fox at the end of the run; the earths all staked.

As for the last dereliction of all, how can we either understand or endure it? Is it that God Himself cannot be Man unless God seems to vanish at His greatest need? And if so, why? I sometimes wonder if we have even begun to understand what is involved in the very concept of creation. If God will create, He will make something to be, and yet to be not Himself. To be created is, in some sense, to be ejected or separated. Can it be that the more perfect the creature is, the further this separation must at some point be pushed? It is saints, not common people, who experience the "dark night". It is men and angels, not beasts, who rebel. Inanimate matter sleeps in the bosom of the Father. The "hiddenness" of God perhaps presses most painfully on those who are in another way nearest to Him, and therefore God Himself, made man, will of all men be by God most forsaken? One of the Seventeenth Century divines says: "By pretending to be visible God could only deceive the world." Perhaps He does pretend just a little to simple souls who need a full measure of "sensible consolation". Not deceiving them, but tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. Of course I'm not saying like Niebühr that evil is inherent in finitude. That would identify the creation with the fall and make God the author of evil. But perhaps there is an anguish, an alienation, a crucifixion involved in the creative act. Yet He who alone can judge judges the far-off consummation to be worth it.

I am, you see, a Job's comforter. Far from lightening the dark valley where you now find yourself, I blacken it. And you know why. Your darkness has brought back my own. But on second thoughts I don't regret what I have written. I think it is only in a shared darkness that you and I can really meet at present; shared with one another and, what matters most, with our Master. We are not on an untrodden path. Rather, on the main-road.

Certainly we were talking too lightly and easily about these things a fortnight ago. We were playing with counters. One used to be told as a child: "Think what you're saying." Apparently we need also to be told: "Think what you're thinking." The stakes have to be raised before we take the game quite seriously. I know this is the opposite of what is often said about the necessity of keeping all emotion out of our intellectual processes — "You can't think straight unless you are cool." But then neither can you think deep if you are. I suppose one must try every problem in both states. You remember that the ancient Persians debated everything twice: once when they were drunk and once when they were sober.

I know one of you will let me have news as soon as there is any.

Letter 9

Thank God. What a mare's nest! Or, more grimly, what a rehearsal! It is only twenty-four hours since I got Betty's wire, and already the crisis seems curiously far away. Like at sea. Once you have doubled the point and got into smooth water, the point doesn't take long to hide below the horizon.

And now, your letter. I'm not at all surprised at your feeling flattened rather than joyful. That isn't ingratitude. It's only exhaustion. Weren't there moments even during those terrible days when you glided into a sort of apathy — for the same reason? The body (bless it) will not continue indefinitely supplying us with the physical media of emotion.

Surely there's no difficulty about the prayer in Gethsemane on the ground that if the disciples were asleep they couldn't have heard it and therefore couldn't have recorded it? The words they did record would hardly have taken three seconds to utter. He was only "a stone's throw" away. The silence of night was around them. And we may be sure He prayed aloud. People did everything aloud in those days. You remember how astonished St. Augustine was — some centuries later in a far more sophisticated society — to discover that when St. Ambrose was reading (to himself) you couldn't hear the words even if you went and stood just beside him? The disciples heard the opening words of the prayer before they went to sleep. They record those opening words as if they were the whole.

There is a rather amusing instance of the same thing in Acts XXIV. The Jews had got down a professional orator called Tertullos to conduct the prosecution of St. Paul. The speech as recorded by St. Luke takes eighty-four words in the Greek, if I've counted correctly. Eighty-four words are impossibly short for a Greek advocate on a full-dress occasion. Presumably, then, they are a *précis*? But of those eighty-odd words forty are taken up with preliminary compliments to the bench — stuff, which, in a *précis* on that tiny scale, ought not to have come in at all. It is easy to guess what has happened. St. Luke, though an excellent narrator, was no good as a reporter. He starts off by trying to memorise, or to get down, the whole speech *verbatim*. And he succeeds in reproducing a certain amount of the exordium (The style unmistakable. Only a practising *rhetor* ever talks that way). But he is soon defeated. The whole of the rest of the speech has to be represented by a ludicrously inadequate abstract. But he doesn't tell us what

has happened, and thus seems to attribute to Tertullos a performance which would have spelled professional ruin.

As you say, the problems about prayer which really press upon a man when he is praying for dear life are not the general and philosophical ones; they are those that arise within Christianity itself. At least, this is so for you and me. We have long since agreed that if our prayers are granted at all they are granted from the foundation of the world. God and His acts are not in time. Intercourse between God and man occurs at particular moments for the man, but not for God. If there is — as the very concept of prayer presupposes — an adaptation between the free actions of men in prayer and the course of events, this adaptation is from the beginning inherent in the great single creative act. Our prayers are heard — don't say "have been heard" or you are putting God into time — not only before we make them but before we are made ourselves.

The real problems are different. Is it our faith that prayers, or some prayers, are real causes? But they are not magical causes: they don't, like spells, act directly on nature. They act, then, on nature through God? This would seem to imply that they act on God. But God, we believe, is impassible. All theology would reject the idea of a transaction in which a creature was the agent and God the patient.

It is quite useless to try to answer this empirically by producing stories — though you and I could tell strange ones — of striking answers to prayer. We shall be told, reasonably enough, that *post hoc* is not *propter hoc*. The thing we prayed for was going to happen anyway. Our action was irrelevant. Even a fellow-creature's action which fulfils our request may not be caused by it; he does what we ask, but perhaps he would equally have done so without our asking. Some cynics will tell us that no woman ever married a man *because* he proposed to her: she always elicits the proposal because she has determined to marry him.

In these human instances we believe, when we do believe, that our request was the cause, or *a* cause, of the other party's action, because we have from deep acquaintance a certain impression of that party's character. Certainly not by applying the scientific procedures — control experiments, etc. — for establishing causes. Similarly we believe, when we do believe, that the relation between our prayer and the event is not a mere coincidence only because we have a certain idea of God's character. Only faith vouches

for the connection. No empirical proof could establish it. Even a miracle, if one occurred, “might have been going to happen anyway.”

Again, in the most intimate human instances we really feel that the category of cause and effect will not contain what actually happens. In a real “proposal” — as distinct from one in an old-fashioned novel — is there any agent-patient relation? Which drop on the window pane moves to join the other?

Now I am going to suggest that strictly causal thinking is even more inadequate when applied to the relation between God and man. I don’t mean only when we are thinking of prayer, but whenever we are thinking about what happens at the Frontier, at the mysterious point of junction and separation where absolute being utters derivative being.

One attempt to define causally what happens there has led to the whole puzzle about Grace and free will. You will notice that Scripture just sails over the problem. “Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling” — pure Pelagianism. But why? “For it is God who worketh in you” — pure Augustinianism. It is presumably only our presuppositions that make this appear nonsensical. We profanely assume that divine and human action exclude one another like the actions of two fellow-creatures so that “God did this” and “I did this” cannot both be true of the same act except in the sense that each contributed a share.

In the end we must admit a two-way traffic at the junction. At first sight no passive verb in the world would seem to be so utterly passive as “to be created”. Does it not mean “to *have been* nonentity”? Yet, for us rational creatures, to be created also means “to be made agents”. We have nothing that we have not received; but part of what we have received is the power of being something more than receptacles. We exercise it, no doubt, chiefly by our sins. But they, for my present argument, will do as well as anything else. For God forgives sins. He would not do so if we committed none— “whereto serves Mercy but to confront the visage of offence?” In that sense the Divine action is consequent upon, conditioned by, elicited by, our behaviour. Does this mean that we can “act upon” God? I suppose you could put it that way if you wanted. If you do, then we must interpret His “impassibility” in a way which admits this; for we know that God forgives much better than we know what “impassible” means. I would rather say that from before all worlds His providential and creative act (for they are all

one) takes into account all the situations produced by the acts of His creatures. And if He takes our sins into account, why not our petitions?

Letter 10

I see your point. But you must admit that Scripture doesn't take the slightest pains to guard the doctrine of Divine Impassibility. We are constantly represented as exciting the Divine wrath or pity — even as "grieving" God. I know this language is analogical. But when we say that, we must not smuggle in the idea that we can throw the analogy away and, as it were, get in behind it to a purely literal truth. All we can really substitute for the analogical expression is some theological abstraction. And the abstraction's value is almost entirely negative. It warns us against drawing absurd consequences from the analogical expression by prosaic extrapolations. By itself, the abstraction "impassible" can get us nowhere. It might even suggest something far more misleading than the most naïf Old Testament picture of a stormily emotional Jehovah. Either something inert, or something which was "Pure Act" in such a sense that it could take no account of events within the universe it had created.

I suggest two rules for exegetics. (1) Never take the images literally. (2) When the *purport* of the images — what they say to our fear and hope and will and affections — seems to conflict with the theological abstractions, trust the purport of the images every time. For our abstract thinking is itself a tissue of analogies: a continual modelling of spiritual reality in legal or chemical or mechanical terms. Are these likely to be more adequate than the sensuous, organic, and personal images of scripture — light and darkness, river and well, seed and harvest, master and servant, hen and chickens, father and child? The footprints of the Divine are more visible in that rich soil than across rocks or slag-heaps. Hence what they now call "de-mythologising" Christianity can easily be "re-mythologising" it — and substituting a poorer mythology for a richer.

I agree that my deliberately vague expression about our prayers being "taken into account" is a retreat from Pascal's magnificent dictum ("God has instituted prayer so as to confer upon His creatures the dignity of being causes"). But Pascal really does suggest a far too explicit agent-and-patient relation, with God as the patient. And I have another ground for preferring my own more modest formula. To think of our prayers as just "causes" would suggest that the whole importance of petitionary prayer lay in the achievement of the thing asked for. But really, for our spiritual life as a

whole, the “being taken into account”, or “considered”, matters more than the being granted. Religious people don’t talk about the “results” of prayer; they talk of its being “answered” or “heard”. Someone said “A suitor wants his suit to be heard as well as granted.” In suits to God, if they are really religious acts at all and not merely attempts at magic, this is even more so. We can bear to be refused but not to be ignored. In other words, our faith can survive many refusals if they really are refusals and not mere disregards. The apparent stone will be bread to us if we believe that a Father’s hand put it into ours, in mercy or in justice or even in rebuke. It is hard and bitter, yet it can be chewed and swallowed. But if, having prayed for our heart’s desire and got it, we then became convinced that this was a mere accident — that providential designs which had only some quite different end just couldn’t help throwing out this satisfaction for us as a by-product — then the apparent bread would become a stone. A pretty stone, perhaps, or even a precious stone. But not edible to the soul.

What we must fight against is Pope’s maxim:

the first Almighty Cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws.

The odd thing is that Pope thought, and all who agree with him think, that this philosophical theology is an advance beyond the religion of the child and the savage (and the New Testament). It seems to them less naïf and anthropomorphic. The real difference, however, is that the anthropomorphism is more subtly hidden and of a far more disastrous type.

For the implication is that there exists on the Divine level a distinction with which we are very familiar on our own: that between the plan (or the main plan) and its unintended but unavoidable by-products. Whatever we do, even if it achieves its object, will also scatter round it a spray of consequences which were not its object at all. This is so even in private life. I throw out crumbs for the birds and provide, incidentally, a breakfast for the rats. Much more so in what may be called managerial life. The governing body of the college alters the time of dinner in hall; our object being to let the servants get home earlier. But by doing so we alter the daily pattern of life for every undergraduate. To some the new arrangement will be a convenience, to others the reverse. But we had no special favour for the first lot and no spite against the second. Our arrangement drags these unforeseen and undesired consequences after it. We can’t help this.

On Pope's view God has to work in the same way. He has His grand design for the sum of things. Nothing we can say will deflect it. It leaves Him little freedom (or none?) for granting, or even for deliberately refusing, our prayers. The grand design churns out innumerable blessings and curses for individuals. God can't help that. They're all by-products.

I suggest that the distinction between plan and by-product must vanish entirely on the level of omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect goodness. I believe this because even on the human level it diminishes the higher you go. The better a human plan is made, the fewer unconsidered by-products it will have and the more birds it will kill with one stone, the more diverse needs and interests it will meet; the nearer it will come — it can never come very near — to being a plan for each individual. Bad laws make hard cases. But let us go beyond the managerial altogether. Surely a man of genius composing a poem or symphony must be less unlike God than a ruler? But the man of genius has no mere by-products in his work. Every note or word will be more than a means, more than a consequence. Nothing will be present *solely* for the sake of other things. If each note or word were conscious it would say: "The maker had me myself in view and chose for me, with the whole force of his genius, exactly the context I required." And it would be right — provided it remembered that every other note or word could say no less.

How should the true Creator work by "general laws"? "To generalise is to be an idiot," said Blake. Perhaps he went too far. But to generalise is to be a finite mind. Generalities are the lenses with which our intellects have to manage. How should God sully the infinite lucidity of this vision with such makeshifts? One might as well think He had to consult books of reference, or that, if He ever considered me individually, He would begin by saying, "Gabriel, bring me Mr. Lewis's file."

The God of the New Testament who takes into account the death of every sparrow is not more, but far less, anthropomorphic than Pope's.

I will not believe in the Managerial God and his general laws. If there is Providence at all, everything is providential and every providence is a special providence. It is an old and pious saying that Christ died not only for Man but for each man, just as much as if each had been the only man there was. Can I not believe the same of this creative act — which, as spread out in time, we call destiny or history? It is for the sake of each human soul. Each is an end. Perhaps for each beast. Perhaps even each

particle of matter — the night sky suggests that the inanimate also has for God some value we cannot imagine. His ways are not (not there, anyway) like ours.

If you ask why I believe all this, I can only reply that we are taught, both by precept and example, to pray, and that prayer would be meaningless in the sort of universe Pope pictured. One of the purposes for which God instituted prayer may have been to bear witness that the course of events is not governed like a state but created like a work of art to which every being makes its contribution and (in prayer) a conscious contribution, and in which every being is both an end and a means. And since I have momentarily considered prayer itself as a means let me hasten to add that it is also an end. The world was made partly that there might be prayer; partly that our prayers for George might be answered. But let’s have finished with “partly”. The great work of art was made for the sake of all it does and is, down to the curve of every wave and the flight of every insect.

Letter 11

I see you won't let me off. And the longer I look at it the less I shall like it. I must face — or else explicitly decline — the difficulties that really torment us when we cry for mercy in earnest. I have found no book that helps me with them all. I have so little confidence in my own power to tackle them that, if it were possible, I would let sleeping dogs lie. But the dogs are not sleeping. They are awake and snapping. We both bear the marks of their teeth. That being so, we had better share our bewilderments. By hiding them from each other we should not hide them from ourselves.

The New Testament contains embarrassing promises that what we pray for with faith we shall receive. Mark XI, 24 is the most staggering. Whatever we ask for, believing that we'll get it, we'll get. No question, it seems, of confining it to spiritual gifts; *whatever* we ask for. No question of a merely general faith in God, but a belief that you will get the particular thing you ask. No question of getting either it or else something that is really far better for you; you'll get precisely it. And to heap paradox on paradox, the Greek doesn't even say "believing that you *will* get it". It uses the aorist, [Greek: elabete], which one is tempted to translate "believing that you *got* it". But this final difficulty I shall ignore. I don't expect Aramaic had anything which we — brought up on Latin grammar — would recognise as tenses at all.

How is this astonishing promise to be reconciled —

(a) With the observed facts?

(b) With the prayer in Gethsemane, and (as a result of that prayer) the universally accepted view that we should ask everything with a reservation ("if it be Thy will")?

As regards (a), no evasion is possible. Every war, every famine or plague, almost every death-bed, is the monument to a petition that was not granted. At this very moment thousands of people in this one island are facing as a *fait accompli*, the very thing against which they have prayed night and day, pouring out their whole soul in prayer, and, as they thought, with faith. They have sought and not found. They have knocked and it has not been opened. "That which they greatly feared has come upon them."

But (b) though much less often mentioned, is surely an equal difficulty. How is it possible at one and the same moment to have a perfect faith — an

untroubled or unhesitating faith as St. James says (I, 6) — that you will get what you ask and yet also prepare yourself submissively in advance for a possible refusal? If you envisage a refusal as possible, how can you have simultaneously a perfect confidence that what you ask will not be refused? If you have that confidence, how can you take refusal into account at all?

It is easy to see why so much more is written about worship and contemplation than about “crudely” or “naïvely” petitionary prayer. They may be — I think they are — nobler forms of prayer. But they are also a good deal easier to write about.

As regards the first difficulty, I’m not asking why our petitions are so often refused. Anyone can see in general that this must be so. In our ignorance we ask what is not good for us or for others, or not even intrinsically possible. Or again, to grant one man’s prayer involves refusing another’s. There is much here which it is hard for our will to accept but nothing that is hard for our intellect to understand. The real problem is different; not why refusal is so frequent, but why the opposite result is so lavishly promised.

Shall we then proceed on Vidler’s principles and scrap the embarrassing promises as “venerable archaisms” which have to be “outgrown”? Surely, even if there were no other objection, that method is too easy. If we are free to delete all inconvenient data we shall certainly have no theological difficulties; but for the same reason no solutions and no progress. The very writers of the “Tekkies”, not to mention the scientists, know better. The troublesome fact, the apparent absurdity which can’t be fitted into any synthesis we have yet made, is precisely the one we must not ignore. Ten to one, it’s in that covert the fox is lurking. There is always hope if we keep an unsolved problem fairly in view; there’s none if we pretend it’s not there.

Before going any further, I want to make two purely practical points: 1. These lavish promises are the worst possible place at which to begin Christian instruction in dealing with a child or a Pagan. You remember what happened when the Widow started Huck Finn off with the idea he could get what he wanted by praying for it. He tried the experiment and then, not unnaturally, never gave Christianity a second thought; we had better not talk about the view of prayer embodied in Mark XI, 24 as “naïf” or “elementary”. If that passage contains a truth, it is a truth for very advanced pupils indeed. I don’t think it is “addressed to our condition” (yours and

mine) at all. It is a coping-stone, not a foundation. For most of us the prayer in Gethsemane is the only model. Removing mountains can wait.

2. We must not encourage in ourselves or others any tendency to work up a subjective state which, if we succeeded, we should describe as “faith”, with the idea that this will somehow ensure the granting of our prayer. We have probably all done this as children. But the state of mind which desperate desire working on a strong imagination can manufacture is not faith in the Christian sense. It is a feat of psychological gymnastics.

It seems to me we must conclude that such promises about prayer with faith refer to a degree or kind of faith which most believers never experience. A far inferior degree is, I hope, acceptable to God. Even the kind that says, “Help thou my unbelief”, may make way for a miracle. Again, the absence of such faith as ensures the granting of the prayer is not even necessarily a sin; for Our Lord had no such assurance when He prayed in Gethsemane.

How or why does such faith occur sometimes, but not always, even in the perfect petitioner? We, or I, can only guess. My own idea is that it occurs only when the one who prays does so as God’s fellow-worker, demanding what is needed for the joint work. It is the prophet’s, the apostle’s, the missionary’s, the healer’s prayer that is made with this confidence and finds the confidence justified by the event. The difference, we are told, between a servant and a friend is that a servant is not in his master’s secrets. For him, “orders is orders”. He has only his own surmises as to the plans he helps to execute. But the fellow-worker, the companion or (dare we say?) the colleague of God is so united with Him at certain moments that something of the divine foreknowledge enters his mind. Hence his faith is the “evidence” — that is, the evidentness, the obviousness — of things not seen.

As the friend is above the servant, the servant is above the suitor, the man praying on his own behalf. It is no sin to be a suitor. Our Lord descends into the humiliation of being a suitor, of praying on His own behalf, in Gethsemane. But when He does so the certitude about His Father’s will is apparently withdrawn.

After that it would be no true faith — it would be idle presumption — for us, who are habitually suitors and do not often rise to the level of servants, to imagine that we shall have any assurance which is not an illusion — or correct only by accident — about the event of our prayers.

Our struggle is, isn’t it? — to achieve and retain faith on a lower level. To believe that, whether He can grant them or not, God will listen to our prayers, will take them into account. Even to go on believing that there is a Listener at all. For as the situation grows more and more desperate, the grisly fears intrude. Are we only talking to ourselves in an empty universe? The silence is often so emphatic. And we have prayed so much already.

What do you think about these things? I have offered only guesses.

Letter 12

My experience is the same as yours. I have never met a book on prayer which was much use to people in our position. There are many little books *of* prayers, which may be helpful to those who share Rose Macaulay's approach, but you and I wouldn't know what to do with them. It's not words we lack! And there are books *on* prayer, but they nearly all have a strongly conventual background. Even the *Imitation* is sometimes, to an almost comic degree, "not addressed to my condition". The author assumes that you will want to be chatting in the kitchen when you ought to be in your cell. Our temptation is to be in our studies when we ought to be chatting in the kitchen. (Perhaps if our studies were as cold as those cells it would be different.)

You and I are people of the foothills. In the happy days when I was still a walker, I loved the hills, and even mountain walks, but I was no climber. I hadn't the head. So now, I do not attempt the precipices of mysticism. On the other hand, there is, apparently, a level of prayer-life lower even than ours. I don't mean that the people who occupy it are spiritually lower than we. They may far excel us. But their praying is of an astonishingly undeveloped type.

I have only just learned about it — from our Vicar. He assures me that, so far as he has been able to discover, the overwhelming majority of his parishioners mean by "saying their prayers" repeating whatever little formula they were taught in childhood by their mothers. I wonder how this can come about. It can't be that they are never penitent or thankful — they're dear people, many of them — or have no needs. Is it that there is a sort of water-tight bulk-head between their "religion" and their "real life", in which case the part of their life which they call "religious" is really the irreligious part?

But however badly needed a good book on prayer is, I shall never try to write it. Two people on the foothills comparing notes in private are all very well. But in a book one would inevitably seem to be attempting, not discussion, but instruction. And for me to offer the world instruction about prayer would be impudence.

About the higher level — the crags up which the mystics vanish out of my sight — the glaciers and the *aiguilles* — I have only two things to say.

One is that I don't think we are all "called" to that ascent. "If it were so, He would have told us."

The second is this. The following position is gaining ground and is extremely plausible. Mystics (it is said) starting from the most diverse religious premises all find the same things. These things have singularly little to do with the professed doctrines of any particular religion — Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Neo-Platonism, etc. Therefore, mysticism is, by empirical evidence, the only real contact Man has ever had with the unseen. The agreement of the explorers proves that they are all in touch with something objective. It is therefore the one true religion. And what we call the "religions" are either mere delusions or, at best, so many porches through which an entrance into transcendent reality can be effected —

And when he hath the kernel eate,
Who doth not throw away the shell?

I am doubtful about the premises. Did Plotinus and Lady Julian and St. John of the Cross really find "the same things"? But even admitting some similarity. One thing common to all mysticisms is the temporary shattering of our ordinary spatial and temporal consciousness and of our discursive intellect. The value of this negative experience must depend on the nature of that positive, whatever it is, for which it makes room. But should we not expect that the negative would always *feel* the same? If wine-glasses were conscious, I suppose that *being emptied* would be the same experience for each, even if some were to remain empty and some to be filled with wine and some broken. All who leave the land and put to sea will "find the same things" — the land sinking below the horizon, the gulls dropping behind, the salty breeze. Tourists, merchants, sailors, pirates, missionaries — it's all one. But this identical experience vouches for nothing about the utility or lawfulness or final event of their voyages —

It may be that the gulfs will wash them down,
It may be they will touch the Happy Isles.

I do not at all regard mystical experience as an illusion. I think it shows that there is a way to go, before death, out of what may be called "this world" — out of the stage set. Out of this; but into what? That's like asking

an Englishman, “Where does the sea lead to?” He will reply “To everywhere on earth, including Davy Jones’s locker, except England.” The lawfulness, safety, and utility of the mystical voyage depends not at all on its being mystical — that is, on its being a departure — but on the motives, skill, and constancy of the voyager, and on the grace of God. The true religion gives value to its own mysticism; mysticism does not validate the religion in which it happens to occur.

I shouldn’t be at all disturbed if it could be shown that a diabolical mysticism, or drugs, produced experiences indistinguishable (by introspection) from those of the great Christian mystics. Departures are all alike; it is the landfall that crowns the voyage. The saint, by being a saint, proves that his mysticism (if he was a mystic; not all saints are) led him aright; the fact that he has practised mysticism could never prove his sanctity.

You may wonder that my intense desire to peep behind the scenes has not led me to attempt the mystic way. But would it not be the worst of all possible motives? The saint may win “a mortal glimpse of death’s immortal rose”, but it is a by-product. He took ship simply in humble and selfless love.

There can be a desire (like mine) with no carnal element in it at all which is nevertheless, in St. Paul’s sense, “flesh” and not “spirit”. That is, there can be a merely impulsive, headstrong, greedy desire even for spiritual things. It is, like our other appetites, “cross-fodder”. Yet, being crucified, it can be raised from the dead, and made part of our bliss.

Turning now to quite a different point in your letter. I too had noticed that our prayers for others flow more easily than those we offer on our own behalf. And it would be nice to accept your view that this just shows we are made to live by charity. I’m afraid, however, I detect two much less attractive reasons for the ease of my own intercessory prayers. One is that I am often, I believe, praying for others when I should be doing things for them. It’s so much easier to pray for a bore than to go and see him. And the other is like unto it. Suppose I pray that you may be given grace to withstand your besetting sin (short list of candidates for this post will be forwarded on demand). Well, all the work has to be done by God and you. If I pray against my own besetting sin there will be work for me. One sometimes fights shy of admitting an act to be a sin for this very reason.

The increasing list of people to be prayed for is, nevertheless, one of the burdens of old age. I have a scruple about crossing anyone off the list. When I say a scruple, I mean precisely a scruple. I don't really think that if one prays for a man at all it is a duty to pray for him all my life. But when it comes to dropping him *now*, this particular day, it somehow goes against the grain. And as the list lengthens, it is hard to make it more than a mere string of names. But here — in some measure — a curious law comes into play. Don't you find that, if you keep your mind fixed upon God, you will automatically think of the person you are praying for; but that there is no tendency for it to work the other way round?

Letter 13

I've just found in an old note-book a poem, with no author's name attached, which is rather relevant to something we were talking about a few weeks ago — I mean, the haunting fear that there is no-one listening, and that what we call prayer is soliloquy: someone talking to himself. This writer takes the bull by the horns and says in effect: "Very well, suppose it is", and gets a surprising result. Here is the poem:

They tell me, Lord that when I seem
   To be in speech with you,
Since but one voice is heard, it's all a dream,
   One talker aping two.

Sometimes it is, yet not as they
   Conceive it. Rather, I
Seek in myself the things I hoped to say,
   But lo!, my wells are dry.

Then, seeing me empty, you forsake
   The listener's role and through
My dumb lips breathe and into utterance wake
   The thoughts I never knew.

And thus you neither need reply
   Nor can; thus, while we seem
Two talkers, thou are One forever, and I
   No dreamer, but thy dream.

Dream makes it too like Pantheism and was perhaps dragged in for the rhyme. But is he not right in thinking that prayer in its most perfect state is a soliloquy? If the Holy Spirit speaks in the man, then in prayer God speaks to God. But the human petitioner does not therefore become a "dream". As you said the other day, God and man cannot exclude one another, as man excludes man, at the point of junction, so to call it, between Creator and creature; the point where the mystery of creation — timeless for God, and

incessant in time for us — is actually taking place. “God did (or said) it” and “I did (or said) it” can both be true.

You remember the two maxims Owen [Barfield] lays down in *Saving the Appearances*? On the one hand, the man who does not regard God as other than himself cannot be said to have a religion at all. On the other hand, if I think God other than myself in the same way in which my fellow-men, and objects in general, are other than myself, I am beginning to make Him an idol. I am daring to treat His existence as somehow *parallel* to my own. But He is the ground of our being. He is always both within us and over against us. Our reality is so much from His reality as He, moment by moment, projects into us. The deeper the level within ourselves from which our prayer, or any other act, wells up, the more it is His, but not at all the less ours. Rather, most ours when most His. Arnold speaks of us as “enisled” from one another in “the sea of life”. But we can’t be similarly “en-isled” from God. To be discontinuous from God as I am discontinuous from you would be annihilation.

A question at once arises. Is it still God speaking when a liar or a blasphemer speaks? In one sense, almost Yes. Apart from God he could not speak at all; there are no words not derived from the Word; no acts not derived from Him who is *Actus purus*. And indeed the only way in which I can make real to myself what theology teaches about the heinousness of sin is to remember that every sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us — an energy which, if not thus distorted, would have blossomed into one of those holy acts whereof “God did it” and “I did it” are both true descriptions. We poison the wine as He decants it into us; murder a melody He would play with us as the instrument. We caricature the self-portrait He would paint. Hence all sin, whatever else it is, is sacrilege.

We must, no doubt, distinguish this ontological continuity between Creator and creature which is, so to speak, “given” by the relation between them, from the union of wills which, under Grace, is reached by a life of sanctity. The ontological continuity is, I take it, unchangeable, and exists between God and a reprobate (or a devil) no less than between God and a saint. “Whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I go down to hell, thou art there also.”

Where there is prayer at all we may suppose that there is some effort, however feeble, towards the second condition, the union of wills. What God

labours to do or say through the man comes back to God with a distortion which at any rate is not total.

Do you object to the apparent "roundaboutness" — it could easily be made comic — of the whole picture? Why should God speak to Himself through man? I ask, in reply, why should He do anything through His creatures? Why should He achieve, the long way round, through the labours of angels, men (always imperfectly obedient and efficient), and the activity of irrational and inanimate beings, ends which, presumably, the mere *fiat* of omnipotence would achieve with instantaneous perfection?

Creation seems to be delegation through and through. He will do nothing simply of Himself which can be done by creatures. I suppose this is because He is a giver. And He has nothing to give but Himself. And to give Himself is to do His deeds — in a sense, and on varying levels to be Himself — through the things He has made.

In Pantheism God is all. But the whole point of creation surely is that He was not content to be all. He intends to be "all *in all*".

One must be careful not to put this in a way which would blur the distinction between the creation of a man and the Incarnation of God. Could one, as a mere model, put it thus? In creation God makes — invents — a person and "utters" — injects — him into the realm of Nature. In the Incarnation, God the Son takes the body and human soul of Jesus, and, through that, the whole environment of Nature, all the creaturely predicament, into His own being. So that "He came down from Heaven" can almost be transposed into "Heaven drew earth up into it," and locality, limitation, sleep, sweat, footsore weariness, frustration, pain, doubt and death, are, from before all worlds, known by God from within. The pure light walks the earth; the darkness, received into the heart of Deity, is there swallowed up. Where, except in uncreated light, can the darkness be drowned?

Letter 14

I won't admit without a struggle that when I speak of God "uttering" or "inventing" the creatures I am "watering down the concept of creation." I am trying to give it, by remote analogies, some sort of content. I know that to create is defined as "to make out of nothing," *ex nihilo*. But I take that to mean "*not* out of any pre-existing material." It can't mean that God makes what God has not thought of, or that He gives His creatures any powers or beauties which He Himself does not possess. Why, we think that even human work comes nearest to creation when the maker has "got it all out of his own head."

Nor am I suggesting a theory of "emanations". The differentia of an "emanation" — literally an overflowing, a trickling out — would be that it suggests something involuntary. But my words— "uttering" and "inventing" — are meant to suggest an act.

This act, as it is for God, must always remain totally inconceivable to man. For we — even our poets and musicians and inventors — never, in the ultimate sense, *make*. We only build. We always have materials to build from. All we can know about the act of creation must be derived from what we can gather about the relation of the creatures to their Creator.

Now the very Pagans knew that any beggar at your door might be a god in disguise: and the parable of the sheep and the goats is Our Lord's comment. What you do, or don't do, to the beggar, you do, or don't do, to Him. Taken at the Pantheist extreme, this could mean that men are only appearances of God — dramatic representations, as it were. Taken at the Legalist extreme, it could mean that God, by a sort of Legal fiction, will "deem" your kindness to the beggar a kindness done to Himself. Or again, as Our Lord's own words suggest, that since the least of men are His "brethren", the whole action is, so to speak, "within the family." And in what sense brethren? Biologically, because Jesus is Man? Ontologically, because the light lightens them all? Or simply "loved like brethren." (It cannot refer only to the regenerate.) I would ask first whether any one of these formulations is "right" in a sense which makes the others simply wrong? It seems to me improbable. If I ever see more clearly I will speak more surely.

Meanwhile, I stick to Owen's view. All creatures, from the angel to the atom, are other than God; with an otherness to which there is no parallel: incommensurable. The very word "to be" cannot be applied to Him and to them in exactly the same sense. But also, no creature is other than He in the same way in which it is other than all the rest. He is in it as they can never be in one another. In each of them as the ground and root and continual supply of its reality. And also in good rational creatures as light; in bad ones as fire, as at first the smouldering unease, and later the flaming anguish, of an unwelcome and vainly resisted presence.

Therefore of each creature we can say, "This also is Thou: neither is this Thou."

Simple faith leaps to this with astonishing ease. I once talked to a Continental pastor who had seen Hitler, and had, by all human standards, good cause to hate him. "What did he look like?" I asked. "Like all men," he replied, "that is, like Christ."

One is always fighting on at least two fronts. When one is among Pantheists one must emphasise the distinctness, and relative independence, of the creatures. Among Deists — or perhaps in Woolwich, if the laity there really think God is to be sought in the sky — one must emphasise the divine presence in my neighbour, my dog, my cabbage-patch.

It is much wiser, I believe, to think of that presence in particular objects than just of "omnipresence". The latter gives very naïf people (Woolwich again, perhaps?) the idea of something spatially extended, like a gas. It also blurs the distinctions, the truth that God is present in each thing but not necessarily in the same mode; not in a man as in the consecrated bread and wine, nor in a bad man as in a good one, nor in a beast as in a man, nor in a tree as in a beast, nor in inanimate matter as in a tree. I take it there is a paradox here. The higher the creature, the more and also the less God is in it; the more present by grace, and the less present (by a sort of abdication) as mere power. By grace He gives the higher creatures power to will His will ("and wield their little tridents"): the lower ones simply execute it automatically.

It is well to have specifically holy places, and things, and days, for, without these focal points or reminders, the belief that all is holy and "big with God" will soon dwindle into a mere sentiment. But if these holy places, things, and days cease to remind us, if they obliterate our awareness that all ground is holy and every bush (could we but perceive it) a Burning

Bush, then the hallows begin to do harm. Hence both the necessity, and the perennial danger, of “religion”.

Boehme advises us once an hour “to fling ourselves beyond every creature.” But in order to find God it is perhaps not always necessary to leave the creatures behind. We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere *incognito*. And the *incognito* is not always hard to penetrate. The real labour is to remember, to attend. In fact, to come awake. Still more, to remain awake.

Oddly enough, what corroborates me in this faith is the fact, otherwise so infinitely deplorable, that the awareness of this presence has so often been unwelcome. I call upon Him in prayer. Often He might reply — I think He does reply— “But you have been evading me for hours.” For He comes not only to raise up but to cast down; to deny, to rebuke, to interrupt. The prayer “prevent us in all our doings” is often answered as if the word *prevent* had its modern meaning. The presence which we voluntarily evade is often, and we know it, His presence in wrath.

And out of this evil comes a good. If I never fled from His presence, then I should suspect those moments when I seemed to delight in it of being wish-fulfilment dreams. That, by the way, explains the feebleness of all those watered versions of Christianity which leave out all the darker elements and try to establish a religion of pure consolation. No real belief in the watered versions can last. Bemused and besotted as we are, we still dimly know at heart that nothing which is at all times and in every way agreeable to us can have objective reality. It is of the very nature of the real that it should have sharp corners and rough edges, that it should be resistant, should be itself. Dream-furniture is the only kind on which you never stub your toes or bang your knee. You and I have both known happy marriage. But how different our wives were from the imaginary mistresses of our adolescent dreams! So much less exquisitely adapted to all our wishes; and for that very reason (among others) so incomparably better.

Servile fear is, to be sure, the lowest form of religion. But a god such that there could never be occasion for even servile fear, a *safe* god, a tame god, soon proclaims himself to any sound mind as a fantasy. I have met no people who fully disbelieved in Hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in Heaven.

There is, I know, a belief in both, which is of no religious significance. It makes these spiritual things, or some travesty of them, objects of purely carnal, prudential, self-centred fear and hope. The deeper levels, those things which only immortal spirit can desire or dread, are not concerned at all. Such belief is fortunately very brittle. The old divines exhausted their eloquence especially in arousing such fear: but, as they themselves rather naïvely complain, the effect did not last for more than a few hours after the sermon.

The soul that has once been waked, or stung, or uplifted by the desire of God, will inevitably (I think) awake to the fear of losing Him.

Letter 15

I hadn't realised that Betty was the silent third in this dialogue. I ought to have guessed it. Not that her worst enemy ever accused her of being The Silent Woman — remember the night at Mullingar — but that her silences during a prolonged argument between you and me are usually of a very emphatic, audible, and even dialectical character. One knows she is getting her broom ready and will soon sweep up all our breakages. On the present point she is right. I *am* making very heavy weather of what most believers find a very simple matter. What is more natural, and easier, if you believe in God, than to address Him? How could one not?

Yes. But it depends who one is. For those in my position — adult converts from the *intelligentsia* — that simplicity and spontaneity can't always be the starting point. One can't just jump back into one's childhood. If one tries to, the result will only be an archaising revival, like Victorian Gothic — a parody of being born again. We have to work back to the simplicity a long way round.

In actual practice, in my prayers, I often have to use that long way at the very beginning of the prayer.

St. François de Sales begins every meditation with the command: *Mettez-vous en la présence de Dieu*. I wonder how many different mental operations have been carried out in intended obedience to that?

What happens to me if I try to take it — as Betty would tell me— "simply", is the juxtaposition of two "representations" or ideas or phantoms. One is the bright blur in the mind which stands for God. The other is the idea I call "me". But I can't leave it at that, because I know — and it's useless to pretend I don't know — that they are both phantasmal. The real I has created them both — or, rather, built them up in the vaguest way from all sorts of psychological odds and ends.

Very often, paradoxically, the first step is to banish the "bright blur" — or, in statelier language, to break the idol. Let's get back to what has at least some degree of resistant reality. Here are the four walls of the room. And here am I. But both terms are merely the façade of impenetrable mysteries.

The walls, they say, are matter. That is, as the physicists will try to tell me, something totally unimaginable, only mathematically describable, existing in a curved space, charged with appalling energies. If I could

penetrate far enough into that mystery I should perhaps finally reach what is sheerly real.

And what am I? The façade is what I call consciousness. I am at least conscious of the colour of those walls. I am not, in the same way, or to the same degree, conscious of what I call my thoughts: for if I try to examine what happens when I am thinking, it stops happening. Yet even if I could examine my thinking, it would, I well know, turn out to be the thinnest possible film on the surface of a vast deep. The psychologists have taught us that. Their real error lies in underestimating the depth and the variety of its contents. Dazzling lightness as well as dark clouds come up. And if all the enchanting visions are, as they rashly claim, mere disguises for sex, where lives the hidden artist who, from such monotonous and claustrophobic material, can make works of such various and liberating art? And depths of time too. All my past; my ancestral past; perhaps my pre-human past.

Here again, if I could dive deeply enough, I might again reach at the bottom that which simply is.

And only now am I ready, in my own fashion, to "place myself in the presence of God." Either mystery, if I could follow it far enough, would lead me to the same point — the point where something, in each case unimaginable, leaps forth from God's naked hand. The Indian, looking at the material world, says, "I am that." I say, "That and I grow from one root." *Verbum supernum prodiens*, the Word coming forth from the Father, has made both, and brought them together in this subject-object embrace.

And what, you ask, is the advantage of all this? Well, for me — I am not talking about anyone else — it plants the prayer right in the present reality. For, whatever else is or is not real, this momentary confrontation of subject and object is certainly occurring: always occurring except when I am asleep. Here is the actual meeting of God's activity and man's — not some imaginary meeting that might occur if I were an angel or if God incarnate entered the room. There is here no question of a God "up there" or "out there"; rather, the present operation of God "in here", as the ground of my own being, and God "in there", as the ground of the matter that surrounds me, and God embracing and uniting both in the daily miracle of finite consciousness.

The two façades — the "I" as I perceive myself and the room as I perceive it — were obstacles as long as I mistook them for ultimate

realities. But the moment I recognised them as façades, as mere surfaces, they became conductors. Do you see? A lie is a delusion only so long as we believe it; but a recognised lie is a reality — a real lie — and as such may be highly instructive. A dream ceases to be a delusion as soon as we wake. But it does not become a nonentity. It is a real dream: and it also may be instructive. A stage set is not a real wood or drawing room: it is a real stage set, and may be a good one. (In fact we should never ask of anything "Is it real?", for everything is real. The proper question is "A real *what*?" e.g. a real snake or real *delirium tremens*?) The objects around me, and my idea of "me", will deceive if taken at their face value. But they are momentous if taken as the end-products of divine activities. Thus and not otherwise, the creation of matter and the creation of mind meet one another and the circuit is closed.

Or put it this way. I have called my material surroundings a stage set. A stage set is not a dream nor a nonentity. But if you attack a stage house with a chisel you will not get chips of brick or stone; you'll only get a hole in a piece of canvas and, beyond that, windy darkness. Similarly, if you start investigating the nature of matter, you will not find anything like what imagination has always supposed matter to be. You will get mathematics. From that unimaginable physical reality my senses select a few stimuli. These they translate or symbolise into sensations, which have no likeness at all to the reality of matter. Of these sensations my associative power, very much directed by my practical needs and influenced by social training, makes up little bundles into what I call "things" (labelled by nouns). Out of these I build myself a neat little box stage, suitably provided with properties such as hills, fields, houses, and the rest. In this I can act.

And you may well say "act". For what I call "myself" (for all practical, everyday purposes) is also a dramatic construction; memories, glimpses in the shaving-glass, and snatches of the very fallible activity called "introspection", are the principal ingredients. Normally I call this construction "me", and the stage set "the real world."

Now the moment of prayer is for me — or involves for me as its condition — the awareness, the reawakened awareness, that this "real world" and "real self" are very far from being rock-bottom realities. I cannot, in the flesh, leave the stage, either to go behind the scenes or to take my seat in the pit; but I can remember that these regions exist. And I also remember that my apparent self — this clown or hero or super — under his

grease-paint is a real person with an off-stage life. The dramatic person could not tread the stage unless he concealed a real person: unless the real and unknown I existed, I would not even make mistakes about the imagined me. And in prayer this real I struggles to speak, for once, from his real being, and to address, for once, not the other actors, but — what shall I call Him? The Author, for He invented us all? The Producer, for He controls all? Or the Audience, for He watches, and will judge, the performance?

The attempt is not to escape from space and time and from my creaturely situation as a subject facing objects. It is more modest: to re-awake the awareness of that situation. If that can be done, there is no need to go anywhere else. This situation itself, is, at every moment, a possible theophany. Here is the holy ground; the Bush is burning now.

Of course this attempt may be attended with almost every degree of success or failure. The prayer preceding all prayers is, “May it be the real I who speaks. May it be the real Thou that I speak to.” Infinitely various are the levels from which we pray. Emotional intensity is in itself no proof of spiritual depth. If we pray in terror we shall pray earnestly; it only proves that terror is an earnest emotion. Only God Himself can let the bucket down to the depths in us. And, on the other side, He must constantly work as the iconoclast. Every idea of Him we form, He must in mercy shatter. The most blessed result of prayer would be to rise thinking, “But I never knew before. I never dreamed...” I suppose it was at such a moment that Thomas Aquinas said of all his own theology: “It reminds me of straw.”

Letter 16

I didn't mean that a "bright blur" is my only idea of God. I meant that something of that sort tends to be there when I start praying, and would remain if I made no effort to do better. And "bright blur" is not a very good description. In fact you can't have a good description of anything so vague. If the description became good it would become false.

Betty's recipe— "use images as the rest of us do" — doesn't help me much. And which does she mean? Images in the outer world, things made of wood or plaster? Or mental images?

As regards the first kind, I am not, as she suggests, suffering from a phobia about "idolatry". I don't think people of our type are in any danger of that. We shall always be aware that the image is only a bit of matter. But its use, for me, is very limited. I think the mere fact of keeping one's eyes focused on something — almost any object will do — is some help towards concentration. The visual concentration symbolises, and promotes, the mental. That's one of the ways the body teaches the soul. The lines of a well designed church, free from stunts, drawing one's eyes to the altar, have something of the same effect.

But I think that is all an image does for me. If I tried to get more out of it, I think it would get in the way. For one thing, it will have some artistic merits or (more probably) demerits. Both are a distraction. Again, since there can be no plausible images of the Father or the Spirit, it will usually be an image of Our Lord. The continual and exclusive addressing our prayers to Him surely tends to what has been called "Jesus-worship"? A religion which has its value; but not, in isolation, the religion Jesus taught.

Mental images may have the same defect, but they give rise to another problem as well.

St. Ignatius Loyola (I think it was) advised his pupils to begin their meditations with what he called a *compositio loci*. The Nativity or the Marriage At Cana, or whatever the theme might be, was to be visualised in the fullest possible detail. One of his English followers would even have us look up "what good Authors write of those places" so as to get the topography, "the height of the hills and the situation of the townes", correct. Now for two different reasons this is not "addressed to my condition."

One is that I live in an archaeological age. We can no longer, as St. Ignatius could, believingly introduce the clothes, furniture, and utensils of our age into ancient Palestine. I'd know I wasn't getting them right. I'd know that the very sky and sunlight of those latitudes were different from any my northern imagination could supply. I could no doubt pretend to myself a naïveté I don't really possess; but that would cast an unreality over the whole exercise.

The second reason is more important. St. Ignatius was a great master, and I am sure he knew what his pupils needed. I conclude that they were people whose visual imagination was weak and needed to be stimulated. But the trouble with people like ourselves is the exact reverse. We can say this to one another because, in our mouths, it is not a boast but a confession. We are agreed that the power — indeed, the compulsion — to visualise is not "Imagination" in the higher sense, not the Imagination which makes a man either a great author or a sensitive reader. Ridden on a *very* tight rein, this visualising power can sometimes serve true Imagination; very often it merely gets in the way.

If I started with a *compositio loci* I should never reach the meditation. The picture would go on elaborating itself indefinitely and becoming every moment of less spiritual relevance.

There is indeed one mental image which does not lure me away into trivial elaborations. I mean the Crucifixion itself; not seen in terms of all the pictures and crucifixes, but as we must suppose it to have been in its raw, historical reality. But even this is of less spiritual value than one might expect. Compunction, compassion, gratitude — all the fruitful emotions — are strangled. Sheer physical horror leaves no room for them. Nightmare. Even so, the image ought to be periodically faced. But no-one could live with it. It did not become a frequent motif of Christian art until the generations which had seen real crucifixions were all dead. As for many hymns and sermons on the subject — endlessly harping on blood, as if that were all that mattered — they must be the work either of people so far above me that they can't reach me, or else of people with no imagination at all. (Some might be cut off from me by both these gulfs.)

Yet mental images play an important part in my prayers. I doubt if any act of will or thought or emotion occurs in me without them. But they seem to help me most when they are most fugitive and fragmentary — rising and bursting like bubbles in champagne or wheeling like rooks in a windy sky:

contradicting one another (in logic) as the crowded metaphors of a swift poet may do. Fix on any one, and it goes dead. You must do as Blake would do with a joy; kiss it as it flies. And then, in their total effect, they do mediate to me something very important. It is always something qualitative — more like an adjective than a noun. That, for me, gives it the impact of reality. For I think we respect nouns (and what we think they stand for) too much. All my deepest, and certainly all my earliest, experiences seem to be of sheer quality. The terrible and the lovely are older and solider than terrible and lovely things. If a musical phrase could be translated into words at all it would become an adjective. A great lyric is very like a long, utterly adequate, adjective. Plato was not so silly as the Moderns think when he elevated abstract nouns — that is, adjectives disguised as nouns — into the supreme realities — the Forms.

I know very well that in logic God is a “substance”. Yet my thirst for quality is authorised even here: “We give thanks to thee for thy great glory.” He *is* this glory. What He is (the quality) is no abstraction from Him. A personal God, to be sure; but so much more than personal. To speak more soberly, our whole distinction between “things” and “qualities”, “substances” and “attitudes”, has no application to Him. Perhaps it has much less than we suppose even to the created universe. Perhaps it is only part of the stage set.

The wave of images, thrown off like a spray from the prayer, all momentary, all correcting, refining, “interanimating” one another, and giving a kind of spiritual body to the unimaginable, occurs more, I find, in acts of worship than in petitionary prayers. Of which, perhaps, we have written enough. But I don’t regret it. They are the right starting point. They raise all the problems. If anyone attempted to practise, or to discuss, the higher forms without going through this turnstile, I should distrust him. “The higher does not stand without the lower.” An omission or disdain of petitionary prayer can sometimes, I think, spring not from superior sanctity but from a lack of faith and a consequent preference for levels where the question: “Am I only doing things to myself?” does not jut out in such apparent crudity.

Letter 17

It’s comical that you, of all people, should ask my views about prayer as worship or adoration. On this subject you yourself taught me nearly all I know. On a walk in the Forest of Dean. Can you have forgotten?

You first taught me the great principle, “Begin where you are.” I had thought one had to start by summoning up what we believe about the goodness and greatness of God, by thinking about creation and redemption and “all the blessings of this life”. You turned to the brook and once more splashed your burning face and hands in the little waterfall and said: “Why not begin with this?”

And it worked. Apparently you have never guessed how much. That cushiony moss, that coldness and sound and dancing light were no doubt very minor blessings compared with “the means of grace and the hope of glory.” But then they were manifest. So far as they were concerned, sight had replaced faith. They were not the hope of glory, they were an exposition of the glory itself.

Yet you were not — or so it seemed to me — telling me that “Nature”, or “the beauties of Nature”, manifest the glory. No such abstraction as “Nature” comes into it. I was learning the far more secret doctrine that *pleasures* are shafts of the glory as it strikes our sensibility. As it impinges on our will or our understanding, we give it different names — goodness or truth or the like. But its flash upon our senses and mood is pleasure.

But aren’t there bad, unlawful pleasures? Certainly there are. But in calling them “bad pleasures” I take it we are using a kind of shorthand. We mean “pleasures snatched by unlawful acts.” It is the stealing of the apple that is bad, not the sweetness. The sweetness is still a beam from the glory. That does not palliate the stealing. It makes it worse. There is sacrilege in the theft. We have abused a holy thing.

I have tried, since that moment, to make every pleasure into a channel of adoration. I don’t mean simply by giving thanks for it. One must of course give thanks, but I mean something different. How shall I put it?

We can’t — or I can’t — hear the song of a bird simply as a sound. Its meaning or message (“That’s a bird”) comes with it inevitably — just as one can’t see a familiar word in print as a merely visual pattern. The reading is as involuntary as the seeing. When the wind roars I don’t just hear the

roar; I “hear the wind.” In the same way it is possible to “read” as well as to “have” a pleasure. Or not even “as well as.” The distinction ought to become, and sometimes is, impossible; to receive it and to recognise its divine source are a single experience. This heavenly fruit is instantly redolent of the orchard where it grew. This sweet air whispers of the country from whence it blows. It is a message. We know we are being touched by a finger of that right hand at which there are pleasures for evermore. There need be no question of thanks or praise as a separate event, something done afterwards. To experience the tiny theophany is itself to adore.

Gratitude exclaims, very properly: “How good of God to give me this.” Adoration says: “What must be the quality of that Being whose far-off and momentary coruscations are like this!” One’s mind runs back up the sunbeam to the sun.

If I could always be what I aim at being, no pleasure would be too ordinary or too usual for such reception; from the first taste of the air when I look out of the window — one’s whole cheek becomes a sort of palate — down to one’s soft slippers at bed-time.

I don’t always achieve it. One obstacle is inattention. Another is the wrong kind of attention. One could, if one practised, hear simply a roar and not the roaring-of-the-wind. In the same way, only far too easily, one can concentrate on the pleasure as an event in one’s own nervous system — subjectify it — and ignore the smell of Deity that hangs about it. A third obstacle is greed. Instead of saying: “This also is Thou”, one may say the fatal word *Encore*. There is also conceit: the dangerous reflection that not everyone can find God in a plain slice of bread and butter, or that others would condemn as simply “grey” the sky in which I am delightedly observing such delicacies of pearl and dove and silver.

You notice that I am drawing no distinction between sensuous and aesthetic pleasures. But why should I? The line is almost impossible to draw and what use would it be if one succeeded in drawing it?

If this is Hedonism, it is also a somewhat arduous discipline. But it is worth some labour: for in so far as it succeeds, almost every day furnishes us with so to speak, “bearings” on the Bright Blur. It becomes brighter but less blurry.

William Law remarks that people are merely “amusing themselves” by asking for the patience which a famine or a persecution would call for if, in

the meantime, the weather and every other inconvenience sets them grumbling. One must learn to walk before one can run. So here. We — or at least I — shall not be able to adore God on the highest occasions if we have learned no habit of doing so on the lowest. At best, our faith and reason will tell us that He is adorable, but we shall not have *found* Him so, not have "tasted and seen." Any patch of sunlight in a wood will show you something about the sun which you could never get from reading books on astronomy. These pure and spontaneous pleasures are "patches of Godlight" in the woods of our experience.

Of course one wants the books too. One wants a great many things besides this "adoration in infinitesimals" which I am preaching. And if I were preaching it in public, instead of feeding it back to the very man who taught it me (though he may by now find the lesson nearly unrecognisable?), I should have to pack it in ice, enclose it in barbed-wire reservations, and stick up warning notices in every direction.

Don't imagine I am forgetting that the simplest act of mere obedience is worship of a far more important sort than what I've been describing (to obey is better than sacrifice). Or that God, besides being the Great Creator, is the Tragic Redeemer. Perhaps the Tragic Creator too. For I am not sure that the great canyon of anguish which lies across our lives is *solely* due to some pre-historic catastrophe. Something tragic may, as I think I've said before, be inherent in the very act of creation. So that one sometimes wonders why God thinks the game worth the candle. But then we share, in some degree, the cost of the candle and have not yet seen the "game".

There! I've done it again. I know that my tendency to use images like play and dance for the highest things is a stumbling-block to you. You don't, I admit, accuse it of profanity, as you used to — like the night we nearly came to blows at Edinburgh. You now, much more reasonably, call it "heartless". You feel it a brutal mockery of every martyr and every slave that a world-process which is so desperately serious to the actors should, at whatever celestial apex, be seen in terms of frivolities. And you add that it comes with a ludicrously ill grace from me who never enjoyed any game and can dance no better than a centipede with wooden legs. But I still think you don't see the real point.

I do *not* think that the life of Heaven bears any analogy to play or dance in respect of frivolity. I do think that while we are in this "valley of tears", cursed with labour, hemmed round with necessities, tripped up with

frustrations, doomed to perpetual plannings, puzzlings, and anxieties, certain qualities that must belong to the celestial condition have no chance to get through, can project no image of themselves, except in activities which, for us here and now, are frivolous. For surely we must suppose the life of the blessed to be an end in itself, indeed The End: to be utterly spontaneous; to be the complete reconciliation of boundless freedom with order — with the most delicately adjusted, supple, intricate, and beautiful order? How can you find any image of this in the "serious" activities either of our natural or of our (present) spiritual life? — either in our precarious and heart-broken affections or in the Way which is always, in some degree, a *via crucis*: No, Malcolm. It is only in our "hours-off", only in our moments of permitted festivity, that we find an analogy. Dance and game *are* frivolous, unimportant down here; for "down here" is not their natural place. Here, they are a moment's rest from the life we were placed here to live. But in this world everything is upside down. That which, if it could be prolonged here, would be a truancy, is likest that which in a better country is the End of ends. Joy is the serious business of Heaven.

Letter 18

I plead guilty. When I was writing about pleasures last week I had quite forgotten about the *mala mentis gaudia* — the pleasures of the mind which are intrinsically evil. The pleasure, say, of having a grievance. What a disappointment it is — for one self-revealing moment — to discover that the other party was not really to blame? And how a resentment, while it lasts, draws one back and back to nurse and fondle and encourage it! It behaves just like a lust. But I don't think this leaves my theory (and experience) of ordinary pleasures in ruins. Aren't these intrinsically vicious pleasures, as Plato said, "mixed". To use his own image, given the itch, one wants to scratch it. And if you abstain, the temptation is very severe, and if you scratch there is a sort of pleasure in the momentary and deceptive relief. But one didn't want to itch. The scratch is not a pleasure simply, but only by comparison with the context. In the same way, resentment is pleasant only as a relief from, or alternative to, humiliation. I still think that those experiences which are pleasures in their own right can all be regarded as I suggest.

The mere mention of the horrible pleasures — the dainties of Hell — very naturally led you away from the subject of adoration to that of repentance. I'm going to follow you into your digression, for you said something I disagreed with.

I admit of course, that penitential prayers— "acts" of penitence, as I believe they are called — can be on very different levels. At the lowest, what you call "Pagan penitence", there is simply the attempt to placate a supposedly angry power— "I'm sorry. I won't do it again. Let me off this time." At the highest level, you say, the attempt is rather to restore an infinitely valued and vulnerable personal relation which has been shattered by an action of one's own, and if forgiveness, in the "crude" sense of remission of penalty, comes in, this is valued chiefly as a symptom or seal or even by-product of the reconciliation. I expect you are right about that. I say "expect" because I can't claim to know much by experience about the highest level either of penitence or of anything else. The ceiling, if there is one, is a long way off.

All the same, there is a difference between us. I can't agree to call your lowest level "Pagan penitence". Doesn't your description cover a great deal

of Old Testament penitence? Look at the Psalms. Doesn't it cover a good deal of Christian penitence — a good deal that is embodied in Christian liturgies? "Neither take thou vengeance for our sins... be not angry with us forever... *neque secundum iniquitates nostras retribuas nobis*."

Here, as nearly always, what we regard as "crude" and "low", and what presumably is in fact lowest, spreads far further up the Christian life than we like to admit. And do we find anywhere in Scripture or in the Fathers that explicit and resounding rejection of it which would be so welcome?

I fully grant you that "wrath" can be attributed to God only by an analogy. The situation of the penitent before God isn't, but is somehow like, that of one appearing before a justly angered sovereign, lover, father, master, or teacher. But what more can we know about it than just this likeness? Trying to get in behind the analogy, you go further and fare worse. You suggest that what is traditionally regarded as our experience of God's anger would be more helpfully regarded as what inevitably happens to us if we behave inappropriately towards a reality of immense power. As you say, "The live wire doesn't feel angry with us, but if we blunder against it we get a shock."

My dear Malcolm, what do you suppose you have gained by substituting the image of a live wire for that of angered majesty? You have shut us all up in despair; for the angry can forgive, and electricity can't.

And you give as your reason that "even by analogy the sort of pardon which arises because a fit of temper is spent cannot worthily be attributed to God nor gratefully accepted by man." But the belittling words "fit of temper" are your own choice. Think of the fullest reconciliation between mortals. Is cool disapproval coolly assuaged? Is the culprit let down lightly in a view of "extenuating circumstances"? Was peace restored by a moral lecture? Was the offence said not to "matter"? Was it hushed up or passed over? Blake knew better:

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath. My wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe;
I hid my wrath. My wrath did grow.

You too know better. Anger — no peevish fit of temper, but just, generous, scalding indignation — passes (not necessarily at once) into

embracing, exultant, re-welcoming love. That is how friends and lovers are truly reconciled. Hot wrath, hot love. Such anger is the fluid that love bleeds when you cut it. The *angers*, not the measured remonstrances, of lovers are love's renewal. Wrath and pardon are both, as applied to God, analogies; but they belong together to the same circle of analogy — the circle of life, and love, and deeply personal relationships. All the liberalising and "civilising" analogies only lead us astray. Turn God's wrath into mere enlightened disapproval, and you also turn His love into mere humanitarianism. The "consuming fire" and the "perfect beauty" both vanish. We have, instead, a judicious headmistress or a conscientious magistrate. It comes of being high-minded.

I know that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." That is not because wrath is wrath but because man is (fallen) man.

But perhaps I've already said too much. All that any imagery can do is to facilitate, or at least not to impede, man's act of penitence and reception of pardon. We cannot see the matter "from God's side."

The crude picture of penitence as something like apology or even placation has, for me, the value of making penitence an act. The more high-minded views involve some danger of regarding it simply as a state of feeling. Do you agree that this would be unwholesome?

The question is before my mind at present because I've been reading Alexander Whyte. Morris lent him to me. He was a Presbyterian divine of the last century, whom I'd never heard of. Very well worth reading, and strangely broad-minded — Dante, Pascal, and even Newman, are among his heroes. But I mention him at the moment for a different reason. He brought me violently face to face with a characteristic of Puritanism which I had almost forgotten. For him, one essential symptom of the regenerate life is a permanent, and permanently horrified, perception of one's natural and (it seems) unalterable corruption. The true Christian's nostril is to be continually attentive to the inner cess-pool. I knew that the experience was a regular feature of the old conversion stories. As in *Grace Abounding*: "But my inward and original corruption... that I had the guilt of to amazement... I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than was a toad... sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain." Another author, quoted in Haller's *Rise of Puritanism* says that when he looked into his heart, it was "as if I had in the heat of summer lookt down into the Filth of a Dungeon, where I discerned

Millions of crawling living things in the midst of that Sink and liquid Corruption."

I won't listen to those who describe that vision as merely pathological. I have seen the "slimy things that crawled with legs" in my own dungeon. I thought the glimpse taught me sense. But Whyte seems to think it should be not a glimpse but a daily, lifelong scrutiny. Can he be right? It sounds so very unlike the New Testament fruits of the spirit — love, joy, peace. And very unlike the Pauline programme; "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things that are before." And very unlike St. François de Sales' green, dewy chapter on *la douceur* towards one's self. Anyway, what's the use of laying down a programme of permanent emotions? They can be permanent only by being factitious.

What do you think? I know that a spiritual emetic, at the right moment, may be needed. But not a regular diet of emetics! If one survived, one would develop a "tolerance" of them. This poring over the "sink" might breed its own perverse pride

over-just and self-displeased
For self-offence more than for God offended.

Anyway, in solitude, and also in confession, I have found (to my regret) that the degrees of shame and disgust which I actually feel at my own sins do not at all correspond to what my reason tells me about their comparative gravity. Just as the degree to which, in daily life, I feel the emotion of fear has very little to do with my rational judgment of the danger. I'd sooner have really nasty seas when I'm in an open boat than look down in perfect (actual) safety from the edge of a cliff. Similarly, I have confessed ghastly uncharities with less reluctance than small unmentionables — or those sins which happen to be ungentlemanly as well as un-Christian. Our emotional reactions to our own behaviour are of limited ethical significance.

Letter 19

Tell Betty that it you hadn't whisked me off onto the subject of repentance, I was just going to say the very thing she blames me for not saying. I was going to say that in adoration, more than in any other kind of prayer, the public or communal act is of the utmost importance. One would lose incomparably more by being prevented from going to Church on Easter than on Good Friday. And, even in private, adoration should be communal — "with angels and archangels and all the company", all the transparent publicity of Heaven. On the other hand, I find that the prayers to which I can most fully attend in church are always those I have most often used in my bedroom.

I deny, with some warmth, the charge of being "choosy about services." My whole point was that any form will do me if only I'm given time to get used to it. The idea of allowing myself to be put off by mere inadequacy — an ugly church, a gawky server, a badly turned out celebrant — is horrible. On the contrary, it constantly surprises me how little these things matter, as if

never anything can be amiss.
When simpleness and duty tender it.

One of the golden Communions of my life was in a Nissen hut. Sometimes the cockney accent of a choir has a singularly touching quality. A tin mug for a chalice, if there were good reason for it, would not distress me in the least. (I wonder what sort of crockery was used at the Last Supper?)

You ask me why I've never written anything about the Holy Communion. For the very simple reason that I am not good enough at Theology. I have nothing to offer. Hiding any light I think I've got under a bushel is not my besetting sin! I am much more prone to prattle unseasonably. But there is a point at which even I would gladly keep silent. The trouble is that people draw conclusions even from silence. Someone said in print the other day that I seemed to "admit rather than welcome" the sacraments.

I wouldn’t like you and Betty to think the same. But as soon as I try to tell you anything more, I see another reason for silence. It is almost impossible to state the negative effect which certain doctrines have on me — my failure to be nourished by them — without seeming to mount an attack against them. But the very last thing I want to do is to unsettle in the mind of any Christian, whatever his denomination, the concepts — for him traditional — by which he finds it profitable to represent to himself what is happening when he receives the bread and wine. I could wish that no definitions had even been felt to be necessary; and, still more, that none had been allowed to make divisions between churches.

Some people seem able to discuss different theories of this act as if they understood them all and needed only evidence as to which was best. This light has been withheld from me. I do not know and can’t imagine what the disciples understood Our Lord to mean when, His body still unbroken and His blood unshed, He handed them the bread and wine, saying *they* were His body and blood. I can find within the forms of my human understanding no connection between eating a man — and it is as Man that the Lord has flesh — and entering into any spiritual oneness or community or [Greek: koinônia] with him. And I find “substance” (in Aristotle’s sense), when stripped of its own accidents and endowed with the accidents of some other substance, an object I cannot think. My effort to do so produces mere nursery-thinking — a picture of something like very rarefied Plasticine. On the other hand, I get on no better with those who tell me that the elements are mere bread and mere wine, used symbolically to remind me of the death of Christ. They are, on the natural level, such a very odd symbol of *that*. But it would be profane to suppose that they are as arbitrary as they seem to me. I well believe there is in reality an appropriateness, even a necessity, in their selection. But it remains, for me, hidden. Again, if they are, if the whole act is, simply memorial, it would seem to follow that its value must be purely psychological, and dependent on the recipient’s sensibility at the moment of reception. And I cannot see why *this* particular reminder — a hundred other things may, psychologically, remind me of Christ’s death, equally, or perhaps more — should be so uniquely important as all Christendom (and my own heart) unhesitatingly declare.

However, then, it may be for others, for me the something which holds together and “informs” all the objects, words, and actions of this rite, is unknown and unimaginable. I am not saying to any one in the world: “Your

explanation is wrong." I am saying: "Your explanation leaves the mystery for me still a mystery."

Yet I find no difficulty in believing that the veil between the worlds, nowhere else (for me) so opaque to the intellect, is nowhere else so thin and permeable to divine operation. Here a hand from the hidden country touches not only my soul but my body. Here the prig, the don, the modern, in me have no privilege over the savage or the child. Here is big medicine and strong magic. *Favete linguis.*

When I say "Magic" I am not thinking of the paltry and pathetic techniques by which fools attempt and quacks pretend to control Nature. I mean rather what is suggested by fairy-tale sentences like: "This is a magic flower, and if you carry it the seven gates will open to you of their own accord", or: "This is a magic cave and those who enter it will renew their youth." I should define magic in this sense as "objective efficacy which cannot be further analysed."

Magic, in this sense, will always win a response from a normal imagination because it is in principle so "true to nature." Mix these two powders and there will be an explosion. Eat a grain of this and you will die. Admittedly, the "magical" element in such truths can be got rid of by explanation; that is, by seeing them to be instances or consequences of larger truths. Which larger truths remain "magical" till they also are, in the same way, explained. In that fashion, the sciences are always pushing further back the realm of mere "brute fact." But no scientist, I suppose, believes that the process could ever reach completion. At the very least, there must always remain the utterly "brute" fact, the completely opaque *datum*, that a universe — or rather *this* universe with its determinate character — exists; as "magical" as the magic flower in the fairy tale.

Now the value, for me, of the magical element in Christianity is this. It is a permanent witness that the heavenly realm, certainly no less than the natural universe and perhaps very much more, is a realm of objective facts — hard, determinate facts, not to be constructed *a priori*, and not to be dissolved into maxims, ideals, values, and the like. One cannot conceive a more completely "given", or, if you like, a more "magical", fact than the existence of God as *causa sui*.

Enlightened people want to get rid of this magical element in favour of what they would call the "spiritual" element. But the spiritual, conceived as something thus antithetical to "magical", seems to become merely the

psychological or ethical. And neither that by itself, nor the magical by itself, is a religion. I am not going to lay down rules as to the share — quantitatively considered — which the magical should have in anyone's religious life. Individual differences may be permissible. What I insist on is that it can never be reduced to zero. If it is, what remains is only morality, or culture, or philosophy.

What makes some theological works like sawdust to me is the way the authors can go on discussing how far certain positions are adjustable to contemporary thought, or beneficial in relation to social problems, or "have a future" before them, but never squarely ask what grounds we have for supposing them to be true accounts of any objective reality. As if we were trying to make rather than to learn. Have we no Other to reckon with?

I hope I do not offend God by making my communions in the frame of mind I have been describing. The command, after all, was Take, eat: not Take, understand. Particularly, I hope I need not be tormented by the question "What is this?" — this wafer, this sip of wine. That has a dreadful effect on me. It invites me to take "this" out of its holy context and regard it as an object among objects, indeed as part of nature. It is like taking a red coal out of the fire to examine it: it becomes a dead coal. To me, I mean. All this is autobiography, not theology.

Letter 20

I really must digress to tell you a bit of good news. Last week, while at prayer, I suddenly discovered — or felt as if I did — that I had forgiven someone I have been trying to forgive for over thirty years. Trying, and praying that I might. When the thing actually happened — sudden as the longed-for cessation of one's neighbour's radio — my feeling was "But it's so easy. Why didn't you do it ages ago?" So many things are done easily the moment you can do them at all. But till then, sheerly impossible, like learning to swim. There are months during which no efforts will keep you up; then comes the day and hour and minute after which, and ever after, it becomes almost impossible to sink. It also seemed to me that forgiving (that man's cruelty) and being forgiven (my resentment) were the very same thing. "Forgive and you shall be forgiven" sounds like a bargain. But perhaps it is something much more. By heavenly standards, that is, for pure intelligence, it is perhaps a tautology — forgiving and being forgiven are two names for the same thing. The important thing is that a discord has been resolved, and it is certainly the great Resolver who has done it. Finally, and perhaps best of all, I believed anew what is taught us in the parable of the Unjust Judge. No evil habit is so ingrained nor so long prayed against (as it seemed) in vain, that it cannot, even in dry old age, be whisked away.

I wonder, do the long dead know it when we at last, after countless failures, succeed in forgiving them? It would be a pity if they don't. A pardon given but not received would be frustrated. Which brings me to your question.

Of course I pray for the dead. The action is so spontaneous, so all but inevitable, that only the most compulsive theological case against it would deter me. And I hardly know how the rest of my prayers would survive if those for the dead were forbidden. At our age the majority of those we love best are dead. What sort of intercourse with God could I have if what I love best were unmentionable to Him?

On the traditional Protestant view, all the dead are damned or saved. If they are damned, prayer for them is useless. If they are saved, it is equally useless. God has already done all for them. What more should we ask?

But don't we believe that God has already done and is already doing all that He can for the living? What more should we ask? Yet we are told to

ask.

"Yes," it will be answered, "but the living are still on the road. Further trials, developments, possibilities of error, await them. But the saved have been made perfect. They have finished the course. To pray for them presupposes that progress and difficulty are still possible. In fact, you are bringing in something like Purgatory."

Well, I suppose I am. Though even in Heaven some perpetual increase of beatitude, reached by a continually more ecstatic self-surrender, without the possibility of failure but not perhaps without its own ardours and exertions — for delight also has its severities and steep ascents, as lovers know — might be supposed. But I won't press, or guess, that side for the moment. I believe in Purgatory.

Mind you, the Reformers had good reasons for throwing doubt on "the Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory" as that Romish doctrine had then become. I don't mean merely the commercial scandal. If you turn from Dante's *Purgatorio* to the Sixteenth Century you will be appalled by the degradation. In Thomas More's *Supplication of Souls* Purgatory is simply temporary Hell. In it the souls are tormented by devils, whose presence is "more horrible and grievous to us than is the pain itself." Worse still, Fisher, in his Sermon on Psalm VI, says the tortures are so intense that the spirit who suffers them cannot, for pain, "remember God as he ought to do." In fact, the very etymology of the word *purgatory* has dropped out of sight. Its pains do not bring us nearer to God, but make us forget Him. It is a place not of purification but purely of retributive punishment.

The right view returns magnificently in Newman's *Dream*. There, if I remember it rightly, the saved soul, at the very foot of the throne, begs to be taken away and cleansed. It cannot bear for a moment longer "With its darkness to affront that light." Religion has reclaimed Purgatory.

Our souls *demand* Purgatory, don't they? Would it not break the heart if God said to us, "It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy."? Should we not reply, "With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I'd *rather* be cleaned first." "It may hurt, you know"— "Even so, sir."

I assume that the process of purification will normally involve suffering. Partly from tradition; partly because most real good that has been done me in this life has involved it. But I don't think suffering is the purpose of the

purgation. I can well believe that people neither much worse nor much better than I will suffer less than I or more. “No nonsense about merit.” The treatment given will be the one required, whether it hurts little or much.

My favourite image on this matter comes from the dentist’s chair. I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn and I am “coming round”, a voice will say, “Rinse your mouth out with this.” *This* will be Purgatory. The rinsing may take longer than I can now imagine. The taste of *this* may be more fiery and astringent than my present sensibility could endure. But More and Fisher shall not persuade me that it will be disgusting and unhallowed.

Your own peculiar difficulty — that the dead are not in time — is another matter.

How do you know they are not? I certainly believe that to be God is to enjoy an infinite present, where nothing has yet passed away and nothing is still to come. Does it follow that we can say the same of saints and angels? Or at any rate exactly the same? The dead might experience a time which was not quite so linear as ours — it might, so to speak, have thickness as well as length. Already in this life we get some thickness whenever we learn to attend to more than one thing at once. One can suppose this increased to any extent, so that though, for them as for us, the present is always becoming the past, yet each present contains unimaginably more than ours.

I *feel* — can you work it out for me and tell me if it is more than a feeling — that to make the life of the blessed dead strictly timeless is inconsistent with the resurrection of the body.

Again, as you and I have agreed, whether we pray on behalf of the living or the dead, the causes which will prevent or exclude the events we pray for are in fact already at work. Indeed they are part of a series which, I suppose, goes back as far as the creation of the universe. The causes which made George’s illness a trivial one were already operating while we prayed about it; if it had been what we feared, the causes of that would have been operative. That is why, as I hold, our prayers are granted, or not, in eternity. The task of dovetailing the spiritual and physical histories of the world into each other is accomplished in the total act of creation itself. Our prayers, and other free acts, are known to us only as we come to the moment of doing them. But they are eternally in the score of the great symphony. Not “pre-determined”; the syllable *pre* lets in the notion of eternity as simply an older time. For though we cannot experience our life as an endless present,

we are eternal in God’s eyes; that is, in our deepest reality. When I say we are “in time” I don’t mean that we are, impossibly, outside the endless present in which He beholds us as He beholds all else. I mean, our creaturely limitation is that our fundamentally timeless reality can be experienced by us only in the mode of succession.

In fact we began by putting the question wrongly. The question is not whether the dead are part of timeless reality. They are; so is a flash of lightning. The question is whether they share the divine perception of timelessness.

Tell George I should be delighted. *Rendez-vous* in my rooms at 7.15. We do *not* dress for dinner on ordinary nights.

Letter 21

Betty is quite right— “all this about prayer and never a word on the practical problem: its irksomeness.” And she sees fit to add, “Anyone might think it was a correspondence between two saints!”

That was a barbed shaft and went home. And yet I don’t really think we were being hypocritical. Doesn’t the mere fact of putting something into words of itself involve an exaggeration? Prose words, I mean. Only poetry can speak low enough to catch the faint murmur of the mind, the “litel winde, unethe hit might be lesse.” The other day I tried to describe to you a very minimal experience — the tiny wisps of adoration with which (sometimes) I salute my pleasures. But I now see that putting it down in black and white made it sound far bigger than it really is. The truth is, I haven’t any language weak enough to depict the weakness of my spiritual life. If I weakened it enough it would cease to be language at all. Like when you try to turn the gas-ring a little lower still, and it merely goes out.

Then again, by talking at this length about prayer at all, we seem to give it a much bigger place in our lives than, I’m afraid, it has. For while we talk about it, all the rest of our experience, which in reality crowds our prayer into the margin or sometimes off the page altogether, is not mentioned. Hence, in the talk, an error of proportion which amounts to, though it was not intended for, a lie.

Well, let’s now at any rate come clean. Prayer is irksome. An excuse to omit it is never unwelcome. When it is over, this casts a feeling of relief and holiday over the rest of the day. We are reluctant to begin. We are delighted to finish. While we are at prayer, but not while we are reading a novel or solving a cross-word puzzle, any trifle is enough to distract us.

And we know that we are not alone in this. The fact that prayers are constantly set as penances tells its own tale.

The odd thing is that this reluctance to pray is not confined to periods of dryness. When yesterday’s prayers were full of comfort and exaltation, today’s will still be felt as, in some degree, a burden.

Now the disquieting thing is not simply that we skimp and begrudge the duty of prayer. The really disquieting thing is it should have to be numbered among duties at all. For we believe that we were created “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” And if the few, the very few, minutes we now

spend on intercourse with God are a burden to us rather than a delight, what then? If I were a Calvinist this symptom would fill me with despair. What can be done *for* — or what should be done *with* — a rose-tree that *dislikes* producing roses? Surely it ought to want to?

Much of our backwardness in prayer is no doubt due to our sins, as every teacher will tell us; to our avoidable immersion in the things of this world, to our neglect of mental discipline. And also to the very worst kind of "fear of God." We shrink from too naked a contact, because we are afraid of the divine demands upon us which it might make too audible. As some old writer says, many a Christian prays faintly "lest God might really hear him, which he, poor man, never intended." But sins — at any rate, our actual and individual sins — are not perhaps the only cause.

By the very constitution of our minds as they now are — whatever they may have been when God first made man — it is difficult for us to concentrate on anything which is neither sensible (like potatoes) nor abstract (like numbers). What is concrete but immaterial can be kept in view only by painful effort. Some would say, "Because it does not exist." But the rest of our experience cannot accept that solution. For we ourselves, and all that we most care about, seem to come in the class "concrete (that is, individual) and insensible." If reality consists of nothing but physical objects and abstract concepts, then reality has, in the last resort, nothing to say to us. We are in the wrong universe. Man is a *passion inutile*; and so, good night. And yet, the supposedly real universe has been quarried out of man's sensuous experiences.

The painful effort which prayer involves is no proof that we are doing something we were not created to do.

If we were perfected, prayer would not be a duty, it would be delight. Some day, please God, it will be. The same is true of many other behaviours which now appear as duties. If I loved my neighbour as myself, most of the actions which are now my moral duty would flow out of me as spontaneously as song from a lark or fragrance from a flower. Why is this not so yet? Well, we know, don't we? Aristotle has taught us that delight is the "bloom" on an unimpeded activity. But the very activities for which we were created are, while we live on earth, variously impeded: by evil in ourselves or in others. Not to practise them is to abandon our humanity. To practise them spontaneously and delightfully is not yet possible. This situation creates the category of duty, the whole specifically *moral* realm.

It exists to be transcended. Here is the paradox of Christianity. As practical imperatives for here and now the two great commandments have to be translated "Behave *as if* you loved God and man." For no man can love because he is told to. Yet obedience on this practical level is not really obedience at all. And if a man really loved God and man, once again this would hardly be obedience; for if he did, he would be unable to help it. Thus the command really says to us, "Ye must be born again." Till then, we have duty, morality, the Law. A schoolmaster, as St. Paul says, to bring us to Christ. We must expect no more of it than of a schoolmaster; we must allow it no less. I must say my prayers today whether I feel devout or not; but that is only as I must learn my grammar if I am ever to read the poets.

But the school-days, please God, are numbered. There is no morality in Heaven. The angels never knew (from within) the meaning of the word *ought*, and the blessed dead have long since gladly forgotten it. This is why Dante's Heaven is so right, and Milton's, with its military discipline, so silly. This also explains — to pick up an earlier point — why we have to picture that world in terms which seem almost frivolous. In this world our most momentous actions are impeded. We can picture unimpeded, and therefore delighted, action only by the analogy of our present play and leisure. Thus we get the notion that what is as free as they would have to matter as little.

I said, mind you, that "most" of the behaviour which is now duty would be spontaneous and delightful if we were, so to speak, good rose-trees. Most, not all. There is, or might be, martyrdom. We are not called upon to like it. Our Master didn't. But the principle holds, that duty is always conditioned by evil. Martyrdom, by the evil in the persecutor; other duties, by lack of love in myself or by the general diffused evil of the world. In the perfect and eternal world the Law will vanish. But the results of having lived faithfully under it will not.

I am therefore not really deeply worried by the fact that prayer is at present a duty, and even an irksome one. This is humiliating. It is frustrating. It is terribly time-wasting — the worse one is praying, the longer one's prayers take. But we are still only at school. Or, like Donne, "I tune my instrument here at the door." And even now — how can I weaken the words enough, how speak at all without exaggeration? — we have what seem rich moments. Most frequently, perhaps, in our momentary, only just

voluntary, ejaculations; refreshments “unimplored, unsought, Happy for man so coming.”

But I don’t rest much on that; nor would I if it were ten times as much as it is. I have a notion that what seem our worst prayers may really be, in God’s eyes, our best. Those, I mean, which are least supported by devotional feeling and contend with the greatest disinclination. For these, perhaps, being nearly all will, come from a deeper level than feeling. In feeling there is so much that is really not ours — so much that comes from weather and health or from the last book read. One thing seems certain. It is no good angling for the rich moments. God sometimes seems to speak to us most intimately when He catches us, as it were, off our guard. Our preparations to receive Him sometimes have the opposite effect. Doesn’t Charles Williams say somewhere that “the altar must often be built in one place in order that the fire from heaven may descend *somewhere else*.”?

Letter 22

By not belonging to a press-cutting agency I miss most of the bouquets and brickbats which are aimed at me. So I never saw the article you write about. But I have seen others of that kind, and they'll break no bones of mine. Don't, however, misjudge these "liberal Christians." They genuinely believe that writers of my sort are doing a great deal of harm.

They themselves find it impossible to accept most of the articles of the "faith once given to the saints." They are nevertheless extremely anxious that some vestigial religion which they (not we) can describe as "Christianity" should continue to exist and make numerous converts. They think these converts will come in only if this religion is sufficiently "de-mythologised". The ship must be lightened if she is to keep afloat.

It follows that, to them, the most mischievous people in the world are those who, like myself, proclaim that Christianity essentially involves the supernatural. They are quite sure that belief in the supernatural never will, nor should, be revived, and that if we convince the world that it must choose between accepting the supernatural and abandoning all pretence of Christianity, the world will undoubtedly choose the second alternative. It will thus be we, not the liberals, who have really sold the pass. We shall have re-attached to the name *Christian* a deadly scandal from which, but for us, they might have succeeded in decontaminating it.

If, then, some tone of resentment creeps into their comments on our work, can you blame them? But it would be unpardonable if we allowed ourselves any resentment against them. We do in some measure queer their pitch. But they make no similar contribution to the forces of secularism. It has already a hundred champions who carry far more weight than they. Liberal Christianity can only supply an ineffectual echo to the massive chorus of agreed and admitted unbelief. Don't be deceived by the fact that this echo so often "hits the headlines." That is because attacks on Christian doctrine which would pass unnoticed if they were launched (as they are daily launched) by anyone else, become News when the attacker is a clergyman; just as a very commonplace protest against make-up would be News if it came from a film star.

By the way, did you ever meet, or hear of, anyone who was converted from scepticism to a "liberal" or "de-mythologised" Christianity? I think

that when unbelievers come in at all, they come in a good deal further.

Not, of course, that either group is to be judged by its success, as if the question were one of tactics. The liberals are honest men and preach their version of Christianity, as we preach ours, because they believe it to be true. A man who first tried to guess "what the public wants," and then preached that as Christianity *because* the public wants it, would be a pretty mixture of fool and knave.

I am enlarging on this because even you, in your last letter, seemed to hint that there was too much of the supernatural in my position; especially in the sense that "the next world" loomed so large. But how can it loom less than large if it is believed in at all?

You know my history. You know why my withers are quite unwrung by the fear that I was bribed — that I was lured into Christianity by the hope of everlasting life. I believed in God before I believed in Heaven. And even now, even if — let's make an impossible supposition — His voice, unmistakably His, said to me, "They have misled you. I can do nothing of that sort for you. My long struggle with the blind forces is nearly over. I die, children. The story is ending" — would that be a moment for changing sides? Would not you and I take the Viking way: "The Giants and Trolls win. Let us die on the right side, with Father Odin."

But if it is not so, if that other world is once admitted, how can it, except by sensual or bustling pre-occupations, be kept in the background of our minds? How can the "rest of Christianity" — what is this "rest"? — be disentangled from it? How can we untwine this idea, if once admitted, from our present experience, in which, even before we believed, so many things at least *looked* like "bright shoots of everlastingness"?

And yet... after all. I know. It is a venture. We don't *know* it will be. There is our freedom, our chance for a little generosity, a little sportsmanship.

Isn't it possible that many "liberals" have a highly illiberal motive for banishing the idea of Heaven? They want the gilt-edged security of a religion so contrived that no possible fact could ever refute it. In such a religion they have the comfortable feeling that, whatever the real universe may be like, they will not have "been had" or "backed the wrong horse". It is close to the spirit of the man who hid his talent in a napkin— "I know you are a hard man and I'm taking no risks". But surely the sort of religion they want would consist of nothing but tautologies?

About the resurrection of the body. I agree with you that the old picture of the soul reassuming the corpse — perhaps blown to bits or long since usefully dissipated through nature — is absurd. Nor is it what St. Paul's words imply. And I admit that if you ask what I substitute for this, I have only speculations to offer.

The principle behind these speculations is this. We are not, in this doctrine, concerned with matter as such at all: with waves and atoms and all that. What the soul cries out for is the resurrection of the senses. Even in this life matter would be nothing to us if it were not the source of sensations.

Now we already have some feeble and intermittent power of raising dead sensations from their graves. I mean, of course, memory.

You see the way my thought is moving. But don't run away with the idea that when I speak of the resurrection of the body I mean merely that the blessed dead will have excellent memories of their sensuous experiences on earth. I mean it the other way round: that memory as we now know it is a dim foretaste, a mirage even, of a power which the soul, or rather Christ in the soul (he "went to prepare a place for us") will exercise hereafter. It need no longer be intermittent. Above all, it need no longer be private to the soul in which it occurs. I can now communicate to you the vanished fields of my boyhood — they are building-estates today — only imperfectly by words. Perhaps the day is coming when I can take you for a walk through them.

At present we tend to think of the soul as somehow "inside" the body. But the glorified body of the resurrection as I conceive it — the sensuous life raised from its death — will be inside the soul. As God is not in space but space is in God.

I have slipped in "glorified" almost unawares. But this glorification is not only promised, it is already foreshadowed. The dullest of us knows how memory can transfigure; how often some momentary glimpse of beauty in boyhood is

a whisper
Which memory will warehouse as a shout.

Don't talk to me of the "illusions" of memory. Why should what we see at the moment be more "real" than what we see from ten years' distance? It is indeed an illusion to believe that the blue hills on the horizon would still

look blue if you went to them. But the fact that they are blue five miles away, and the fact that they are green when you are on them, are equally good facts. Traherne's "orient and immortal wheat" or Wordsworth's landscape "apparelled in celestial light" may not have been so radiant in the past when it was present as in the remembered past. That is the beginning of the glorification. One day they will be more radiant still. Thus in the sense-bodies of the redeemed the whole New Earth will arise. The same yet not the same as this. It was sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

I dare not omit, though it may be mocked and misunderstood, the extreme example. The strangest discovery of a widower's life is the possibility, sometimes, of recalling with detailed and uninhibited imagination, with tenderness and gratitude, a passage of carnal love, yet with no re-awakening of concupiscence. And when this occurs (it must not be sought) awe comes upon us. It is like seeing Nature itself rising from its grave. What was sown in momentariness is raised in still permanence. What was sown as a becoming rises as being. Sown in subjectivity, it rises in objectivity. The transitory secret of two is now a chord in the ultimate music.

"But this," you protest, "is no resurrection of the *body*. You have given the dead a sort of dream world and dream bodies. They are not real." Surely neither less nor more real than those you have always known: you know better than I that the "real world" of our present experience (coloured, resonant, soft or hard, cool or warm, all corseted by perspective) has no place in the world described by physics or even physiology. Matter enters our experience only by becoming sensation (when we perceive it) or conception (when we understand it). That is, by becoming soul. That element in the soul which it becomes will, in my view, be raised and glorified; the hills and valleys of Heaven will be to those you now experience not as a copy is to an original, nor as a substitute to the genuine article, but as the flower to the root, or the diamond to the coal. It will be eternally true that they originate with matter; let us therefore bless matter. But in entering our soul as alone it can enter — that is, by being perceived and known — matter has turned into soul (like the Undines who acquired a soul by marriage with a mortal).

I don't say the resurrection of this body will happen at once. It may well be that this part of us sleeps in death and the intellectual soul is sent to Lenten lands where she fasts in naked spirituality — a ghostlike and

imperfectly human condition. I don’t imply that an angel is a ghost. But naked spirituality is in accordance with his nature: not, I think, with ours. (A two-legged horse is maimed but not a two-legged man.) Yet from that fact my hope is that we shall return and re-assume the wealth we laid down.

Then the new earth and sky, the same yet not the same as these, will rise in us as we have risen in Christ. And once again, after who knows what aeons of the silence and the dark, the birds will sing out and the waters flow, and lights and shadows move across the hills and the faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition.

Guesses, of course, only guesses. If they are not true, something better will be. For we know that we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Thank Betty for her note. I’ll come by the later train, the 3.40. And tell her not to bother about a bed on the ground floor. I can manage stairs again now, provided I take them “in bottom.” Till Saturday.

IT ALL BEGAN WITH A PICTURE...



The Editor has asked me to tell you how I came to write *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. I will try, but you must not believe all that authors tell you about how they wrote their books. This is not because they mean to tell lies. It is because a man writing a story is too excited about the story itself to sit back and notice how he is doing it. In fact, that might stop the works; just as, if you start thinking about how you tie your tie, the next thing is that you find you can't tie it. And afterwards, when the story is finished, he has forgotten a good deal of what writing it was like.

One thing I am sure of. All my seven Narnian books, and my three science fiction books, began with seeing pictures in my head. At first they were not a story, just pictures. The *Lion* all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood. This picture had been in my mind since I was about sixteen. Then one day, when I was about forty, I said to myself: 'Let's try to make a story about it.'

At first I had very little idea how the story would go. But then suddenly Aslan came bounding into it. I think I had been having a good many dreams of lions about that time. Apart from that, I don't know where the Lion came from or why He came. But once He was there He pulled the whole story together, and soon He pulled the six other Narnian stories in after Him.

So you see that, in a sense, I know very little about how this story was born. That is, I don't know where the pictures came from. And I don't believe anyone knows exactly how he 'makes things up'. Making up is a very mysterious thing. When you 'have an idea' could you tell anyone exactly *how* you thought of it?

C. S. LEWIS

The Autobiography



Lewis, c. 1948

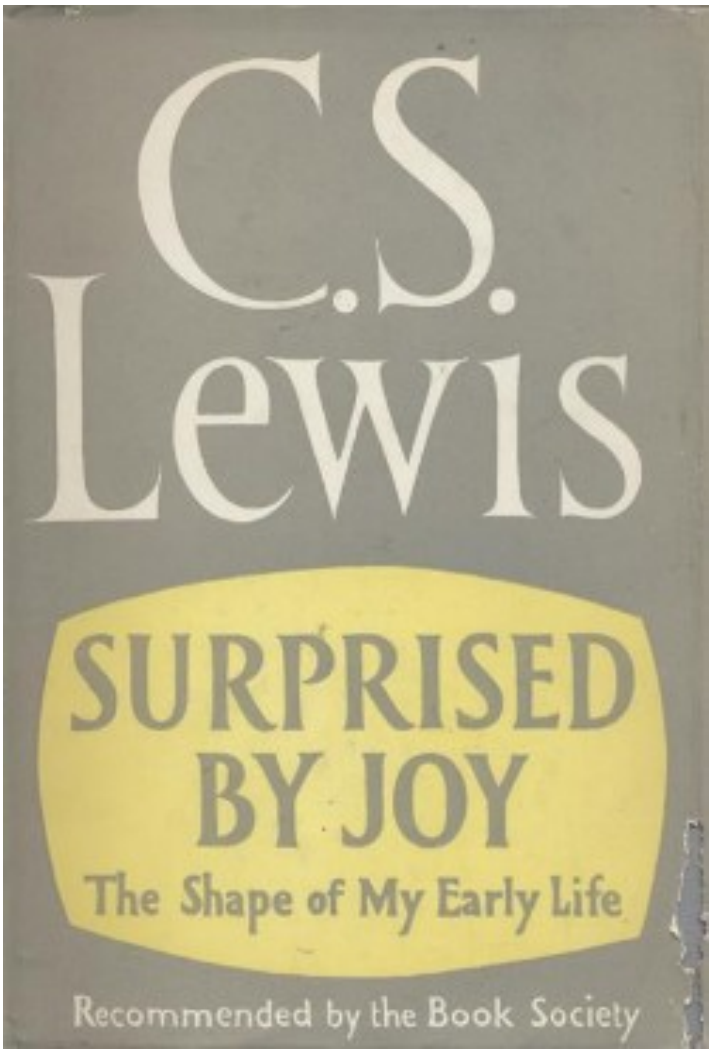
SURPRISED BY JOY: THE SHAPE OF MY EARLY LIFE



This autobiography was published in 1955 and principally relates the author's conversion to Christianity, which had taken place twenty-four years earlier. Lewis' purpose in writing was not primarily historical. His aim was instead to identify and describe the events surrounding his accidental discovery of and consequent search for the phenomenon he labelled "Joy", his best translation of the idea of *Sehnsucht* (longing). This Joy was so intense for something so good and so high up it could not be explained with words. He goes so far as to describe himself as struck with "stabs of joy" throughout his life.

The book, overall, contains less detail concerning specific events than a typical autobiography, though it is not devoid of information about the author's life. Lewis recounts and remembers his early years with a measure of amusement sometimes mixed with pain. However, while he does describe his life, the principal theme of the book is *Joy* as he defined it for his own purpose.

Lewis ultimately defines the true nature and purpose of Joy and its place in his own life. The book's last two chapters cover the end of his search as he makes moves from atheism to theism and then from theism to Christianity and, as a result, he realises that Joy is like a "signpost" to those lost in the woods, pointing the way, and that its appearance is not as important "when we have found the road and are passing signposts every few miles."



The first edition

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TO

DOM BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

Preface

This book is written partly in answer to requests that I would tell how I passed from Atheism to Christianity and partly to correct one or two false notions that seem to have got about. How far the story matters to anyone but myself depends on the degree to which others have experienced what I call “joy”. If it is at all common, a more detailed treatment of it than has (I believe) been attempted before may be of some use. I have been emboldened to write of it because I notice that a man seldom mentions what he had supposed to be his most idiosyncratic sensations without receiving from at least one (often more) of those present the reply, “What! Have *you* felt that too? I always thought I was the only one.”

The book aims at telling the story of my conversion and is not a general autobiography, still less “Confessions” like those of St. Augustine or Rousseau. This means in practice that it gets less like a general autobiography as it goes on. In the earlier chapters the net has to be spread pretty wide in order that, when the explicitly spiritual crisis arrives, the reader may understand what sort of person my childhood and adolescence had made me. When the “build-up” is complete, I confine myself strictly to business and omit everything (however important by ordinary biographical standards) which seems, at that stage, irrelevant. I do not think there is much loss; I never read an autobiography in which the parts devoted to the earlier years were not far the most interesting.

The story is, I fear, suffocatingly subjective; the kind of thing I have never written before and shall probably never write again. I have tried so to write the first chapter that those who can’t bear such a story will see at once what they are in for and close the book with the least waste of time.

C. S. L.

I. The First Years

Happy, but for so happy ill secured.
MILTON

I was born in the winter of 1898 at Belfast, the son of a solicitor and of a clergyman's daughter. My parents had only two children, both sons, and I was the younger by about three years. Two very different strains had gone to our making. My father belonged to the first generation of his family that reached professional station. His grandfather had been a Welsh farmer; his father, a self-made man, had begun life as a workman, emigrated to Ireland, and ended as a partner in the firm of Macilwaine and Lewis, "Boiler-makers, Engineers, and Iron Ship Builders". My mother was a Hamilton with many generations of clergymen, lawyers, sailors, and the like behind her; on her mother's side, through the Warrens, the blood went back to a Norman knight whose bones lie at Battle Abbey. The two families from which I spring were as different in temperament as in origin. My father's people were true Welshmen, sentimental, passionate, and rhetorical, easily moved both to anger and to tenderness; men who laughed and cried a great deal and who had not much of the talent for happiness. The Hamiltons were a cooler race. Their minds were critical and ironic and they had the talent for happiness in a high degree — went straight for it as experienced travellers go for the best seat in a train. From my earliest years I was aware of the vivid contrast between my mother's cheerful and tranquil affection and the ups and downs of my father's emotional life, and this bred in me long before I was old enough to give it a name a certain distrust or dislike of emotion as something uncomfortable and embarrassing and even dangerous.

Both my parents, by the standards of that time and place, were bookish or "clever" people. My mother had been a promising mathematician in her youth and a B.A. of Queen's College, Belfast, and before her death was able to start me both in French and Latin. She was a voracious reader of good novels, and I think the Merediths and Tolstoys which I have inherited were bought for her. My father's tastes were quite different. He was fond of oratory and had himself spoken on political platforms in England as a young man; if he had had independent means he would certainly have aimed at a political career. In this, unless his sense of honour, which was

fine to the point of being Quixotic, had made him unmanageable, he might well have succeeded, for he had many of the gifts once needed by a Parliamentarian — a fine presence, a resonant voice, great quickness of mind, eloquence, and memory. Trollope's political novels were very dear to him; in following the career of Phineas Finn he was, as I now suppose, vicariously gratifying his own desires. He was fond of poetry provided it had elements of rhetoric or pathos, or both; I think *Othello* was his favourite Shakespearian play. He greatly enjoyed nearly all humorous authors, from Dickens to W. W. Jacobs, and was himself, almost without rival, the best *raconteur* I have ever heard; the best, that is, of his own type, the type that acts all the characters in turn with a free use of grimace, gesture, and pantomime. He was never happier than when closeted for an hour or so with one or two of my uncles exchanging "wheezes" (as anecdotes were oddly called in our family). What neither he nor my mother had the least taste for was that kind of literature to which my allegiance was given the moment I could choose books for myself. Neither had ever listened for the horns of elfland. There was no copy either of Keats or Shelley in the house, and the copy of Coleridge was never (to my knowledge) opened. If I am a romantic my parents bear no responsibility for it. Tennyson, indeed, my father liked, but it was the Tennyson of *In Memoriam* and *Locksley Hall*. I never heard from him of the *Lotus Eaters* or the *Morte d'Arthur*. My mother, I have been told, cared for no poetry at all.

In addition to good parents, good food, and a garden (which then seemed large) to play in, I began life with two other blessings. One was our nurse, Lizzie Endicott, in whom even the exacting memory of childhood can discover no flaw — nothing but kindness, gaiety, and good sense. There was no nonsense about "lady nurses" in those days. Through Lizzie we struck our roots into the peasantry of County Down. We were thus free of two very different social worlds. To this I owe my lifelong immunity from the false identification which some people make of refinement with virtue. From before I can remember I had understood that certain jokes could be shared with Lizzie which were impossible in the drawing-room; and also that Lizzie was, as nearly as a human can be, simply good.

The other blessing was my brother. Though three years my senior, he never seemed to be an elder brother; we were allies, not to say confederates, from the first. Yet we were very different. Our earliest pictures (and I can remember no time when we were not incessantly drawing) reveal it. His

were of ships and trains and battles; mine, when not imitated from his, were of what we both called “dressed animals” — the anthropomorphised beasts of nursery literature. His earliest story — as my elder he preceded me in the transition from drawing to writing — was called *The Young Rajah*. He had already made India “his country”; Animal-Land was mine. I do not think any of the surviving drawings date from the first six years of my life which I am now describing, but I have plenty of them that cannot be much later. From them it appears to me that I had the better talent. From a very early age I could draw movement — figures that looked as if they were really running or fighting — and the perspective is good. But nowhere, either in my brother’s work or my own, is there a single line drawn in obedience to an idea, however crude, of beauty. There is action, comedy, invention; but there is not even the germ of a feeling for design, and there is a shocking ignorance of natural form. Trees appear as balls of cotton wool stuck on posts, and there is nothing to show that either of us knew the shape of any leaf in the garden where we played almost daily. This absence of beauty, now that I come to think of it, is characteristic of our childhood. No picture on the walls of my father’s house ever attracted — and indeed none deserved — our attention. We never saw a beautiful building nor imagined that a building could be beautiful. My earliest aesthetic experiences, if indeed they were aesthetic, were not of that kind; they were already incurably romantic, not formal. Once in those very early days my brother brought into the nursery the lid of a biscuit tin which he had covered with moss and garnished with twigs and flowers so as to make it a toy garden or a toy forest. That was the first beauty I ever knew. What the real garden had failed to do, the toy garden did. It made me aware of nature — not, indeed, as a storehouse of forms and colours but as something cool, dewy, fresh, exuberant. I do not think the impression was very important at the moment, but it soon became important in memory. As long as I live my imagination of Paradise will retain something of my brother’s toy garden. And every day there were what we called “the Green Hills”; that is, the low line of the Castlereagh Hills which we saw from the nursery windows. They were not very far off but they were, to children, quite unattainable. They taught me longing — *Sehnsucht*; made me for good or ill, and before I was six years old, a votary of the Blue Flower.

If aesthetic experiences were rare, religious experiences did not occur at all. Some people have got the impression from my books that I was brought

up in strict and vivid Puritanism, but this is quite untrue. I was taught the usual things and made to say my prayers and in due time taken to church. I naturally accepted what I was told but I cannot remember feeling much interest in it. My father, far from being specially Puritanical, was, by nineteenth-century and Church of Ireland standards, rather “high”, and his approach to religion, as to literature, was at the opposite pole from what later became my own. The charm of tradition and the verbal beauty of Bible and Prayer Book (all of them for me late and acquired tastes) were his natural delight, and it would have been hard to find an equally intelligent man who cared so little for metaphysics. Of my mother’s religion I can say almost nothing from my own memory. My childhood, at all events, was not in the least other-worldly. Except for the toy garden and the Green Hills it was not even imaginative; it lives in my memory mainly as a period of humdrum, prosaic happiness and awakes none of the poignant nostalgia with which I look back on my much less happy boyhood. It is not settled happiness but momentary joy that glorifies the past.

To this general happiness there was one exception. I remember nothing earlier than the terror of certain dreams. It is a very common trouble at that age, yet it still seems to me odd that petted and guarded childhood should so often have in it a window opening on what is hardly less than Hell. My bad dreams were of two kinds, those about spectres and those about insects. The second were, beyond comparison, the worse; to this day I would rather meet a ghost than a tarantula. And to this day I could almost find it in my heart to rationalise and justify my phobia. As Owen Barfield once said to me, “The trouble about insects is that they are like French locomotives — they have all the works on the outside.” *The works* — that is the trouble. Their angular limbs, their jerky movements, their dry, metallic noises, all suggest either machines that have come to life or life degenerating into mechanism. You may add that in the hive and the ant-hill we see fully realised the two things that some of us most dread for our own species — the dominance of the female and the dominance of the collective. One fact about the history of this phobia is perhaps worth recording. Much later, in my teens, from reading Lubbock’s *Ants, Bees and Wasps*, I developed for a short time a genuinely scientific interest in insects. Other studies soon crowded it out; but while my entomological period lasted my fear almost vanished, and I am inclined to think a real objective curiosity will usually have this cleansing effect.

I am afraid the psychologists will not be content to explain my insect fears by what a simpler generation would diagnose as their cause — a certain detestable picture in one of my nursery books. In it a midget child, a sort of Tom Thumb, stood on a toadstool and was threatened from below by a stag-beetle very much larger than himself. This was bad enough; but there is worse to come. The horns of the beetle were strips of cardboard separate from the plate and working on a pivot. By moving a devilish contraption on the *verso* you could make them open and shut like pincers: snip-snap — snip-snap — I can see it while I write. How a woman ordinarily so wise as my mother could have allowed this abomination into the nursery is difficult to understand. Unless, indeed (for now a doubt assails me), unless that picture itself is a product of nightmare. But I think not.

In 1905, my seventh year, the first great change in my life took place. We moved house. My father, growing, I suppose, in prosperity, decided to leave the semi-detached villa in which I had been born and build himself a much larger house, further out into what was then the country. The “New House”, as we continued for years to call it, was a large one even by my present standards; to a child it seemed less like a house than a city. My father, who had more capacity for being cheated than any man I have ever known, was badly cheated by his builders; the drains were wrong, the chimneys were wrong, and there was a draught in every room. None of this, however, mattered to a child. To me, the important thing about the move was that the background of my life became larger. The New House is almost a major character in my story. I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstair indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles. Also, of endless books. My father bought all the books he read and never got rid of any of them. There were books in the study, books in the drawing-room, books in the cloakroom, books (two deep) in the great bookcase on the landing, books in a bedroom, books piled as high as my shoulder in the cistern attic, books of all kinds reflecting every transient stage of my parents’ interests, books readable and unreadable, books suitable for a child and books most emphatically not. Nothing was forbidden me. In the seemingly endless rainy afternoons I took volume after volume from the shelves. I had always the same certainty of finding a book that was new to me as a man who walks into a field has of finding a new blade of grass. Where all these books had

been before we came to the New House is a problem that never occurred to me until I began writing this paragraph. I have no idea of the answer.

Out of doors was “the view” for which, no doubt, the site had principally been chosen. From our front door we looked down over wide fields to Belfast Lough and across it to the long mountain line of the Antrim shore — Divis, Colin, Cave Hill. This was in the far-off days when Britain was the world’s carrier and the Lough was full of shipping; a delight to both us boys, but most to my brother. The sound of a steamer’s horn at night still conjures up my whole boyhood. Behind the house, greener, lower, and nearer than the Antrim mountains, were the Holywood Hills, but it was not till much later that they won my attention. The north-western prospect was what mattered at first; the interminable summer sunsets behind the blue ridges, and the rooks flying home. In these surroundings the blows of change began to fall.

First of all, my brother was packed off to an English boarding-school and thus removed from my life for the greater part of every year. I remember well the rapture of his homecomings for the holidays but have no recollection of any corresponding anguish at his departures. His new life made no difference to the relations between us. I, meanwhile, was going on with my education at home; French and Latin from my mother and everything else from an excellent governess, Annie Harper. I made rather a bugbear of this mild and modest little lady at the time, but all that I can remember assures me that I was unjust. She was a Presbyterian; and a longish lecture which she once interpolated between sums and copies is the first thing I can remember that brought the other world to my mind with any sense of reality. But there were many things that I thought about more. My real life — or what memory reports as my real life — was increasingly one of solitude. I had indeed plenty of people to talk to: my parents, my grandfather Lewis, prematurely old and deaf, who lived with us; the maids; and a somewhat bibulous old gardener. I was, I believe, an intolerable chatterbox. But solitude was nearly always at my command, somewhere in the garden or somewhere in the house. I had now learned both to read and to write; I had a dozen things to do.

What drove me to write was the extreme manual clumsiness from which I have always suffered. I attribute it to a physical defect which my brother and I both inherit from our father; we have only one joint in the thumb. The upper joint (that furthest from the nail) is visible, but it is a mere sham; we

cannot bend it. But whatever the cause, nature laid on me from birth an utter incapacity to make anything. With pencil and pen I was handy enough, and I can still tie as good a bow as ever lay on a man's collar; but with a tool or a bat or a gun, a sleeve-link or a corkscrew, I have always been unteachable. It was this that forced me to write. I longed to make things, ships, houses, engines. Many sheets of cardboard and pairs of scissors I spoiled, only to turn from my hopeless failures in tears. As a last resource, as a *pis aller*, I was driven to write stories instead; little dreaming to what a world of happiness I was being admitted. You can do more with a castle in a story than with the best cardboard castle that ever stood on a nursery table.

I soon staked out a claim to one of the attics and made it "my study". Pictures, of my own making or cut from the brightly coloured Christmas numbers of magazines, were nailed on the walls. There I kept my pen and inkpot and writing books and paint-box; and there

What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?

Here my first stories were written, and illustrated, with enormous satisfaction. They were an attempt to combine my two chief literary pleasures— "dressed animals" and "knights-in-armour". As a result, I wrote about chivalrous mice and rabbits who rode out in complete mail to kill not giants but cats. But already the mood of the systematiser was strong in me; the mood which led Trollope so endlessly to elaborate his Barsetshire. The Animal-Land which came into action in the holidays when my brother was at home was a modern Animal-Land; it had to have trains and steamships if it was to be a country shared with him. It followed, of course, that the medieval Animal-Land about which I wrote my stories must be the same country at an earlier period; and of course the two periods must be properly connected. This led me from romancing to historiography; I set about writing a full history of Animal-Land. Though more than one version of this instructive work is extant, I never succeeded in bringing it down to modern times; centuries take a deal of filling when all the events have to come out of the historian's head. But there is one touch in the *History* that I still recall with some pride. The chivalric adventures which filled my stories were in it alluded to very lightly and the reader was warned that they might be "only legends". Somehow — but heaven knows how — I realised even then that a

historian should adopt a critical attitude towards epic material. From history it was only a step to geography. There was soon a map of Animal-Land — several maps, all tolerably consistent. Then Animal-Land had to be geographically related to my brother's India, and India consequently lifted out of its place in the real world. We made it an island, with its north coast running along the back of the Himalayas; between it and Animal-Land my brother rapidly invented the principal steamship routes. Soon there was a whole world and a map of that world which used every colour in my paint box. And those parts of that world which we regarded as our own — Animal-Land and India — were increasingly peopled with consistent characters.

Of the books that I read at this time very few have quite faded from memory, but not all have retained my love. Conan Doyle's *Sir Nigel*, which first set my mind upon "knights in armour", I have never felt inclined to reread. Still less would I now read Mark Twain's *Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*, which was then my only source for the Arthurian story, blissfully read for the sake of the romantic elements that came through and with total disregard of the vulgar ridicule directed against them. Much better than either of these was E. Nesbit's trilogy, *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix and the Wishing Carpet*, and *The Amulet*. The last did most for me. It first opened my eyes to antiquity, the "dark backward and abysm of time". I can still re-read it with delight. *Gulliver* in an unexpurgated and lavishly illustrated edition was one of my favourites, and I pored endlessly over an almost complete set of old *Punches* which stood in my father's study. Tenniel gratified my passion for "dressed animals" with his Russian Bear, British Lion, Egyptian Crocodile and the rest, while his slovenly and perfunctory treatment of vegetation confirmed my own deficiencies. Then came the Beatrix Potter books, and here at last beauty.

It will be clear that at this time — at the age of six, seven, and eight — I was living almost entirely in my imagination; or at least that the imaginative experience of those years now seems to me more important than anything else. Thus I pass over a holiday in Normandy (of which, nevertheless, I retain very clear memories) as a thing of no account; if it could be cut out of my past I should still be almost exactly the man I am. But imagination is a vague word and I must make some distinctions. It may mean the world of reverie, day-dream, wish-fulfilling fantasy. Of that I knew more than enough. I often pictured myself cutting a fine figure. But I must insist that

this was a totally different activity from the invention of Animal-Land. Animal-Land was not (in that sense) a fantasy at all. I was not one of the characters it contained. I was its creator, not a candidate for admission to it. Invention is essentially different from reverie; if some fail to recognise the difference that is because they have not themselves experienced both. Anyone who has will understand me. In my day-dreams I was training myself to be a fool; in mapping and chronicling Animal-Land I was training myself to be a novelist. Note well, a novelist; not a poet. My invented world was full (for me) of interest, bustle, humour, and character; but there was no poetry, even no romance, in it. It was almost astonishingly prosaic. Thus if we use the word imagination in a third sense, and the highest sense of all, this invented world was not imaginative. But certain other experiences were, and I will now try to record them. The thing has been much better done by Traherne and Wordsworth, but every man must tell his own tale.

[Footnote 1] For readers of my children's books, the best way of putting this would be to say that Animal-Land had nothing whatever in common with Narnia except the anthropomorphic beasts. Animal-Land, by its whole quality, excluded the least hint of wonder.

The first is itself the memory of a memory. As I stood beside a flowering currant bush on a summer day there suddenly arose in me without warning, and as if from a depth not of years but of centuries, the memory of that earlier morning at the Old House when my brother had brought his toy garden into the nursery. It is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me; Milton's "enormous bliss" of Eden (giving the full, ancient meaning to "enormous") comes somewhere near it. It was a sensation, of course, of desire; but desire for what? not, certainly, for a biscuit-tin filled with moss, nor even (though that came into it) for my own past. [Greek: Ioulian pothô] — and before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased. It had taken only a moment of time; and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison.

[Footnote 2] Oh, I desire too much.

The second glimpse came through *Squirrel Nutkin*; through it only, though I loved all the Beatrix Potter books. But the rest of them were merely entertaining; it administered the shock, it was a trouble. It troubled

me with what I can only describe as the Idea of Autumn. It sounds fantastic to say that one can be enamoured of a season, but that is something like what happened; and, as before, the experience was one of intense desire. And one went back to the book, not to gratify the desire (that was impossible — how can one *possess* Autumn?) but to re-awake it. And in this experience also there was the same surprise and the same sense of incalculable importance. It was something quite different from ordinary life and even from ordinary pleasure; something, as they would now say, "in another dimension".

The third glimpse came through poetry. I had become fond of Longfellow's *Saga of King Olaf*: fond of it in a casual, shallow way for its story and its vigorous rhythms. But then, and quite different from such pleasures, and like a voice from far more distant regions, there came a moment when I idly turned the pages of the book and found the unrhymed translation of *Tegner's Drapa* and read

I heard a voice that cried,
Balder the beautiful
Is dead, is dead ——

I knew nothing about Balder; but instantly I was uplifted into huge regions of northern sky, I desired with almost sickening intensity something never to be described (except that it is cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote) and then, as in the other examples, found myself at the very same moment already falling out of that desire and wishing I were back in it.

The reader who finds these three episodes of no interest need read this book no further, for in a sense the central story of my life is about nothing else. For those who are still disposed to proceed I will only underline the quality common to the three experiences; it is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again. Apart from that, and considered only in its quality, it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all

the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is.

I cannot be absolutely sure whether the things I have just been speaking of happened before or after the great loss which befell our family and to which I must now turn. There came a night when I was ill and crying both with headache and toothache and distressed because my mother did not come to me. That was because she was ill too; and what was odd was that there were several doctors in her room, and voices and comings and goings all over the house and doors shutting and opening. It seemed to last for hours. And then my father, in tears, came into my room and began to try to convey to my terrified mind things it had never conceived before. It was in fact cancer and followed the usual course; an operation (they operated in the patient's house in those days), an apparent convalescence, a return of the disease, increasing pain, and death. My father never fully recovered from this loss.

Children suffer not (I think) less than their elders, but differently. For us boys the real bereavement had happened before our mother died. We lost her gradually as she was gradually withdrawn from our life into the hands of nurses and delirium and morphia, and as our whole existence changed into something alien and menacing, as the house became full of strange smells and midnight noises and sinister whispered conversations. This had two further results, one very evil and one very good. It divided us from our father as well as our mother. They say that a shared sorrow draws people closer together; I can hardly believe that it often has that effect when those who share it are of widely different ages. If I may trust my own experience, the sight of adult misery and adult terror has an effect on children which is merely paralysing and alienating. Perhaps it was our fault. Perhaps if we had been better children we might have lightened our father's sufferings at this time. We certainly did not. His nerves had never been of the steadiest and his emotions had always been uncontrolled. Under the pressure of anxiety his temper became incalculable; he spoke wildly and acted unjustly. Thus by a peculiar cruelty of fate, during those months the unfortunate man, had he but known it, was really losing his sons as well as his wife. We were coming, my brother and I, to rely more and more exclusively on each other for all that made life bearable; to have confidence only in each other. I expect that we (or at any rate I) were already learning to lie to him. Everything that had made the house a home had failed us; everything except

one another. We drew daily closer together (that was the good result) — two frightened urchins huddled for warmth in a bleak world.

Grief in childhood is complicated with many other miseries. I was taken into the bedroom where my mother lay dead; as they said, “to see her”, in reality, as I at once knew, “to see it”. There was nothing that a grown-up would call disfigurement — except for that total disfigurement which is death itself. Grief was overwhelmed in terror. To this day I do not know what they mean when they call dead bodies beautiful. The ugliest man alive is an angel of beauty compared with the loveliest of the dead. Against all the subsequent paraphernalia of coffin, flowers, hearse, and funeral I reacted with horror. I even lectured one of my aunts on the absurdity of mourning clothes in a style which would have seemed to most adults both heartless and precocious; but this was our dear Aunt Annie, my maternal uncle’s Canadian wife, a woman almost as sensible and sunny as my mother herself. To my hatred for what I already felt to be all the fuss and flummery of the funeral I may perhaps trace something in me which I now recognise as a defect but which I have never fully overcome — a distaste for all that is public, all that belongs to the collective; a boorish inaptitude for formality.

My mother’s death was the occasion of what some (but not I) might regard as my first religious experience. When her case was pronounced hopeless I remembered what I had been taught; that prayers offered in faith would be granted. I accordingly set myself to produce by will-power a firm belief that my prayers for her recovery would be successful; and, as I thought, I achieved it. When nevertheless she died I shifted my ground and worked myself into a belief that there was to be a miracle. The interesting thing is that my disappointment produced no results beyond itself. The thing hadn’t worked, but I was used to things not working, and I thought no more about it. I think the truth is that the belief into which I had hypnotised myself was itself too irreligious for its failure to cause any religious revolution. I had approached God, or my idea of God, without love, without awe, even without fear. He was, in my mental picture of this miracle, to appear neither as Saviour nor as Judge, but merely as a magician; and when He had done what was required of Him I supposed He would simply — well, go away. It never crossed my mind that the tremendous contact which I solicited should have any consequences beyond restoring the *status quo*. I imagine that a “faith” of this kind is often generated in children and that its disappointment is of no religious importance; just as the things believed in,

if they could happen and be only as the child pictures them, would be of no religious importance either.

With my mother’s death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of Joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis.

II. Concentration Camp

Arithmetic with Coloured Rods.
TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT, Nov. 19, 1954

Clop-clop-clop-clop... we are in a four-wheeler rattling over the uneven squaresets of the Belfast streets through the damp twilight of a September evening, 1908; my father, my brother, and I. I am going to school for the first time. We are in low spirits. My brother, who has most reason to be so, for he alone knows what we are going to, shows his feelings least. He is already a veteran. I perhaps am buoyed up by a little excitement, but very little. The most important fact at the moment is the horrible clothes I have been made to put on. Only this morning — only two hours ago — I was running wild in shorts and blazer and sandshoes. Now I am choking and sweating, itching too, in thick dark stuff, throttled by an Eton collar, my feet already aching with unaccustomed boots. I am wearing knickerbockers that button at the knee. Every night for some forty weeks of every year and for many a year I am to see the red, smarting imprint of those buttons in my flesh when I undress. Worst of all is the bowler-hat, apparently made of iron, which grasps my head. I have read of boys in the same predicament who welcomed such things as signs of growing up; I had no such feeling. Nothing in my experience had ever suggested to me that it was nicer to be a schoolboy than a child or nicer to be a man than a schoolboy. My brother never talked much about school in the holidays. My father, whom I implicitly believed, represented adult life as one of incessant drudgery under the continual threat of financial ruin. In this he did not mean to deceive us. Such was his temperament that when he exclaimed, as he frequently did, “There’ll soon be nothing for it but the workhouse,” he momentarily believed, or at least felt, what he said. I took it all literally and had the gloomiest anticipation of adult life. In the meantime, the putting on of the school clothes was, I well knew, the assumption of a prison uniform.

We reach the quay and go on board the old “Fleetwood boat”; after some miserable strolling about the deck my father bids us goodbye. He is deeply moved; I, alas, am mainly embarrassed and self-conscious. When he has gone ashore we almost, by comparison, cheer up. My brother begins to show me over the ship and tell me about all the other shipping in sight. He

is an experienced traveller and a complete man of the world. A certain agreeable excitement steals over me. I like the reflected port and starboard lights on the oily water, the rattle of winches, the warm smell from the engine-room skylight. We cast off. The black space widens between us and the quay; I feel the throb of screws underneath me. Soon we are dropping down the Lough and there is a taste of salt on one's lips, and that cluster of lights astern, receding from us, is everything I have known. Later, when we have gone to our bunks, it begins to blow. It is a rough night and my brother is sea-sick. I absurdly envy him this accomplishment. He is behaving as experienced travellers should. By great efforts I succeed in vomiting; but it is a poor affair — I was, and am, an obstinately good sailor.

No Englishman will be able to understand my first impressions of England. When we disembarked, I suppose at about six next morning (but it seemed to be midnight), I found myself in a world to which I reacted with immediate hatred. The flats of Lancashire in the early morning are in reality a dismal sight; to me they were like the banks of Styx. The strange English accents with which I was surrounded seemed like the voices of demons. But what was worst was the English landscape from Fleetwood to Euston. Even to my adult eye that main line still appears to run through the dullest and most unfriendly strip in the island. But to a child who had always lived near the sea and in sight of high ridges it appeared as I suppose Russia might appear to an English boy. The flatness! The interminableness! The miles and miles of featureless land, shutting one in from the sea, imprisoning, suffocating! Everything was wrong; wooden fences instead of stone walls and hedges, red brick farmhouses instead of white cottages, the fields too big, haystacks the wrong shape. Well does the *Kalevala* say that in the stranger's house the floor is full of knots. I have made up the quarrel since; but at that moment I conceived a hatred for England which took many years to heal.

Our destination was the little town of — let us call it Belsen — in Hertfordshire. "Green Hertfordshire", Lamb calls it; but it was not green to a boy bred in County Down. It was flat Hertfordshire, flinty Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire of the yellow soil. There is the same difference between the climate of Ireland and of England as between that of England and the Continent. There was far more weather at Belsen than I had ever met before; there I first knew bitter frost and stinging fog, sweltering heat and

thunderstorms on the great scale. There, through the curtainless dormitory windows, I first came to know the ghastly beauty of the full moon.

The school, as I first knew it, consisted of some eight or nine boarders and about as many day-boys. Organised games, except for endless rounders in the flinty playground, had long been moribund and were finally abandoned not very long after my arrival. There was no bathing except one's weekly bath in the bathroom. I was already doing Latin exercises (as taught by my mother) when I went there in 1908, and I was still doing Latin exercises when I left there in 1910; I had never got in sight of a Roman author. The only stimulating element in the teaching consisted of a few well-used canes which hung on the green iron chimney-piece of the single schoolroom. The teaching staff consisted of the headmaster and proprietor (we called him Oldie), his grown-up son (Wee Wee), and an usher. The ushers succeeded one another with great rapidity; one lasted for less than a week. Another was dismissed in the presence of the boys, with a rider from Oldie to the effect that if he were not in Holy Orders he would kick him downstairs. This curious scene took place in the dormitory, though I cannot remember why. All these ushers (except the one who stayed less than a week) were obviously as much in awe of Oldie as we. But there came a time when there were no more ushers, and Oldie's youngest daughter taught the junior pupils. By that time there were only five boarders, and Oldie finally gave up his school and sought a cure of souls. I was one of the last survivors, and left the ship only when she went down under us.

Oldie lived in a solitude of power, like a sea-captain in the days of sail. No man or woman in that house spoke to him as an equal. No one except Wee Wee initiated conversation with him at all. At meal times we boys had a glimpse of his family life. His son sat on his right hand; they two had separate food. His wife and three grown-up daughters (silent), the usher (silent), and the boys (silent) munched their inferior messes. His wife, though I think she never addressed Oldie, was allowed to make something of a reply to him; the girls — three tragic figures, dressed summer and winter in the same shabby black — never went beyond an almost whispered "Yes, Papa", or "No, Papa", on the rare occasions when they were addressed. Few visitors entered the house. Beer, which Oldie and Wee Wee drank regularly at dinner, was offered to the usher but he was expected to refuse; the one who accepted got his pint, but was taught his place by being asked a few moments later in a voice of thunderous irony, "Perhaps you

would like a little *more* beer, Mr. N.?" Mr. N., a man of spirit, replied casually, "Well, thank you, Mr. C., I think I would." He was the one who did not stay till the end of his first week; and the rest of that day was a black one for us boys.

I myself was rather a pet or mascot of Oldie's — a position which I swear I never sought and of which the advantages were purely negative. Even my brother was not one of his favourite victims. For he had his favourite victims, boys who could do nothing right. I have known Oldie enter the schoolroom after breakfast, cast his eyes round, and remark, "Oh, there you are, Rees, you horrid boy. If I'm not too tired I shall give you a good drubbing this afternoon." He was not angry, nor was he joking. He was a big, bearded man with full lips like an Assyrian king on a monument, immensely strong, physically dirty. Everyone talks of sadism nowadays but I question whether his cruelty had any erotic element in it. I half divined then, and seem to see clearly now, what all his whipping-boys had in common. They were the boys who fell below a certain social status, the boys with vulgar accents. Poor P. — dear, honest, hard-working, friendly, healthily pious P. — was flogged incessantly, I now think, for one offence only; he was the son of a dentist. I have seen Oldie make that child bend down at one end of the schoolroom and then take a run of the room's length at each stroke; but P. was the trained sufferer of countless thrashings and no sound escaped him until, towards the end of the torture, there came a noise quite unlike a human utterance. That peculiar croaking or rattling cry, that, and the grey faces of all the other boys, and their deathlike stillness, are among the memories I could willingly dispense with.

[Footnote 3] This punishment was for a mistake in a geometrical proof.

The curious thing is that despite all this cruelty we did surprisingly little work. This may have been partly because the cruelty was irrational and unpredictable; but it was partly because of the curious methods employed. Except at geometry (which he really liked) it might be said that Oldie did not teach at all. He called his class up and asked questions. When the replies were unsatisfactory he said in a low, calm voice, "Bring me my cane. I see I shall need it." If a boy became confused Oldie flogged the desk, shouting in a crescendo, "Think — Think — THINK!!" Then, as the prelude to execution, he muttered, "Come out, come out, come out." When really angry he proceeded to antics; worming for wax in his ear with his little finger and babbling, "Aye, aye, aye, aye...". I have seen him leap up and

dance round and round like a performing bear. Meanwhile, almost in whispers, Wee Wee or the usher, or (later) Oldie's youngest daughter, was questioning us juniors at another desk. "Lessons" of this sort did not take very long; what was to be done with the boys for the rest of the time? Oldie had decided that they could, with least trouble to himself, be made to do arithmetic. Accordingly, when you entered school at nine o'clock you took your slate and began doing sums. Presently you were called up to "say a lesson". When that was finished you went back to your place and did more sums — and so forever. All the other arts and sciences thus appeared as islands (mostly rocky and dangerous islands)

Which like to rich and various gems inlaid
The unadorned bosom of the deep

— the deep being a shoreless ocean of arithmetic. At the end of the morning you had to say how many sums you had done; and it was not quite safe to lie. But supervision was slack and very little assistance was given. My brother — I have told you that he was already a man of the world — soon found the proper solution. He announced every morning with perfect truth that he had done five sums; he did not add that they were the same five every day. It would be interesting to know how many thousand times he did them.

I must restrain myself. I could continue to describe Oldie for many pages; some of the worst is unsaid. But perhaps it would be wicked, and it is certainly not obligatory, to do so. One good thing I can tell of him. Impelled by conscience, a boy once confessed to him an otherwise undetectable lie. The ogre was touched; he only patted the terrified boy's back and said, "Always stick to the truth." I can also say that though he taught geometry cruelly, he taught it well. He forced us to reason, and I have been the better for those geometry lessons all my life. For the rest, there is a possible explanation of his behaviour which renders it more forgivable. Years after, my brother met a man who had grown up in the house next door to Oldie's school. That man and his family, and (I think) the neighbours in general, believed Oldie to be insane. Perhaps they were right. And if he had fairly recently become so, it would explain a thing which puzzles me. At that school as I knew it most boys learned nothing and no boy learned much. But Oldie could boast an impressive record of

scholarships in the past. His school cannot always have been the swindle it was in our time.

You may ask how our father came to send us there. Certainly not because he made a careless choice. The surviving correspondence shows that he had considered many other schools before fixing on Oldie's; and I know him well enough to be sure that in such a matter he would never have been guided by his first thoughts (which would probably have been right) nor even by his twenty-first (which would at least have been explicable). Beyond doubt he would have prolonged deliberation till his hundred-and-first; and they would be infallibly and invincibly wrong. This is what always happens to the deliberations of a simple man who thinks he is a subtle one. Like Earle's *Scepticke in Religion* he "is alwayes too hard for himself". My father piqued himself on what he called "reading between the lines". The obvious meaning of any fact or document was always suspect: the true and inner meaning, invisible to all eyes except his own, was unconsciously created by the restless fertility of his imagination. While he thought he was interpreting Oldie's prospectus, he was really composing a school-story in his own mind. And all this, I doubt not, with extreme conscientiousness and even some anguish. It might, perhaps, have been expected that this story of his would presently be blown away by the real story which we had to tell after we had gone to Belsen. But this did not happen. I believe it rarely happens. If the parents in each generation always or often knew what really goes on at their sons' schools, the history of education would be very different. At any rate, my brother and I certainly did not succeed in impressing the truth on our father's mind. For one thing (and this will become clearer in the sequel) he was a man not easily informed. His mind was too active to be an accurate receiver. What he thought he had heard was never exactly what you had said. We did not even try very hard. Like other children, we had no standard of comparison; we supposed the miseries of Belsen to be the common and unavoidable miseries of all schools. Vanity helped to tie our tongues. A boy home from school (especially during that first week when the holidays seem eternal) likes to cut a dash. He would rather represent his master as a buffoon than an ogre. He would hate to be thought a coward and a cry-baby, and he cannot paint the true picture of his concentration camp without admitting himself to have been for the last thirteen weeks a pale, quivering, tear-stained, obsequious slave. We all like showing scars received in battle; the

wounds of the *ergastulum*, less. My father must not bear the blame for our wasted and miserable years at Oldie's; and now, in Dante's words, "to treat of the good that I found there".

First, I learned, if not friendship, at least gregariousness. There had been bullying at the school when my brother first went there. I had my brother's protection for my first few terms (after which he left to go to a school we may call Wyvern) but I doubt if it was necessary. During those last declining years of the school we boarders were too few and too badly treated to do or suffer much in that way. Also, after a certain time, there were no new boys. We had our quarrels, which seemed serious enough at the time; but long before the end we had known one another too long and suffered too much together not to be, at the least, very old acquaintance. That, I think, is why Belsen did me, in the long run, so little harm. Hardly any amount of oppression from above takes the heart out of a boy like oppression from his fellows. We had many pleasant hours alone together, we five remaining boarders. The abandonment of organised games, though a wretched preparation for the public school life to which most of us were destined, was at the time a great blessing. We were sent out for walks alone on half holidays. We did not do much walking. We bought sweets in drowsy village shops and pottered about on the canal bank or sat at the brow of a railway cutting watching a tunnel-mouth for trains. Hertfordshire came to look less hostile. Our talk was not bound down to the narrow interests which satisfy public school boys; we still had the curiosity of children. I can even remember from those days what must have been the first metaphysical argument I ever took part in. We debated whether the future was like a line you can't see or like a line that is not yet drawn. I have forgotten which side I took though I know that I took it with great zeal. And always there was what Chesterton calls "the slow maturing of old jokes".

The reader will notice that school was thus coming to reflect a pattern I had already encountered in my home life. At home, the bad times had drawn my brother and me closer together; here, where the times were always bad, the fear and hatred of Oldie had something the same effect upon us all. His school was in some ways very like Dr. Grimstone's school in *Vice Versa*; but unlike Dr. Grimstone's it contained no informer. We stood foursquare against the common enemy. I suspect that this pattern, occurring twice and so early in my life, has unduly biassed my whole outlook. To this day the vision of the world which comes most naturally to me is one in

which “we two” or “we few” (and in a sense “we happy few”) stand together against something stronger and larger. England’s position in 1940 was to me no surprise; it was the sort of thing that I always expect. Hence while friendship has been by far the chief source of my happiness, acquaintance or general society has always meant little to me, and I cannot quite understand why a man should wish to know more people than he can make real friends of. Hence, too, a very defective, perhaps culpably defective, interest in large impersonal movements, causes and the like. The concern aroused in me by a battle (whether in story or in reality) is almost in an inverse ratio to the number of the combatants.

In another way too Oldie’s school presently repeated my home experience. Oldie’s wife died; and in term time. He reacted to bereavement by becoming more violent than before; so much so that Wee Wee made a kind of apology for him to the boys. You will remember that I had already learned to fear and hate emotion; here was a fresh reason to do so.

But I have not yet mentioned the most important thing that befell me at Oldie’s. There first I became an effective believer. As far as I know, the instrument was the church to which we were taken twice every Sunday. This was high “Anglo-Catholic”. On the conscious level I reacted strongly against its peculiarities — was I not an Ulster Protestant, and were not these unfamiliar rituals an essential part of the hated English atmosphere? Unconsciously, I suspect, the candles and incense, the vestments and the hymns sung on our knees, may have had a considerable, and opposite, effect on me. But I do not think they were the important thing. What really mattered was that I here heard the doctrines of Christianity (as distinct from general “uplift”) taught by men who obviously believed them. As I had no scepticism, the effect was to bring to life what I would already have said that I believed. In this experience there was a great deal of fear. I do not think there was more than was wholesome or even necessary; but if in my books I have spoken too much of Hell, and if critics want a historical explanation of the fact, they must seek it not in the supposed Puritanism of my Ulster childhood but in the Anglo-Catholicism of the church at Belsen. I feared for my soul; especially on certain blazing moonlit nights in that curtainless dormitory — how the sound of other boys breathing in their sleep comes back! The effect, so far as I can judge, was entirely good. I began seriously to pray and to read my Bible and to attempt to obey my conscience. Religion was among the subjects which we often discussed;

discussed, if my memory serves me, in an entirely healthy and profitable way, with great gravity and without hysteria, and without the shamefacedness of older boys. How I went back from this beginning you shall hear later.

Intellectually, the time I spent at Oldie's was almost entirely wasted; if the school had not died, and if I had been left there two years more, it would probably have sealed my fate as a scholar for good. Geometry and some pages in West's *English Grammar* (but even those I think I found for myself) are the only items on the credit side. For the rest, all that rises out of the sea of arithmetic is a jungle of dates, battles, exports, imports and the like, forgotten as soon as learned and perfectly useless had they been remembered. There was also a great decline in my imaginative life. For many years Joy (as I have defined it) was not only absent but forgotten. My reading was now mainly rubbish; but as there was no library at the school we must not make Oldie responsible for that. I read twaddling school-stories in *The Captain*. The pleasure here was, in the proper sense, mere wish-fulfilment and fantasy; one enjoyed vicariously the triumphs of the hero. When the boy passes from nursery literature to school-stories he is going down, not up. *Peter Rabbit* pleases a disinterested imagination, for the child does not want to be a rabbit, though he may like pretending to be a rabbit as he may later like acting Hamlet; but the story of the unpromising boy who became captain of the First Eleven exists precisely to feed his real ambitions. I also developed a great taste for all the fiction I could get about the ancient world: *Quo Vadis*, *Darkness and Dawn*, *The Gladiators*, *Ben Hur*. It might be expected that this arose out of my new concern for my religion, but I think not. Early Christians came into many of these stories, but they were not what I was after. I simply wanted sandals, temples, togas, slaves, emperors, galleys, amphitheatres; the attraction, as I now see, was erotic, and erotic in rather a morbid way. And they were mostly, as literature, rather bad books. What has worn better, and what I took to at the same time, is the work of Rider Haggard; and also the "scientifiction" of H. G. Wells. The idea of other planets exercised upon me then a peculiar, heady attraction, which was quite different from any other of my literary interests. Most emphatically it was not the romantic spell of *Das Ferne*. "Joy" (in my technical sense) never darted from Mars or the Moon. This was something coarser and stronger. The interest, when the fit was upon me, was ravenous, like a lust. This particular coarse strength I have come to

accept as a mark that the interest which has it is psychological, not spiritual; behind such a fierce tang there lurks, I suspect, a psychoanalytical explanation. I may perhaps add that my own planetary romances have been not so much the gratification of that fierce curiosity as its exorcism. The exorcism worked by reconciling it with, or subjecting it to, the other, the more elusive, and genuinely imaginative, impulse. That the ordinary interest in scientifiction is an affair for psychoanalysts is borne out by the fact that all who like it, like it thus ravenously, and equally by the fact that those who do not, are often nauseated by it. The repulsion of the one sort has the same coarse strength as the fascinated interest of the other and is equally a tell-tale.

So much for Oldie's; but the year was not all term. Life at a vile boarding-school is in this way a good preparation for the Christian life, that it teaches one to five by hope. Even, in a sense, by faith; for at the beginning of each term, home and the holidays are so far off that it is as hard to realise them as to realise heaven. They have the same pitiful unreality when confronted with immediate horrors. To-morrow's geometry blots out the distant end of term as to-morrow's operation may blot out the hope of Paradise. And yet, term after term, the unbelievable happened. Fantastical and astronomical figures like "This time six weeks" shrank into practicable figures like "This time next week", and then "This time to-morrow", and the almost supernatural bliss of the Last Day punctually appeared. It was a delight that almost demanded to be stayed with flagons and comforted with apples; a delight that tingled down the spine and troubled the belly and at moments went near to stopping the breath. Of course this had a terrible and equally relevant reverse side. In the first week of the holidays we might acknowledge that term would come again — as a young man, in peace time, in full health, acknowledges that he will one day die. But like him we could not even by the grimmest *memento mori* be brought to realise it. And there too, each time, the unbelievable happened. The grinning skull finally peered through all disguises; the last hour, held at bay by every device our will and imaginations knew, came in the end, and once more it was the bowler-hat, the Eton collar, the knickerbockers, and (clop-clop-clop-clop) the evening drive to the quay. In all seriousness I think that the life of faith is easier to me because of these memories. To think, in sunny and confident times, that I shall die and rot, or to think that one day all this universe will slip away and become memory (as Oldie

slipped away into memory three times a year, and with him the canes and the disgusting food, the stinking sanitation and the cold beds) — this is easier to us if we have seen just that sort of thing happening before. We have learned not to take present things at their face value.

In attempting to give an account of our home life at this time I am troubled by doubts about chronology. School affairs can to some extent be dated by surviving records, but the slow, continuous unfolding of family life escapes them. Our slight alienation from our father imperceptibly increased. In part no one was to blame; in a very great part we were to blame. A temperamental widower, still prostrated by the loss of his wife, must be a very good and wise man indeed if he makes no mistakes in bringing up two noisy and mischievous schoolboys who reserve their confidence wholly for each other. And my father's good qualities as well as his weaknesses incapacitated him for the task. He was far too manly and generous to strike a child for the gratification of his anger; and he was too impulsive ever to punish a child in cold blood and on principle. He therefore relied wholly on his tongue as the instrument of domestic discipline. And here that fatal bent towards dramatisation and rhetoric (I speak of it the more freely since I inherit it) produced a pathetic yet comic result. When he opened his mouth to reprove us he no doubt intended a short well-chosen appeal to our common sense and conscience. But alas, he had been a public speaker long before he became a father. He had for many years been a public prosecutor. Words came to him and intoxicated him as they came. What actually happened was that a small boy who had walked on damp grass in his slippers or left a bathroom in a pickle found himself attacked with something like Cicero on Catiline, or Burke on Warren Hastings; simile piled on simile, rhetorical question on rhetorical question, the flash of an orator's eye and the thundercloud of an orator's brow, the gestures, the cadences and the pauses. The pauses might be the chief danger. One was so long that my brother, quite innocently supposing the denunciation to have ended, humbly took up his book and resumed his reading; a gesture which my father (who had after all only made a rhetorical miscalculation of about a second and a half) not unnaturally took for "cool, premeditated insolence". The ludicrous disproportion between such harangues and their occasions puts me in mind of the advocate in Martial who thunders about all the villains of Roman history while meantime *lis est de tribus capellis* —

This case, I beg the court to note,
Concerns a trespass by a goat.

My poor father, while he spoke, forgot not only the offence, but the capacities, of his audience. All the resources of his immense vocabulary were poured forth. I can still remember such words as “abominable”, “sophisticated” and “surreptitious”. You will not get the full flavour unless you know an angry Irishman’s energy in explosive consonants and the rich growl of his R’s. A worse treatment could hardly have been applied. Up to a certain age these invectives filled me with boundless terror and dismay. From the wilderness of the adjectives and the welter of the unintelligible, emerged ideas which I thought I understood only too well, as I heard with implicit and literal belief that our Father’s ruin was approaching, that we should all soon beg our bread in the streets, that he would shut up the house and keep us at school all the year round, that we should be sent to the colonies and there end in misery the career of crime on which we had, it seemed, already embarked. All security seemed to be taken from me; there was no solid ground beneath my feet. It is significant that at this time if I woke in the night and did not immediately hear my brother’s breathing from the neighbouring bed, I often suspected that my father and he had secretly risen while I slept and gone off to America — that I was finally abandoned. Such was the effect of my father’s rhetoric up to a certain age; then, quite suddenly, it became ridiculous. I can even remember the moment of the change, and the story well illustrates both the justice of my father’s anger and the unhappy way in which he expressed it. One day my brother decided it would be a good thing to make a tent. Accordingly we procured a dust-sheet from one of the attics. The next step was to find uprights; the step-ladder in the wash-house suggested itself. For a boy with a hatchet it was the work of a moment to reduce this to a number of disconnected poles. Four of these were then planted in the earth and the sheet draped over them. To make sure that the whole structure was really reliable my brother then tried sitting on the top of it. We remembered to put away the ragged remains of the sheet but quite forgot about the uprights. That evening, when my father had come home from work and dined, he went for a stroll in the garden, accompanied by us. The sight of four slender wooden posts rising from the grass moved in him a pardonable curiosity. Interrogation followed; on this occasion we told the truth. Then the lightnings flashed and the

thunder roared; and all would have gone now as it had gone on a dozen previous occasions, but for the climax— “Instead of which I find you have cut up the step-ladder. And what for, forsooth? To make a thing like an abortive Punch-and-Judy show.” At that moment we both hid our faces; not, alas, to cry.

As will be seen from this anecdote one dominant factor in our life at home was the daily absence of our father from about nine in the morning till six at night. For the rest of the day we had the house to ourselves, except for the cook and housemaid with whom we were sometimes at war and sometimes in alliance. Everything invited us to develop a life that had no connection with our father. The most important of our activities was the endless drama of Animal-Land and India, and this of itself isolated us from him.

But I must not leave the reader under the impression that all the happy hours of the holidays occurred during our father’s absence. His temperament was mercurial, his spirits rose as easily as they fell, and his forgiveness was as thorough-going as his displeasure. He was often the most jovial and companionable of parents. He could “play the fool” as well as any of us, and had no regard for his own dignity, “conned no state”. I could not, of course, at that age see what good company (by adult standards) he was, his humour being of the sort that requires at least some knowledge of life for its full appreciation; I merely basked in it as in fine weather. And all the time there was the sensuous delight of being at home, the delight of luxury— “civilisation”, as we called it. I spoke just now of *Vice Versa*. Its popularity was surely due to something more than farce. It is the only truthful school story in existence. The machinery of the Garuda Stone really serves to bring out in their true colours (which would otherwise seem exaggerated) the sensations which every boy had on passing from the warmth and softness and dignity of his home life to the privations, the raw and sordid ugliness, of school. I say “had” not “has”; for perhaps homes have gone down in the world and schools gone up since then.

It will be asked whether we had no friends, no neighbours, no relatives. We had. To one family in particular our debt is so great that it had better be left, with some other matters, to the next chapter.

III. Mountbracken and Campbell

For all these fair people in hall were in their first age; none happier under the heaven; their king, the man of noblest temper. It would be a hard task to-day to find so brave a fellowship in any castle.
GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

To speak of my nearer relatives is to remind myself how the contrast of Lewis and Hamilton dominated my whole early life. It began, for me, with the grandparents. Grandfather Lewis, deaf, slow-moving, humming his psalm chants, much concerned for his health and prone to remind the family that he would not be with them long, is contrasted with Grandmother Hamilton, the sharp-tongued, sharp-witted widow, full of heterodox opinions (even, to the scandal of the whole connection, a Home Ruler), every inch a Warren, indifferent to convention as only an old Southern Irish aristocrat could be, living alone in a large tumble-down house with half a hundred cats for company. To how many an innocent conversational gambit did she reply, “You’re talking great nonsense”? Born a little later, she would, I think, have been a Fabian. She met vague small talk with ruthless statements of ascertainable fact and well-worn maxims with a tart demand for evidence. Naturally, people called her eccentric. Coming down a generation I find the same opposition. My father’s elder brother “Uncle Joe”, with his family of two boys and three girls, lived very close to us while we were at the Old House. His younger son was my earliest friend, but we drifted apart as we grew older. Uncle Joe was both a clever man and a kind, and especially fond of me. But I remember nothing that was said by our elders in that house; it was simply “grown up” conversation — about people, business, politics, and health, I suppose. But “Uncle Gussie” — my mother’s brother, A. W. Hamilton — talked to me as if we were of an age. That is, he talked about Things. He told me all the science I could then take in, clearly, eagerly, without silly jokes and condescensions, obviously liking it as much as I did. He thus provided the intellectual background for my reading of H. G. Wells. I do not suppose he cared for me as a person half so much as Uncle Joe did; and that (call it an injustice or not) was what I liked. During these talks our attention was fixed not on one another but on the subject. His Canadian wife I have already mentioned. In her also I found

what I liked best — an unfailing, kindly welcome without a hint of sentimentality, unruffled good sense, the unobtrusive talent for making all things at all times as cheerful and comfortable as circumstances allowed. What one could not have one did without and made the best of it. The tendency of the Lewises to re-open wounds and to rouse sleeping dogs was unknown to her as to her husband.

But we had other kin who mattered to us far more than our aunts and uncles. Less than a mile from our home stood the largest house I then knew, which I will here call Mountbracken, and there lived Sir W. E. Lady E. was my mother's first cousin and perhaps my mother's dearest friend, and it was no doubt for my mother's sake that she took upon herself the heroic work of civilising my brother and me. We had a standing invitation to lunch at Mountbracken whenever we were at home; to this, almost entirely, we owe it that we did not grow up savages. The debt is not only to Lady E. ("Cousin Mary") but to her whole family; walks, motor-drives (in those days an exciting novelty), picnics, and invitations to the theatre were showered on us, year after year, with a kindness which our rawness, our noise, and our unpunctuality never seemed to weary. We were at home there almost as much as in our own house, but with this great difference, that a certain standard of manners had to be kept up. Whatever I know (it is not much) of courtesy and *savoir faire* I learned at Mountbracken.

Sir W. ("Cousin Quartus") was the eldest of several brothers who owned between them one of the most important industrial concerns in Belfast. He belonged in fact to just that class and generation of which the modern man gets his impressions through Galsworthy's Forsytes. Unless Cousin Quartus was very untrue to type (as he may well have been) that impression is grossly unjust. No one less like a Galsworthian character ever existed. He was gracious, childlike, deeply and religiously humble, and abounding in charity. No man could feel more fully his responsibility to dependants. He had a good deal of boyish gaiety about him; at the same time I always felt that the conception of duty dominated his life. His stately figure, his grey beard, and his strikingly handsome profile make up one of the most venerable images in my memory. Physical beauty was indeed common to most of the family. Cousin Mary was the very type of the beautiful old lady, with her silver hair and her sweet Southern Irish voice; foreigners must be warned that this resembles what they call a "brogue" about as little as the speech of a Highland gentleman resembles the jargon of the Glasgow

slums. But it was the three daughters whom we knew best. All three were “grown up” but in fact much nearer to us in age than any other grown-ups we knew, and all three were strikingly handsome. H., the eldest and the gravest, was a Juno, a dark queen who at certain moments looked like a Jewess. K. was more like a Valkyrie (though all, I think, were good horse-women) with her father’s profile. There was in her face something of the delicate fierceness of a thoroughbred horse, an indignant fineness of nostril, the possibility of an excellent disdain. She had what the vanity of my own sex calls a “masculine” honesty; no man ever was a truer friend. As for the youngest, G., I can only say that she was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, perfect in shape and colour and voice and every movement — but who can describe beauty? The reader may smile at this as the far-off echo of a precocious calf-love, but he will be wrong. There are beauties so unambiguous that they need no lens of that kind to reveal them; they are visible even to the careless and objective eyes of a child. (The first woman who ever spoke to my blood was a dancing mistress at a school that will come in a later chapter.)

In some ways Mountbracken was like our Father’s house. There too we found the attics, the indoor silences, the endless bookshelves. In the early days, when we were still only a quarter tamed, we often neglected our hostesses and rummaged on our own; it was there that I found Lubbock’s *Ants, Bees and Wasps*. But it was also very different. Life there was more spacious and considered than with us, glided like a barge where ours bumped like a cart.

Friends of our own age — boy and girl friends — we had none. In part this is a natural result of boarding school; children grow up strangers to their next-door neighbours. But much more it was the result of our own obstinate choice. One boy who lived near us attempted every now and then to get to know us. We avoided him by every means in our power. Our lives were already full, and the holidays too short for all the reading, writing, playing, cycling, and talking that we wanted to get through. We resented the appearance of any third party as an infuriating interruption. We resented even more bitterly all attempts (excepting the great and successful attempt made by Mountbracken) to show us hospitality. At the period that I am now speaking of this had not yet become a serious nuisance, but as it became gradually and steadily more serious throughout our schooldays I may be allowed to say a word about it here and to get the subject out of our way. It

was the custom of the neighbourhood to give parties which were really dances for adults but to which, none the less, mere schoolboys and schoolgirls were asked. One sees the advantages of this arrangement from the hostess's point of view; and when the junior guests know each other well and are free from self-consciousness perhaps they enjoy themselves. To me these dances were a torment — of which ordinary shyness made only a part. It was the false position (which I was well able to realise) that tormented me; to know that one was regarded as a child and yet be forced to take part in an essentially grown-up function, to feel that all the adults present were being half-mockingly kind and pretending to treat you as what you were not. Add to this the discomfort of one's Eton suit and stiff shirt, the aching feet and burning head, and the mere weariness of being kept up so many hours after one's usual bedtime. Even adults, I fancy, would not find an evening party very endurable without the attraction of sex and the attraction of alcohol; and how a small boy who can neither flirt nor drink should be expected to enjoy prancing about on a polished floor till the small hours of the morning, is beyond my conception. I had of course no notion of the social nexus. I never realised that certain people were in civility obliged to ask me because they knew my father or had known my mother. To me it was all inexplicable, unprovoked persecution; and when, as often happened, such engagements fell in the last week of the holidays and wrested from us a huge cantle of hours in which every minute was worth gold, I positively felt that I could have torn my hostess limb from limb. Why should she thus pester me? I had never done her any harm, never asked *her* to a party.

My discomforts were aggravated by the totally unnatural behaviour which I thought it my duty to adopt at a dance; and that had come about in a sufficiently amusing way. Reading much and mixing little with children of my own age, I had, before I went to school, developed a vocabulary which must (I now see) have sounded very funny from the lips of a chubby urchin in an Eton jacket. When I brought out my "long words" adults not unnaturally thought I was showing off. In this they were quite mistaken. I used the only words I knew. The position was indeed the exact reverse of what they supposed; my pride would have been gratified by using such schoolboy slang as I possessed, not at all by using the bookish language which (inevitably in my circumstances) came naturally to my tongue. And there were not lacking adults who would egg me on with feigned interest and feigned seriousness — on and on till the moment at which I suddenly

knew I was being laughed at. Then, of course, my mortification was intense; and after one or two such experiences I made it a rigid rule that at “social functions” (as I secretly called them) I must never on any account speak of any subject in which I felt the slightest interest nor in any words that naturally occurred to me. And I kept my rule only too well; a giggling and gurgling imitation of the vapidest grown-up chatter, a deliberate concealment of all that I really thought and felt under a sort of feeble jocularity and enthusiasm, was henceforth my party manner, assumed as consciously as an actor assumes his role, sustained with unspeakable weariness, and dropped with a groan of relief the moment my brother and I at last tumbled into our cab and the drive home (the only pleasure of the evening) began. It took me years to make the discovery that any real human intercourse could take place at a mixed assembly of people in their good clothes.

I am here struck by the curious mixture of justice and injustice in our lives. We are blamed for our real faults but usually not on the right occasions. I was, no doubt, and was blamed for being, a conceited boy; but the blame was usually attached to something in which no conceit was present. Adults often accuse a child of vanity without pausing to discover on what points children in general, or that child in particular, are likely to be vain. Thus it was for years a complete mystery to me that my father should stigmatise as “affectation” my complaints about the itching and tickling of new underclothes. I see it all now; he had in mind a social legend associating delicacy of skin with refinement and supposed that I was claiming to be unusually refined. In reality I was in simple ignorance of that social legend, and if vanity had come into the matter would have been much prouder of having a skin like a sailor. I was being accused of an offence which I lacked resources to commit. I was on another occasion called “affected” for asking what “stirabout” was. It is, in fact, a “low” Irish word for porridge. To certain adults it seems obvious that he who claims not to know the Low must be pretending to be High. Yet the real reason why I asked was that I had never happened to hear the word; had I done so I should have piqued myself on using it.

Oldie’s school, you will remember, sank unlamented in summer 1910; new arrangements had to be made for my education. My father now hit upon a plan which filled me with delight. About a mile from the New House rose the large red-brick walls and towers of Campbell College,

which had been founded for the express purpose of giving Ulster boys all the advantages of a public school education without the trouble of crossing the Irish Sea. My clever cousin, Uncle Joe's boy, was already there and doing well. It was decided that I should go as a boarder, but I could get an *exeat* to come home every Sunday. I was enchanted. I did not believe that anything Irish, even a school, could be bad; certainly not so bad as all I yet knew of England. To "Campbell" I accordingly went.

I was at this school for so short a time that I shall attempt no criticism of it. It was very unlike any English public school that I have ever heard of. It had indeed prefects, but the prefects were of no importance. It was nominally divided into "houses" on the English pattern, but they were mere legal fictions; except for purposes of games (which were not compulsory) no one took any notice of them. The population was socially much more "mixed" than at most English schools; I rubbed shoulders there with farmers' sons. The boy I most nearly made a friend of was the son of a tradesman who had recently been going the rounds with his father's van because the driver was illiterate and could not keep "the books". I much envied him this pleasant occupation, and he, poor fellow, looked back on it as a golden age. "This time last month, Lewis," he used to say, "I wouldn't have been going in to Preparation. I'd have been coming home from my rounds and a wee teacloth laid for me at one end of the table and sausages to my tea."

I am always glad, as a historian, to have known Campbell, for I think it was very much what the great English schools had been before Arnold. There were real fights at Campbell, with seconds, and (I think) betting, and a hundred or more roaring spectators. There was bullying, too, though no serious share of it came my way, and there was no trace of the rigid hierarchy which governs a modern English school; every boy held just the place which his fists and mother-wit could win for him. From my point of view the great drawback was that one had, so to speak, no home. Only a few very senior boys had studies. The rest of us, except when seated at table for meals or in a huge "preparation room" for evening "Prep", belonged nowhere. In out-of-school hours one spent one's time either evading or conforming to all those inexplicable movements which a crowd exhibits as it thins here and thickens there, now slackens its pace and now sets like a tide in one particular direction, now seems about to disperse and then clots again. The bare brick passages echoed to a continual tramp of feet,

punctuated with cat-calls, scrimmages, gusty laughter. One was always “moving on” or “hanging about” — in lavatories, in store rooms, in the great hall. It was very like living permanently in a large railway station.

The bullying had this negative merit that it was honest bullying; not bullying conscience-salved and authorised in the *maison tolérée* of the prefectorial system. It was done mainly by gangs; parties of eight or ten boys each who scoured those interminable corridors for prey. Their sorties, though like a whirlwind, were not perceived by the victim till too late; the general, endless confusion and clamour, I suppose, masked them. Sometimes capture involved serious consequences; two boys whom I knew were carried off and flogged in some backwater — flogged in the most disinterested fashion, for their captors had no personal acquaintance with them; art for art’s sake. But on the only occasion when I was caught myself my fate was much milder and perhaps odd enough to be worth recording. When I had come to myself after being dragged at headlong speed through a labyrinth of passages which took me beyond all usual landmarks, I found that I was one of several prisoners in a low, bare room, half-lit (I think) by a single gas-jet. After a pause to recover their breath two of the brigands led out the first captive. I now noticed that a horizontal row of pipes ran along the opposite wall, about three feet from the floor. I was alarmed but not surprised when the prisoner was forced into a bending position with his head under the lowest pipe, in the very posture for execution. But I was very much surprised a moment later. You will remember that the room was half dark. The two gangsters gave their victim a shove; and instantly no victim was there. He vanished; without trace, without sound. It appeared to be sheer black magic. Another victim was led out; again the posture for a flogging was assumed; again, instead of flogging, — dissolution, atomisation, annihilation. At last my own turn came. I too received the shove from behind, and found myself falling through a hole or hatch in the wall into what turned out to be a coal-cellar. Another small boy came hurtling in after me, the door was slammed and bolted behind us, and our captors with a joyous whoop rushed away for more booty. They were, no doubt, playing against a rival gang with whom they would presently compare “bags”. We were let out again presently, very dirty and rather cramped, but otherwise none the worse.

Much the most important thing that happened to me at Campbell was that I there read *Sohrab and Rustum* in form under an excellent master

whom we called Octie. I loved the poem at first sight and have loved it ever since. As the wet fog, in the first line, rose out of the Oxus stream, so out of the whole poem there rose and wrapped me round an exquisite, silvery coolness, a delightful quality of distance and calm, a grave melancholy. I hardly appreciated then, as I have since learned to do, the central tragedy; what enchanted me was the artist in Pekin with his ivory forehead and pale hands, the cypress in the queen's garden, the backward glance at Rustum's youth, the pedlars from Khabul, the hushed Chorasmian waste. Arnold gave me at once (and the best of Arnold gives me still) a sense, not indeed of passionless vision, but of a passionate, silent gazing at things a long way off. And here observe how literature actually works. Parrot critics say that *Sohrab* is a poem for classicists, to be enjoyed only by those who recognise the Homeric echoes. But I, in Octie's form-room (and on Octie be peace) knew nothing of Homer. For me the relation between Arnold and Homer worked the other way; when I came, years later, to read the *Iliad* I liked it partly because it was for me reminiscent of *Sohrab*. Plainly, it does not matter at what point you first break into the system of European poetry. Only keep your ears open and your mouth shut and everything will lead you to everything else in the end — *ogni parte ad ogni parte splende*.

About half-way through my first and only term at Campbell I fell ill and was taken home. My father, for reasons I do not quite know, had become dissatisfied with the school. He had also been attracted by accounts of a preparatory school in the town of Wyvern, though quite unconnected with Wyvern College; especially by the convenience that if I went there my brother and I could still do the journey together. Accordingly I had a blessed six weeks at home, with the Christmas holidays to look forward to at the end and, after that, a new adventure. In a surviving letter my father writes to my brother that I think myself lucky but he "fears I shall be very lonely before the end of the week". It is strange that having known me all my life he should have known me so little. During these weeks I slept in his room and was thus freed from solitude during most of those dark hours in which alone solitude was dreadful to me. My brother being absent, he and I could not lead one another into mischief; there was therefore no friction between my father and myself. I remember no other time in my life of such untroubled affection; we were famously snug together. And in the days, when he was out, I entered with complete satisfaction into a deeper solitude than I had ever known. The empty house, the empty, silent rooms, were like

a refreshing bath after the crowded noise of Campbell. I could read, write, and draw to my heart’s content. Curiously enough it is at this time, not in earlier childhood, that I chiefly remember delighting in fairy tales. I fell deeply under the spell of Dwarfs — the old bright-hooded, snowy-bearded dwarfs we had in those days before Arthur Rackham sublimed, or Walt Disney vulgarised, the earthmen. I visualised them so intensely that I came to the very frontiers of hallucination; once, walking in the garden, I was for a second not quite sure that a little man had not run past me into the shrubbery. I was faintly alarmed, but it was not like my night-fears. A fear that guarded the road to Faerie was one I could face. No one is a coward at all points.

IV. I Broaden my Mind

I struck the board, and cry'd, 'No more;
I will abroad.'
What? shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free: free as the rode,
Loose as the winde, as large as store.
HERBERT

In January 1911, just turned thirteen, I set out with my brother to Wyvern, he for the College and I for a preparatory school which we will call Chartres. Thus began what may be called the classic period of our schooldays, the thing we both think of first when boyhood is mentioned. The joint journeys back to school with a reluctant parting at Wyvern station, the hilarious reunion at the same station for the joint journey home, were now the great structural pillars of each year. Growing maturity is marked by the increasing liberties we take with our travelling. At first, on being landed early in the morning at Liverpool, we took the next train south; soon we learned that it was pleasanter to spend the whole morning in the lounge of the Lime Street Hotel with our magazines and cigarettes and to proceed to Wyvern by an afternoon train which brought us there at the latest permitted moment. Soon too we gave up the magazines; we made the discovery (some people never make it) that real books can be taken on a journey and that hours of golden reading can so be added to its other delights. (It is important to acquire early in life the power of reading sense wherever you happen to be. I first read *Tamburlaine* while travelling from Larne to Belfast in a thunderstorm, and first read Browning's *Paracelsus* by a candle which went out and had to be re-lit whenever a big battery fired in a pit below me, which I think it did every four minutes all that night.) The homeward journey was even more festal. It had an invariable routine: first the supper at a restaurant — it was merely poached eggs and tea but to us the tables of the gods — then the visit to the old Empire (there were still music halls in those days) — and after that the journey to the Landing Stage, the sight of great and famous ships, the departure, and once more the blessed salt on our lips.

The smoking was of course, as my father would have said, “surreptitious”; not so the visit to the Empire. He was no Puritan about such matters, and often of a Saturday night would take us to the Belfast Hippodrome. I recognise now that I never had the taste for vaudeville which he shared with my brother. At the time I supposed myself to be enjoying the show, but I was mistaken. All those antics lie dead in my memory and are incapable of rousing the least vibration even of reminiscent pleasure; whereas the pain of sympathy and vicarious humiliation which I felt when a “turn” failed is still vivid. What I enjoyed was merely the etcetera of the show, the bustle and lights, the sense of having a night out, the good spirits of my father in his holiday mood, and — above all — the admirable cold supper to which we came back at about ten o’clock. For this was also the classical age of our domestic cookery, the age of one Annie Strahan. There were certain “raised pies” set on that table of which a modern English boy has no conception, and which even then would have astonished those who knew only the poor counterfeits sold in shops.

Chartres, a tall, white building further up the hill than the College, was a smallish school with less than twenty boarders; but it was quite unlike Oldie’s. Here indeed my education really began. The Headmaster, whom we called Tubbs, was a clever and patient teacher; under him I rapidly found my feet in Latin and English and even began to be looked on as a promising candidate for a scholarship at the College. The food was good (though of course we grumbled at it) and we were well cared for. On the whole I got on well with my school-fellows, though we had our full share of those lifelong friendships and irreconcilable factions and deadly quarrels and final settlements and glorious revolutions which made up so much of the life of a small boy, and in which I came out sometimes at the bottom and sometimes at the top.

Wyvern itself healed my quarrel with England. The great blue plain below us and, behind, those green, peaked hills, so mountainous in form and yet so manageably small in size, became almost at once my delight. And Wyvern Priory was the first building that I ever perceived to be beautiful. And at Chartres I made my first real friends. But there, too, something far more important happened to me: I ceased to be a Christian.

The chronology of this disaster is a little vague, but I know for certain that it had not begun when I went there and that the process was complete

very shortly after I left. I will try to set down what I know of the conscious causes and what I suspect of the unconscious.

Most reluctantly, venturing no blame, and as tenderly as I would at need reveal some error in my own mother, I must begin with dear Miss C., the Matron. No school ever had a better Matron, more skilled and comforting to boys in sickness, or more cheery and companionable to boys in health. She was one of the most selfless people I have ever known. We all loved her; I, the orphan, especially. Now it so happened that Miss C., who seemed old to me, was still in her spiritual immaturity, still hunting, with the eagerness of a soul that had a touch of angelic quality in it, for a truth and a way of life. Guides were even rarer then than now. She was (as I should now put it) floundering in the mazes of Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Spiritualism; the whole Anglo-American Occultist tradition. Nothing was further from her intention than to destroy my faith; she could not tell that the room into which she brought this candle was full of gunpowder. I had never heard of such things before; never, except in a nightmare or a fairy tale, conceived of spirits other than God and men. I had loved to read of strange sights and other worlds and unknown modes of being, but never with the slightest belief; even the phantom dwarf had only flashed on my mind for a moment. It is a great mistake to suppose that children believe the things they imagine; and I, long familiar with the whole imaginary world of Animal-Land and India (which I could not possibly believe in since I knew I was one of its creators) was as little likely as any child to make that mistake. But now, for the first time, there burst upon me the idea that there might be real marvels all about us, that the visible world might be only a curtain to conceal huge realms uncharted by my very simple theology. And that started in me something with which, on and off, I have had plenty of trouble since — the desire for the preternatural, simply as such, the passion for the Occult. Not everyone has this disease; those who have will know what I mean. I once tried to describe it in a novel. It is a spiritual lust; and like the lust of the body it has the fatal power of making everything else in the world seem uninteresting while it lasts. It is probably this passion, more even than the desire for power, which makes magicians. But the result of Miss C.’s conversation did not stop there. Little by little, unconsciously, unintentionally, she loosened the whole framework, blunted all the sharp edges, of my belief. The vagueness, the merely speculative character, of all this Occultism began to spread — yes, and to spread *deliciously* — to the

stern truths of the creed. The whole thing became a matter of speculation: I was soon (in the famous words) “altering ‘I believe’ to ‘one does feel’”. And oh, the relief of it! Those moonlit nights in the dormitory at Belsen faded far away. From the tyrannous noon of revelation I passed into the cool evening twilight of Higher Thought, where there was nothing to be obeyed, and nothing to be believed except what was either comforting or exciting. I do not mean that Miss C. did this; better say that the Enemy did this in me, taking occasion from things she innocently said.

One reason why the Enemy found this so easy was that, without knowing it, I was already desperately anxious to get rid of my religion; and that for a reason worth recording. By a sheer mistake — and I still believe it to have been an honest mistake — in spiritual technique I had rendered my private practice of that religion a quite intolerable burden. It came about in this way. Like everyone else I had been told as a child that one must not only say one’s prayers but think about what one was saying. Accordingly, when (at Oldie’s) I came to a serious belief, I tried to put this into practice. At first it seemed plain sailing. But soon the false conscience (St. Paul’s “Law”, Herbert’s “prattler”) came into play. One had no sooner reached “Amen” than it whispered, “Yes. But are you sure you were really thinking about what you said?”; then, more subtly, “Were you, for example, thinking about it as well as you did last night?” The answer, for reasons I did not then understand, was nearly always No. “Very well,” said the voice, “hadn’t you, then, better try it over again?” And one obeyed; but of course with no assurance that the second attempt would be any better.

To these nagging suggestions my reaction was, on the whole, the most foolish I could have adopted. I set myself a standard. No clause of my prayer was to be allowed to pass muster unless it was accompanied by what I called a “realisation”, by which I meant a certain vividness of the imagination and the affections. My nightly task was to produce; by sheer will-power a phenomenon which will-power could never produce, which was so ill-defined that I could never say with absolute confidence whether it had occurred, and which, even when it did occur, was of very mediocre spiritual value. If only someone had read to me old Walter Hilton’s warning that we must never in prayer strive to extort “by maistry” what God does not give! But no one did; and night after night, dizzy with desire for sleep and often in a kind of despair, I endeavoured to pump up my “realisations”. The thing threatened to become an infinite regress. One began of course by

praying for good “realisations”. But had that preliminary prayer itself been “realised”? This question I think I still had enough sense to dismiss; otherwise it might have been as difficult to begin my prayers as to end them. How it all comes back! The cold oil-cloth, the quarters chiming, the night slipping past, the sickening, hopeless weariness. This was the burden from which I longed with soul and body to escape. It had already brought me to such a pass that the nightly torment projected its gloom over the whole evening, and I dreaded bedtime as if I were a chronic sufferer from insomnia. Had I pursued the same road much further I think I should have gone mad.

This ludicrous burden of false duties in prayer provided, of course, an unconscious motive for wishing to shuffle off the Christian faith; but about the same time, or a little later, conscious causes of doubt arose. One came from reading the classics. Here, especially in Virgil, one was presented with a mass of religious ideas; and all teachers and editors took it for granted from the outset that these religious ideas were sheer illusion. No one ever attempted to show in what sense Christianity fulfilled Paganism or Paganism prefigured Christianity. The accepted position seemed to be that religions were normally a mere farrago of nonsense, though our own, by a fortunate exception, was exactly true. The other religions were not even explained, in the earlier Christian fashion, as the work of devils. That I might, conceivably, have been brought to believe. But the impression I got was that religion in general, though utterly false, was a natural growth, a kind of endemic nonsense into which humanity tended to blunder. In the midst of a thousand such religions stood our own, the thousand and first, labelled True. But on what grounds could I believe in this exception? It obviously was in some general sense the same kind of thing as all the rest. Why was it so differently treated? Need I, at any rate, continue to treat it differently? I was very anxious not to.

In addition to this, and equally working against my faith, there was in me a deeply ingrained pessimism; a pessimism, by that time, much more of intellect than of temper. I was now by no means unhappy; but I had very definitely formed the opinion that the universe was, in the main, a rather regrettable institution. I am well aware that some will feel disgust and some will laugh, at the idea of a loutish, well-fed boy in an Eton collar, passing an unfavourable judgement on the cosmos. They may be right in either reaction, but no more right because I wore an Eton collar. They are

forgetting what boyhood felt like from within. Dates are not so important as people believe. I fancy that most of those who think at all have done a great deal of their thinking in the first fourteen years. As to the sources of my pessimism, the reader will remember that, though in many ways most fortunate, yet I had very early in life met a great dismay. But I am now inclined to think that the seeds of pessimism were sown before my mother's death. Ridiculous as it may sound, I believe that the clumsiness of my hands was at the root of the matter. How could this be? Not, certainly, that a child says, "I can't cut a straight line with a pair of scissors, therefore the universe is evil." Childhood has no such power of generalisation and is not (to do it justice) so silly. Nor did my clumsiness produce what is ordinarily called an Inferiority Complex. I was not comparing myself with other boys; my defeats occurred in solitude. What they really bred in me was a deep (and, of course, inarticulate) sense of resistance or opposition on the part of inanimate things. Even that makes it too abstract and adult. Perhaps I had better call it a settled expectation that everything would do what you did not want it to do. Whatever you wanted to remain straight, would bend; whatever you tried to bend would fly back to the straight; all knots which you wished to be firm would come untied; all knots you wanted to untie would remain firm. It is not possible to put it into language without making it comic, and I have indeed no wish to see it (now) except as something comic. But it is perhaps just these early experiences which are so fugitive and, to an adult, so grotesque, that give the mind its earliest bias, its habitual sense of what is or is not plausible.

There was another predisposing factor. Though the son of a prosperous man — a man by our present tax-ridden standards almost incredibly comfortable and secure — I had heard ever since I could remember, and believed, that adult life was to be an unremitting struggle in which the best I could hope for was to avoid the workhouse by extreme exertion. My father's highly coloured statements on such matters had sunk deeply into my mind; and I never thought to check them by the very obvious fact that most of the adults I actually knew seemed to be living very comfortable lives. I remember summing up what I took to be our destiny, in conversation with my best friend at Chartres, by the formula, "Term, holidays, term, holidays, till we leave school, and then work, work, work till we die." Even if I had been free from this delusion, I think I should still have seen grounds for pessimism. One's views, even at that age, are not

wholly determined by one's own momentary situation; even a boy can recognise that there is desert all round him though he, for the nonce, sits in an oasis. I was, in my ineffective way, a tender-hearted creature; perhaps the most murderous feelings I ever entertained were towards an under master at Chartres who forbade me to give to a beggar at the school gate. Add to this that my early reading — not only Wells but Sir Robert Ball — had lodged very firmly in my imagination the vastness and cold of space, the littleness of Man. It is not strange that I should feel the universe to be a menacing and unfriendly place. Several years before I read Lucretius I felt the force of his argument (and it is surely the strongest of all) for atheism —

Nequaquam nobis divinitus esse paratam
Naturam rerum; tanta stat praedita culpa

Had God designed the world, it would not be
A world so frail and faulty as we see.

You may ask how I combined this directly Atheistical thought, this great "Argument from Undesign" with my Occultist fancies. I do not think I achieved any logical connection between them. They swayed me in different moods, and had only this in common, that both made against Christianity. And so, little by little, with fluctuations which I cannot now trace, I became an apostate, dropping my faith with no sense of loss but with the greatest relief.

My stay at Chartres lasted from the spring term of 1911 till the end of the summer term 1913, and, as I have said, I cannot give an accurate chronology, between those dates, of my slow apostasy. In other respects the period is divided into two; about half-way through it a much loved under master, and the even more loved Matron, left at the same time. From that day onwards there was a sharp decline; not, indeed, in apparent happiness but in solid good. Dear Miss C. had been the occasion of much good to me as well as of evil. For one thing, by awakening my affections, she had done something to defeat that anti-sentimental inhibition which my early experience had bred in me. Nor would I deny that in all her "Higher Thought", disastrous though its main effect on me was, there were elements of real and disinterested spirituality by which I benefited. Unfortunately, once her presence was withdrawn, the good effects withered and the bad

ones remained. The change of masters was even more obviously for the worse. “Sirrah”, as we called him, had been an admirable influence. He was what I would now describe as a wise madcap: a boisterous, boyish, hearty man, well able to keep his authority while yet mixing with us almost as one of ourselves, an untidy, rollicking man without a particle of affectation. He communicated (what I very much needed) a sense of the gusto with which life ought, wherever possible, to be taken. I fancy it was on a run with him in the sleet that I first discovered how bad weather is to be treated — as a rough joke, a romp. He was succeeded by a young gentleman just down from the University whom we may call Pogo. Pogo was a very minor edition of a Saki, perhaps even a Wodehouse, hero. Pogo was a wit, Pogo was a dressy man, Pogo was a man about town, Pogo was even a lad. After a week or so of hesitation (for his temper was uncertain) we fell at his feet and adored. Here was sophistication, glossy all over, and (dared one believe it?) ready to impart sophistication to us.

We became — at least I became — dressy. It was the age of the “knut”: of “spread” ties with pins in them, of very low cut coats and trousers worn very high to show startling socks, and brogue shoes with immensely wide laces. Something of all this had already trickled to me from the College through my brother, who was now becoming sufficiently senior to aspire to knuttery. Pogo completed the process. A more pitiful ambition for a lout of an overgrown fourteen-year-old with a shilling a week pocket money could hardly be imagined; the more so since I am one of those on whom Nature has laid the doom that whatever they buy and whatever they wear they will always look as if they had come out of an old clothes shop. I cannot even now remember without embarrassment the concern that I then felt about pressing my trousers and (filthy habit) plastering my hair with oil. A new element had entered my life: Vulgarity. Up till now I had committed nearly every other sin and folly within my power, but I had not yet been flashy.

These hobble-de-hoy fineries were, however, only a small part of our new sophistication. Pogo was a great theatrical authority. We soon knew all the latest songs. We soon knew all about the famous actresses of that age — Lily Elsie, Gertie Millar, Zena Dare. Pogo was a fund of information about their private lives. We learned from him all the latest jokes; where we did not understand he was ready to give us help. He explained many things. After a term of Pogo’s society one had the feeling of being not twelve weeks but twelve years older.

How gratifying, and how edifying, it would be if I could trace to Pogo all my slips from virtue and wind up by pointing the moral; how much harm a loose-talking young man can do to innocent boys! Unfortunately this would be false. It is quite true that at this time I underwent a violent, and wholly successful, assault of sexual temptation. But this is amply accounted for by the age I had then reached and by my recent, in a sense my deliberate, withdrawal of myself from Divine protection. I do not believe Pogo had anything to do with it. The mere facts of generation I had learned long ago, from another boy, when I was too young to feel much more than a scientific interest in them. What attacked me through Pogo was not the Flesh (I had that of my own) but the World: the desire for glitter, swagger, distinction, the desire to be in the know. He gave little help, if any, in destroying my chastity, but he made sad work of certain humble and childlike and self-forgetful qualities which (I think) had remained with me till that moment. I began to labour very hard to make myself into a fop, a cad, and a snob.

Pogo's communications, however much they helped to vulgarise my mind, had no such electric effect on my senses as the dancing mistress, nor as Bekker's *Charicles*, which was given me for a prize. I never thought that dancing mistress as beautiful as my cousin G., but she was the first woman I ever "looked upon to lust after her"; assuredly through no fault of her own. A gesture, a tone of the voice, may in these matters have unpredictable results. When the schoolroom on the last night of the winter term was decorated for a dance, she paused, lifted a flag, and, remarking, "I love the smell of bunting," pressed it to her face — and I was undone.

You must not suppose that this was a romantic passion. The passion of my life, as the next chapter will show, belonged to a wholly different region. What I felt for the dancing mistress was sheer appetite; the prose and not the poetry of the Flesh. I did not feel at all like a knight devoting himself to a lady; I was much more like a Turk looking at a Circassian whom he could not afford to buy. I knew quite well what I wanted. It is common, by the way, to assume that such an experience produces a feeling of guilt, but it did not do so in me. And I may as well say here that the feeling of guilt, save where a moral offence happened also to break the code of honour or had consequences which excited my pity, was a thing which at that time I hardly knew. It took me as long to acquire inhibitions as others (they say) have taken to get rid of them. That is why I often find myself at

such cross-purposes with the modern world: I have been a converted Pagan living among apostate Puritans.

I would be sorry if the reader passed too harsh a judgement on Pogo. As I now see it, he was not too old to have charge of boys but too young. He was only an adolescent himself, still immature enough to be delightedly "grown up" and naif enough to enjoy our greater naïveté. And there was a real friendliness in him. He was moved partly by that to tell us all he knew or thought he knew. And now, as Herodotus would say, "Goodbye to Pogo."

Meanwhile, side by side with my loss of faith, of virtue, and of simplicity, something quite different was going on. It will demand a new chapter.

V. Renaissance

So is there in us a world of love to somewhat, though we know not what in the world that should be.
TRAHERNE

I do not much believe in the Renaissance as generally described by historians. The more I look into the evidence the less trace I find of that vernal rapture which is supposed to have swept Europe in the fifteenth century. I half suspect that the glow in the historians' pages has a different source, that each is remembering, and projecting, his own personal Renaissance; that wonderful reawakening which comes to most of us when puberty is complete. It is properly called a re-birth not a birth, a reawakening not a wakening, because in many of us, besides being a new thing, it is also the recovery of things we had in childhood and lost when we became boys. For boyhood is very like the "dark ages" not as they were but as they are represented in bad, short histories. The dreams of childhood and those of adolescence may have much in common; between them, often, boyhood stretches like an alien territory in which everything (ourselves included) has been greedy, cruel, noisy, and prosaic, in which the imagination has slept and the most un-ideal senses and ambitions have been restlessly, even maniacally, awake.

In my own life it was certainly so. My childhood is at unity with the rest of my life; my boyhood not so. Many of the books that pleased me as a child, please me still; nothing but necessity would make me re-read most of the books that I read at Oldie's or at Campbell. From that point of view it is all a sandy desert. The authentic "Joy" (as I tried to describe it in an earlier chapter) had vanished from my life: so completely that not even the memory or the desire of it remained. The reading of *Sohrab* had not given it to me. Joy is distinct not only from pleasure in general but even from aesthetic pleasure. It must have the stab, the pang, the inconsolable longing.

This long winter broke up in a single moment, fairly early in my time at Chartres. Spring is the inevitable image, but this was not gradual like Nature's springs. It was as if the Arctic itself, all the deep layers of secular ice, should change not in a week nor in an hour, but instantly, into a landscape of grass and primroses and orchards in bloom, deafened with bird

songs and astir with running water. I can lay my hand on the very moment; there is hardly any fact I know so well, though I cannot date it. Someone must have left in the schoolroom a literary periodical: *The Bookman*, perhaps, or the *Times Literary Supplement*. My eye fell upon a headline and a picture, carelessly, expecting nothing. A moment later, as the poet says, "The sky had turned round."

What I had read was the words *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods*. What I had seen was one of Arthur Rackham's illustrations to that volume. I had never heard of Wagner, nor of Siegfried. I thought the Twilight of the Gods meant the twilight in which the gods lived. How did I know, at once and beyond question, that this was no Celtic, or silvan, or terrestrial twilight? But so it was. Pure "Northernness" engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity... and almost at the same moment I knew that I had met this before, long, long ago (it hardly seems longer now) in *Tegner's Drapa*, that Siegfried (whatever it might be) belonged to the same world as Balder and the sunward-sailing cranes. And with that plunge back into my own past there arose at once, almost like heartbreak, the memory of Joy itself, the knowledge that I had once had what I had now lacked for years, that I was returning at last from exile and desert lands to my own country; and the distance of the Twilight of the Gods and the distance of my own past Joy, both unattainable, flowed together into a single, unendurable sense of desire and loss, which suddenly became one with the loss of the whole experience, which, as I now stared round that dusty schoolroom like a man recovering from unconsciousness, had already vanished, had eluded me at the very moment when I could first say *It is*. And at once I knew (with fatal knowledge) that to "have it again" was the supreme and only important object of desire.

After this everything played into my hands. One of my father's many presents to us boys had been a gramophone. Thus at the moment when my eyes fell on the words *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods*, gramophone catalogues were already one of my favourite forms of reading; but I had never remotely dreamed that the records from Grand Opera with their queer German or Italian names could have anything to do with me. Nor did I for a week or two think so now. But then I was assailed from a new quarter. A magazine called *The Soundbox* was doing synopses of great operas week by week, and it now did the whole *Ring*. I read in a rapture and discovered who

Siegfried was and what was the “twilight” of the gods. I could contain myself no longer — I began a poem, a heroic poem on the Wagnerian version of the Niblung story. My only source was the abstracts in *The Soundbox*, and I was so ignorant that I made Alberich rhyme with *ditch* and Mime with *time*. My model was Pope’s *Odyssey* and the poem began (with some mixture of mythologies)

Descend to earth, descend, celestial Nine
And chant the ancient legends of the Rhine....

Since the fourth book had carried me only as far as the last scene of *The Rheingold*, the reader will not be surprised to hear that the poem was never finished. But it was not a waste of time, and I can still see just what it did for me and where it began to do it. The first three books (I may, perhaps, at this distance of time, say it without vanity) are really not at all bad for a boy. At the beginning of the unfinished fourth it goes all to pieces; and that is exactly the point at which I really began to try to make poetry. Up to then, if my lines rhymed and scanned and got on with the story I asked no more. Now, at the beginning of the fourth, I began to try to convey some of the intense excitement I was feeling, to look for expressions which would not merely state but suggest. Of course I failed, lost my prosaic clarity, spluttered, gasped, and presently fell silent; but I had learned what writing means.

All this time I had still not heard a note of Wagner’s music, though the very shape of the printed letters of his name had become to me a magical symbol. Next holidays, in the dark, crowded shop of T. Edens Osborne (on whom be peace), I first heard a record of the *Ride of the Valkyries*. They laugh at it nowadays, and, indeed, wrenched from its context to make a concert piece, it may be a poor thing. But I had this in common with Wagner, that I was thinking not of concert pieces but of heroic drama. To a boy already crazed with “the Northernness”, whose highest musical experience had been Sullivan, the *Ride* came like a thunderbolt. From that moment Wagnerian records (principally from the *Ring*, but also from *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*) became the chief drain on my pocket money and the presents I invariably asked for. My general appreciation of music was not, at first, much altered. “Music” was one thing, “Wagnerian music” quite another, and there was no common measure between them; it was not a new

pleasure but a new kind of pleasure, if indeed “pleasure” is the right word, rather than trouble, ecstasy, astonishment, “a conflict of sensations without name”.

That summer our cousin H. (you remember, I hope, Cousin Quartus’s eldest daughter, the dark Juno, the queen of Olympus) who was now married, asked us to spend some weeks with her on the outskirts of Dublin, in Dundrum. There, on her drawing-room table, I found the very book which had started the whole affair and which I had never dared to hope I should see, *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods* illustrated by Arthur Rackham. His pictures, which seemed to me then to be the very music made visible, plunged me a few fathoms deeper into my delight. I have seldom coveted anything as I coveted that book; and when I heard that there was a cheaper edition at fifteen shillings (though the sum was to me almost mythological) I knew I could never rest till it was mine. I got it in the end, largely because my brother went shares with me, purely through kindness, as I now see and then more than half suspected, for he was not enslaved by the Northernness. With a generosity which I was even then half ashamed to accept, he sank in what must have seemed to him a mere picture-book seven and sixpence for which he knew a dozen better uses.

Although this affair will already seem to some readers undeserving of the space I have given it, I cannot continue my story, at all without noting some of its bearings on the rest of my life.

First, you will misunderstand everything unless you realise that, at the time, Asgard and the Valkyries seemed to me incomparably more important than anything else in my experience — than the Matron Miss C., or the dancing mistress, or my chances of a scholarship. More shockingly, they seemed much more important than my steadily growing doubts about Christianity. This may have been — in part, no doubt was — penal blindness; yet that might not be the whole story. If the Northernness seemed then a bigger thing than my religion, that may partly have been because my attitude towards it contained elements which my religion ought to have contained and did not. It was not itself a new religion, for it contained no trace of belief and imposed no duties. Yet unless I am greatly mistaken there was in it something very like adoration, some kind of quite disinterested self-abandonment to an object which securely claimed this by simply being the object it was. We are taught in the Prayer Book to “give thanks to God for His great glory”, as if we owed Him more thanks for being what He

necessarily is than for any particular benefit He confers upon us; and so indeed we do and to know God is to know this. But I had been far from any such experience; I came far nearer to feeling this about the Norse gods whom I disbelieved in than I had ever done about the true God while I believed. Sometimes I can almost think that I was sent back to the false gods there to acquire some capacity for worship against the day when the true God should recall me to Himself. Not that I might not have learned this sooner and more safely, in ways I shall now never know, without apostasy, but that Divine punishments are also mercies, and particular good is worked out of particular evil, and the penal blindness made sanative.

Secondly, this imaginative Renaissance almost at once produced a new appreciation of external nature. At first, I think, this was parasitic on the literary and musical experiences. On that holiday at Dundrum, cycling among the Wicklow mountains, I was always involuntarily looking for scenes that might belong to the Wagnerian world, here a steep hillside covered with firs where Mime might meet Sieglinde, there a sunny glade where Siegfried might listen to the bird, or presently a dry valley of rocks where the lithe scaly body of Fafner might emerge from its cave. But soon (I cannot say how soon) nature ceased to be a mere reminder of the books, became herself the medium of the real joy. I do not say she ceased to be a reminder. All Joy reminds. It is never a possession, always a desire for something longer ago or further away or still "about to be". But Nature and the books now became equal reminders, joint reminders, of — well, of whatever it is. I came no nearer to what some would regard as the only genuine love of nature, the studious love which will make a man a botanist or an ornithologist. It was the mood of a scene that mattered to me; and in tasting that mood my skin and nose were as busy as my eyes.

Thirdly, I passed on from Wagner to everything else I could get hold of about Norse mythology, *Myths of the Norsemen, Myths and Legends of the Teutonic Race,* Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*. I became knowledgeable. From these books again and again I received the stab of Joy. I did not yet notice that it was, very gradually, becoming rarer. I did not yet reflect on the difference between it and the merely intellectual satisfaction of getting to know the Eddaic universe. If I could at this time have found anyone to teach me Old Norse I believe I would have worked at it hard.

And finally, the change I had undergone introduces a new difficulty into the writing of this present book. From that first moment in the schoolroom

at Chartres my secret, imaginative life began to be so important and so distinct from my outer life that I almost have to tell two separate stories. The two lives do not seem to influence each other at all. Where there are hungry wastes, starving for Joy, in the one, the other may be full of cheerful bustle and success; or again, where the outer life is miserable, the other may be brimming over with ecstasy. By the imaginative life I here mean only my life as concerned with Joy — including in the outer life much that would ordinarily be called imagination, as, for example, much of my reading, and all my erotic or ambitious fantasies; for these are self-regarding. Even Animal-Land and India belong to the "Outer".

But they were no longer Animal-Land and India; some time in the late eighteenth century (their eighteenth century, not ours) they had been united into the single state of Boxen, which yields, oddly, an adjective *Boxonian*, not *Boxenian* as you might expect. By a wise provision they retained their separate kings but had a common legislative assembly, the Damerfesk. The electoral system was democratic, but this mattered very much less than in England, for the Damerfesk was never doomed to one fixed meeting place. The joint sovereigns could summon it anywhere, say at the tiny fishing village of Danphabel (the Clovelly of Northern Animal-Land, nestling at the foot of the mountains) or in the island of Piscia; and since the Court knew the sovereigns' choice earlier than anyone else, all local accommodation would be booked before a private member got wind of the matter, nor, if he reached the session, had he the least assurance that it would not be moved elsewhere as soon as he arrived. Hence we hear of a certain member who had never actually sat in the Damerfesk at all except on one fortunate occasion when it met in his home town. The records sometimes call this assembly the Parliament, but that is misleading. It had only a single chamber, and the kings presided. At the period which I know best the effective control, however, was not in their hands but in those of an all-important functionary known as the Littlemaster (you must pronounce this all as one word with the accent on the first syllable — like *Jerrybuilder*). The Littlemaster was a Prime Minister, a judge, and if not always Commander-in-Chief (the records waver on this point) certainly always a member of the General Staff. Such at least were the powers he wielded when I last visited Boxen. They may have been encroachments, for the office was held at that time by a man — or to speak more accurately, a Frog — of powerful personality. Lord Big brought to his task one rather

unfair advantage; he had been the tutor of the two young kings and continued to hold over them a quasi-parental authority. Their spasmodic efforts to break his yoke were, unhappily, more directed to the evasion of his inquiry into their private pleasures than to any serious political end. As a result Lord Big, immense in size, resonant of voice, chivalrous (he was the hero of innumerable duels), stormy, eloquent, and impulsive, almost was the state. The reader will divine a certain resemblance between the life of the two kings under Lord Big and our own life under our father. He will be right. But Big was not, in origin, simply our Father first batrachised and then caricatured in some directions and glorified in others. He was in many ways a prophetic portrait of Sir Winston Churchill as Sir Winston Churchill came to be during the last war; I have indeed seen photographs of that great statesman in which, to anyone who has known Boxen, the frog element was unmistakable. This was not our only anticipation of the real world. Lord Big's most consistent opponent, the gadfly that always got inside his armour, was a certain small brown bear, a lieutenant in the Navy; and believe me or believe me not, Lieutenant James Bar was almost exactly like Mr. John Betjeman, whose acquaintance I could not then have made. Ever since I have done so, I have been playing Lord Big to his James Bar.

The interesting thing about the resemblance between Lord Big and my father is that such reflections of the real world had not been the germ out of which Boxen grew. They were more numerous as it drew nearer to its end, a sign of over-ripeness or even the beginning of decay. Go back a little and you will not find them. The two sovereigns who allowed themselves to be dominated by Lord Big were King Benjamin VIII of Animal-Land and Rajah Hawki (I think, VI) of India. They had much in common with my brother and myself. But their fathers, the elder Benjamin and the elder Hawki, had not. The Fifth Hawki is a shadowy figure; but the Seventh Benjamin (a rabbit, as you will have guessed) is a rounded character. I can see him still — the heaviest-jowled and squarest-builded of all rabbits, very fat in his later years, most shabbily and unroyally clad in his loose brown coat and baggy checked trousers, yet not without a certain dignity which could, on occasion, take disconcerting forms. His earlier life had been dominated by the belief that he could be both a king and an amateur detective. He never succeeded in the latter role, partly because the chief enemy whom he was pursuing (Mr. Baddlesmere) was not really a criminal at all but a lunatic — a complication which would have thrown out the

plans of Sherlock Holmes himself. But he very often got himself kidnapped, sometimes for longish periods, and caused great anxiety to his court (we do not learn that his colleague, Hawki V, shared this). Once, on his return from such a misadventure, he had great difficulty in establishing his identity; Baddlesmere had dyed him and the familiar brown figure reappeared as a piebald rabbit. Finally (what will not boys think of?) he was a very early experimenter with what has since been called artificial insemination. The judgement of history cannot pronounce him either a good rabbit or a good King; but he was not a nonentity. He ate prodigiously.

And now that I have opened the gate, all the Boxonians, like the ghosts in Homer, come clamouring for mention. But they must be denied it. Readers who have built a world would rather tell of their own than hear of mine; those who have not would perhaps be bewildered and repelled. Nor had Boxen any connection with Joy. I have mentioned it at all only because to omit it would have been to misrepresent this period of my life.

One caution must here be repeated. I have been describing a life in which, plainly, imagination of one sort or another played the dominant part. Remember that it never involved the least grain of belief; I never mistook imagination for reality. About the Northernness no such question could arise: it was essentially a desire and implied the absence of its object. And Boxen we never could believe in, for we had made it. No novelist (in that sense) believes in his own characters.

At the end of the Summer Term 1913 I won a classical entrance scholarship to Wyvern College.

VI. Bloodery

Any way for Heaven sake
So I were out of your whispering.
WEBSTER

Now that we have done with Chartres we may call Wyvern College simply Wyvern, or more simply still, as Wyvernians themselves call it, The Coll.

Going to the Coll was the most exciting thing that had yet happened in my outer life. At Chartres we had lived under the shadow of the Coll. We were often taken there to see matches or sports or the finish of the great Goldbury Run. These visits turned our heads. The crowd of boys older than oneself, their dazzling air of sophistication, scraps of their esoteric talk overheard, were like Park Lane in the old "Season" to a girl who is to be a *débutante* next year. Above all, the Bloods, the adored athletes and prefects, were an embodiment of all worldly pomp, power, and glory. Beside them Pogo shrank into insignificance; what is a Master compared with a Blood? The whole school was a great temple for the worship of these mortal gods; and no boy ever went there more prepared to worship them than I.

If you have not been at such a school as Wyvern, you may ask what a *Blood* is. He is a member of the school aristocracy. Foreign readers must clearly understand that this aristocracy has nothing whatever to do with the social position of the boys in the outer world. Boys of good, or wealthy, family are no more likely to be in it than anyone else; the only nobleman in my House at Wyvern never became a Blood. Shortly before my time there the son of a very queer customer had been at least on the fringe of Bloodery. The qualifying condition for Bloodery is that one should have been at the school for a considerable time. This by itself will not get you in, but newness will certainly exclude you. The most important qualification is athletic prowess. Indeed if this is sufficiently brilliant it makes you a Blood automatically. If it is a little less brilliant, then good looks and personality will help. So, of course, will fashion, as fashion is understood at your school. A wise candidate for Bloodery will wear the right clothes, use the right slang, admire the right things, laugh at the right jokes. And of course,

as in the outer world, those on the fringes of the privileged class can, and do, try to worm their way into it by all the usual arts of pleasing.

At some schools, I am told, there is a sort of dyarchy. An aristocracy of Bloods, supported or at least tolerated by popular sentiment, stands over against an official ruling class of prefects appointed by the Masters. I believe they usually appoint it from the highest form, so that it has some claim to be an intelligentsia. It was not so at the Coll. Those who were made prefects were nearly all Bloods and they did not have to be in any particular form. Theoretically (though I do not suppose this would ever happen) the dunce at the bottom of the lowest form could have been made the captain — in our language, the Head — of the Coll. We thus had only a single governing class, in whom every kind of power, privilege, and prestige were united. Those to whom the hero-worship of their juniors would in any case have gone, and those whose astuteness and ambition would under any system have enabled them to rise, were the same whom the official power of the Masters supported. Their position was emphasised by special liberties, clothes, priorities, and dignities which affected every side of school life. This, you will see, makes a pretty strong class. But it was strengthened still further by a factor which distinguishes school from ordinary life. In a country governed by an oligarchy, huge numbers of people, and among them some very stirring spirits, know they can never hope to get into that oligarchy; it may therefore be worth their while to attempt a revolution. At the Coll the lowest social class of all were too young, therefore too weak, to dream of revolt. In the middle class — boys who were no longer fags but not yet Bloods — those who alone had physical strength and popularity enough to qualify them as leaders of a revolution were already beginning to hope for Bloodery themselves. It suited them better to accelerate their social progress by courting the existing Bloods than to risk a revolt which, in the unlikely event of its succeeding, would destroy the very prize they were longing to share. And if at last they despaired of ever doing so — why, by that time their schooldays were nearly over. Hence the Wyvernian constitution was unbreakable. Schoolboys have often risen against their Masters; I doubt if there has ever been or ever can be a revolt against Bloods.

It is not, then, surprising if I went to the Coll prepared to worship. Can any adult aristocracy present the World to us in quite such an alluring form as the hierarchy of a public school? Every motive for prostration is brought

to bear at once on the mind of the New Boy when he sees a Blood; the natural respect of the thirteen-year-old for the nineteen-year-old, the fan's feeling for a film-star, the suburban woman's feeling for a duchess, the newcomer's awe in the presence of the Old Hand, the street urchin's dread of the police.

One's first hours at a public school are unforgettable. Our House was a tall, narrow stone building (and, by the way, the only house in the place which was not an architectural nightmare) rather like a ship. The deck on which we chiefly lived consisted of two very dark stone corridors at right angles to one another. The doors off them opened into the studies — little rooms about six feet square, each shared by two or three boys. The very sight of them was ravishing to a boy from a Prep. school who had never before had a *pied-à-terre* of his own. As we were still living (culturally) in the Edwardian period, each study imitated as closely as possible the cluttered appearance of an Edwardian drawing-room; the aim was to fill the tiny cell as full as it could hold with bookcases, corner cupboards, knick-knacks, and pictures. There were two larger rooms on the same floor; one the "Pres' Room", the synod of Olympus, and the other the New Boys' Study. It was not like a study at all. It was larger, darker, and undecorated; an immovable bench ran round a clamped table. But we knew, we ten or twelve recruits, that not all of us would be left in the New Boys' Study. Some of us would be given "real" studies; the residue would occupy the opprobrious place for a term or so. That was the great hazard of our first evening; one was to be taken and another left.

As we sat round our clamped table, silent for the most part and speaking in whispers when we spoke, the door would be opened at intervals; a boy would look in, smile (not at us but to himself) and withdraw. Once, over the shoulder of the smiler there came another face, and a chuckling voice said, "Ho-ho! I know what *you're* looking for." Only I knew what it was all about, for my brother had played Chesterfield to my Stanhope and instructed me in the manners of the Coll. None of the boys who looked in and smiled was a Blood; they were all quite young and there was something common to the faces of them all. They were, in fact, the reigning or fading Tarts of the House, trying to guess which of us were their destined rivals or successors.

It is possible that some readers will not know what a House Tart was. First, as to the adjective. All life at Wyvern was lived, so to speak, in the

two concentric circles of Coll and House. You could be a Coll pre. or merely a House pre. You could be a Coll Blood or merely a House Blood, a Coll Punt (i.e. a pariah, an unpopular person) or merely a House Punt; and of course a Coll Tart or merely a House Tart. A Tart is a pretty and effeminate-looking small boy who acts as a catamite to one or more of his seniors, usually Bloods. Usually, not always. Though our oligarchy kept most of the amenities of life to themselves, they were, on this point, liberal; they did not impose chastity on the middle-class boy in addition to all his other disabilities. Pederasty among the lower classes was not "side", or at least not serious side; not like putting one's hands in one's pockets or wearing one's coat unbuttoned. The gods had a sense of proportion.

[Footnote 4] Here, and throughout this account, I sometimes use the "historic present". Heaven forfend I should be taken to mean that Wyvern is the same to-day.

The Tarts had an important function to play in making school (what it was advertised to be) a preparation for public life. They were not like slaves, for their favours were (nearly always) solicited, not compelled. Nor were they exactly like prostitutes, for the *liaison* often had some permanence and, far from being merely sensual, was highly sentimentalised. Nor were they paid (in hard cash, I mean) for their services; though of course they had all the flattery, unofficial influence, favour, and privileges which the mistresses of the great have always enjoyed in adult society. That was where the Preparation for Public Life came in. It would appear from Mr. Arnold Lunn's *Harrovians* that the Tarts at his school acted as informers. None of ours did. I ought to know, for one of my friends shared a study with a minor Tart; and except that he was sometimes turned out of the study when one of the Tart's lovers came in (and that, after all, was only natural) he had nothing to complain of. I was not shocked by these things. For me, at that age, the chief drawback to the whole system was that it bored me considerably. For you will have missed the atmosphere of our House unless you picture the whole place from week's end to week's end buzzing, tittering, hinting, whispering about this subject. After games, gallantry was the principal topic of polite conversation; who had "a case with" whom, whose star was in the ascendant, who had whose photo, who and when and how often and what night and where.... I suppose it might be called the Greek Tradition. But the vice in question is one to which I had never been tempted, and which,

indeed, I still find opaque to the imagination. Possibly, if I had only stayed longer at the Coll, I might, in this respect as in others, have been turned into a Normal Boy, as the system promises. As things were, I was bored.

Those first days, like your first days in the army, were spent in a frantic endeavour to find out what you had to do. One of my first duties was to find out what "Club" I was in. Clubs were the units to which we were assigned for compulsory games; they belonged to the Coll organisation, not the House organisation, so I had to go to a notice-board "Up Coll" to get my facts. And first to find the place — and then to dare to squeeze oneself into the crowd of more important boys around the notice-board — and then to begin reading through five hundred names, but always with one eye on your watch, for of course there is something else to be done within ten minutes. I was forced away from the board before I had found my name, and so, sweating, back to the House, in a flurry of anxiety, wondering how I could find time to do the job to-morrow and what unheard-of disaster might follow if I could not. (Why, by the way, do some writers talk as if care and worry were the special characteristics of adult life? It appears to me that there is more *atra cura* in an average schoolboy's week than in a grown man's average year.)

When I reached the House something gloriously unexpected happened. At the door of the Pres' Room stood one Fribble; a mere House Blood, it is true, even a minor House Blood, but to me a sufficiently exalted figure; a youth of the lean, laughing type. I could hardly believe it when he actually addressed me. "Oh, I say, Lewis," he bawled, "I can tell you your Club. You're in the same one as me, B6." What a transition from all but despair to elation I underwent! All my anxiety was laid to rest. And then the graciousness of Fribble, the condescension! If a reigning monarch had asked me to dine, I could hardly have been more flattered. But there was better to follow. On every half-holiday I went dutifully to the B6 notice-board to see whether my name was down to play that afternoon or not. And it never was. This was pure joy, for of course I hated games. My native clumsiness, combined with the lack of early training for which Belsen was responsible, had ruled out all possibility of my ever playing well enough to amuse myself, let alone to satisfy other players. I accepted games (quite a number of boys do) as one of the necessary evils of life, comparable to Income Tax or the Dentist. And so, for a week or two, I was in clover.

Then the blow fell. Fribble had lied. I was in a totally different Club. My name had more than once appeared on a notice-board I had never seen. I had committed the serious crime of “skipping Clubs”. The punishment was a flogging administered by the Head of the Coll in the presence of the assembled Coll Pres. To the Head of the Coll himself — a red-headed, pimply boy with a name like Borage or Porridge — I can bear no grudge; it was to him a routine matter. But I must give him a name because the real point of the story requires it. The emissary (some Blood a little lower than the Head himself) who summoned me to execution attempted to reveal to me the heinousness of my crime by the words, “Who are you? Nobody. Who is Porridge? THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON THERE IS.”

I thought then, and I still think, that this rather missed the point. There were two perfectly good morals he could have drawn. He might have said, “We are going to teach you never to rely on second-hand information when first-hand is available” — a very profitable lesson. Or he might have said, “What made you think that a Blood could not be a liar?” But, “Who are you? Nobody,” however just, seems hardly relevant. The implication is that I have skipped Club in arrogance or defiance. And I puzzle endlessly over the question whether the speaker really believed that. Did he really think it likely that an utterly helpless stranger in a new society, a society governed by an irresistible class on whose favour all his hopes of happiness depended, had set himself in the first week to pull the nose of The Most Important Person There Is? It is a problem which has met me many times in later life. What does a certain type of examiner mean when he says, “To show up work like this is an insult to the examiners”? Does he really think that the ploughed candidate has insulted him?

Another problem is Fribble’s share in my little catastrophe. Was his lie to me a hoax, a practical joke? Was he paying off some old score against my brother? Or was he (as I now think most likely) simply what our ancestors called a Rattle, a man from whose mouth information, true and false, flows out all day long without consideration, almost without volition? Some might think that, whatever his motive had originally been, he might have come forward and confessed his part when he saw what I was in for. But that, you know, was hardly to be expected. He was a very minor Blood, still climbing up the social stair; Burradge was almost as far above Fribble as Fribble was above me. By coming forward he would have imperilled his

social position, in a community where social advancement was the one thing that mattered; school is a preparation for public life.

In justice to Wyvern, I must add that Fribble was not, by our standards, quite a fair representative of Bloodery. He had offended against the rules of gallantry in a manner which (my brother tells me) would have been impossible in his day. I said just now that the Tarts were solicited, not compelled. But Fribble did use all his prefectorial powers for a whole term to persecute a boy called, let us say, Parsley who had refused his suit. This was quite easy for Fribble to do. The innumerable small regulations which a junior boy could break almost unawares enabled a prefect to make sure that a given boy was nearly always in trouble, while the fagging system made it easy to see that he had no leisure at all at any hour of any day. So Parsley learned what it was to refuse even a minor Blood. The story would be more impressive if Parsley had been a virtuous boy and had refused on moral grounds. Unfortunately he was “as common as a barber’s chair”, had been a reigning toast in my brother’s day, and was now almost past his bloom. He drew the line at Fribble. But Fribble’s attempt at coercion was the only instance of its kind I ever knew.

Indeed, taking them by and large, and considering the temptations of adolescents, so privileged, so flattered, our Bloods were not a bad lot. The Count was even kindly. The Parrot was nothing worse than a grave fool: “Yards-of-Face” they called him. Stopfish, whom some thought cruel, even had moral principles; in his younger days many (I’m told) had desired him as a Tart, but he had kept his virtue. “Pretty, but no good to anyone; he’s *pie*,” would be the Wyvernian comment. The hardest to defend, perhaps, is Tennyson. We did not much mind his being a shoplifter; some people thought it rather clever of him to come back from a tour of the town with more ties and socks than he had paid for. We minded more his favourite punishment for us rabble, “a clip”. Yet he could truly have pleaded to the authorities that it meant merely a box on the ear. He would not have added that the patient was made to stand with his left ear, temple and cheek almost, but not quite, touching the jamb of a doorway, and then struck with full force on the right. We also grumbled a little in secret when he got up a tournament (either explicitly or virtually compulsory, I think) in a game called Yard Cricket, collected subscriptions, and neither held the tournament nor returned the cash. But you will remember that this happened in the Marconi period, and to be a prefect is a Preparation for Public Life.

And for all of them, even Tennyson, one thing can be said; they were never drunk. I was told that their predecessors, a year before I came, were sometimes very drunk indeed in the House corridor at mid-day. In fact, odd as it would have sounded to an adult, I joined the House when it was in a stern mood of moral rearmament. That was the point of a series of speeches which the prefects addressed to us all in the House Library during my first week. It was explained with a wealth of threatenings that we were to be pulled Up or Together or wherever decadents are pulled by moral reformers. Tennyson was very great on that occasion. He had a fine bass voice and sang solos in the choir. I knew one of his Tarts.

Peace to them all. A worse fate awaited them than the most vindictive fag among us could have wished. Ypres and the Somme ate up most of them. They were happy while their good days lasted.

My flogging by pimply old Ullage was no unmerciful affair in itself. The real trouble was that I think I now became, thanks to Fribble, a marked man; the sort of dangerous New Boy who skips Clubs. At least I think that must have been the main reason why I was an object of dislike to Tennyson. There were probably others. I was big for my age, a great lout of a boy, and that sets one's seniors against one. I was also useless at games. Worst of all, there was my face. I am the kind of person who gets told, "And take that look off your face too." Notice, once more, the mingled justice and injustice of our lives. No doubt in conceit or ill-temper I have often intended to look insolent or truculent; but on those occasions people don't appear to notice it. On the other hand, the moments at which I was told to "take that look off" were usually those when I intended to be most abject. Can there have been a freeman somewhere among my ancestors whose expression, against my will, looked out?

As I have hinted before, the fagging system is the chief medium by which the Bloods, without breaking any rule, can make a junior boy's life a weariness to him. Different schools have different kinds of fagging. At some of them, individual Bloods have individual fags. This is the system most often depicted in school stories; it is sometimes represented as — and, for all I know, sometimes really is — a fruitful relation as of knight and squire, in which service on the one part is rewarded with some degree of countenance and protection on the other. But whatever its merits may be, we never experienced them at Wyvern. Fagging with us was as impersonal as the labour-market in Victorian England; in that way, too, the Coll was a

preparation for public life. All boys under a certain seniority constituted a labour pool, the common property of all the Bloods. When a Blood wanted his O.T.C. kit brushed and polished, or his boots cleaned, or his study “done out”, or his tea made, he shouted. We all came running, and of course the Blood gave the work to the boy he most disliked. The kit-cleaning — it took hours, and then, when you had finished it, your own kit was still to do — was the most detested *corvée*. Shoe-cleaning was a nuisance not so much in itself as in its attendant circumstances. It came at an hour which was vital for a boy like me who, having won a scholarship, had been placed in a high form and could hardly, by all his best efforts, keep up with the work. Hence the success of one’s whole day in Form might depend on the precious forty minutes between breakfast and Morning School, when one went over the set passages of translation with other boys in the same Form. This could be done only if one escaped being fagged as a shoeblack. Not, of course, that it takes forty minutes to clean a pair of shoes. What takes the time is waiting in the queue of other fags in the “boot-hole” to get your turn at the brushes and blacking. The whole look of that cellar, the darkness, the smell, and (for most of the year) the freezing cold, are a vivid memory. You must not of course suppose that, in those spacious days, we lacked servants. There were two official “bootboys” paid by the Housemaster for cleaning all boots and shoes, and everyone, including us fags who had cleaned both our own shoes and the Bloods’ shoes daily, tipped the bootboys at the end of each term for their services.

For a reason which all English readers will understand (others will hear something of it in the next chapter) I am humiliated and embarrassed at having to record that as time went on I came to dislike the fagging system. No true defender of the Public Schools will believe me if I say that I was tired. But I was — dog-tired, cab-horse tired, tired (almost) like a child in a factory. Many things besides fagging contributed to it. I was big and had possibly outgrown my strength. My work in Form was almost beyond me. I was having a good deal of dental trouble at the time, and many nights of clamorous pain. Never, except in the front line trenches (and not always there) do I remember such aching and continuous weariness as at Wyvern. Oh, the implacable day, the horror of waking, the endless desert of hours that separated one from bed-time! And remember that, even without fagging, a school day contains hardly any leisure for a boy who does not like games. For him, to pass from the form-room to the playing field is

simply to exchange work in which he can take some interest for work in which he can take none, in which failure is more severely punished, and in which (worst of all) he must feign an interest.

I think that this feigning, this ceaseless pretence of interest in matters to me supremely boring, was what wore me out more than anything else. If the reader will picture himself, unarmed, shut up for thirteen weeks on end, night and day, in a society of fanatical golfers — or, if he is a golfer himself, let him substitute fishermen, theosophists, bimetallists, Baconians, or German undergraduates with a taste for autobiography — who all carry revolvers and will probably shoot him if he ever seems to lose interest in their conversation, he will have an idea of my school life. Even the hardy Chowbok (in *Erewhon*) quailed at such a destiny. For games (and gallantry) were the only subjects, and I cared for neither. But I must seem to care for both, for a boy goes to a Public School precisely to be made a normal, sensible boy — a good mixer — to be taken out of himself; and eccentricity is severely penalised.

You must not, from this, hastily conclude that most boys liked *playing* games any better than I did. To escape Clubs was considered by dozens of boys an obvious good. Leave off Clubs required the Housemaster's signature, and that harmless Merovingian's signature was imitable. A competent forger (I knew one member of the profession) by manufacturing and selling forged signatures could make a steady addition to his pocket money. The perpetual talk about games depended on three things. First, on the same sort of genuine (though hardly practical) enthusiasm which sends the crowds to the League Football Matches. Few wanted to play, but many wanted to watch, to participate vicariously in the triumphs of the Coll, or the House, team. Secondly, this natural feeling had the vigilant backing of all the Bloods and nearly all the Masters. To be lukewarm on such matters was the supreme sin. Hence enthusiasm had to be exaggerated where it existed and simulated where it did not. At cricket matches minor Bloods patrolled the crowd of spectators to detect and punish any "slackness" in the applause; it reminds one of the precautions taken when Nero sang. For of course the whole structure of Bloodery would collapse if the Bloods played in the spirit of play, for their recreation; there must be audience and limelight. And this brings us to the third reason. For boys who were not yet Bloods but who had some athletic promise, Games were essentially a *moyen de parvenir*. There was nothing recreational about Clubs for them any more

than for me. They went to the playing fields not as men go to the tennis-club but as stage-struck girls go to an Audition; tense and anxious, racked with dazzling hopes and sickening fears, never in peace of mind till they had won some notice which would set their feet on the first rung of the social ladder. And not then at peace either; for not to advance is to fall back.

The truth is that organised and compulsory games had, in my day, banished the element of play from school life almost entirely. There was no time to play (in the proper sense of the word). The rivalry was too fierce, the prizes too glittering, the "hell of failure" too severe.

The only boy, almost, who "played" (but not at games) was our Irish earl. But then he was an exception to all rules; not because of his earldom but because he was an untamable Irishman, anarch in grain, whom no society could iron out. He smoked a pipe in his first term. He went off by night on strange expeditions to a neighbouring city; not, I believe, for women, but for harmless rowdyism, low life, and adventure. He always carried a revolver. I remember it well, for he had a habit of loading one chamber only, rushing into your study, and then firing off (if that is the right word) all the others at you, so that your life depended on his counting accurately. I felt at the time, and I feel still, that this (unlike the fagging) was the sort of thing no sensible boy could object to. It was done in defiance both of masters and Bloods, it was wholly useless, and there was no malice in it. I liked Ballygunnian; he, too, was killed in France. I do not think he ever became a Blood; if he had, he wouldn't have noticed it. He cared nothing for the limelight or for social success. He passed through the Coll without paying it any attention.

I suppose Popsy — the pretty red-head who was housemaid on "the Private side" — might also rank as an element making for "play". Popsy, when caught and carried bodily into our part of the House (I think by the Count), was all giggles and screams. She was too sensible a girl to surrender her "virtue" to any Blood; but it was rumoured that those who found her in the right time and place might induce her to give certain lessons in anatomy. Perhaps they lied.

I have hardly mentioned a Master yet. One master, dearly loved and reverenced, will appear in the next chapter. But other masters are hardly worth speaking of. It is difficult for parents (and more difficult, perhaps, for schoolmasters) to realise the unimportance of most masters in the life of a school. Of the good and evil which is done to a schoolboy masters, in

general, do little, and know less. Our own Housemaster must have been an upright man, for he fed us excellently. For the rest, he treated his House in a very gentlemanly, uninquisitive way. He sometimes walked round the dormitories of a night, but he always wore boots, trod heavily and coughed at the door. He was no spy and no kill-joy, honest man. Live and let live.

As I grew more and more tired, both in body and mind, I came to hate Wyvern. I did not notice the real harm it was doing to me. It was gradually teaching me to be a prig; that is, an intellectual prig or (in the bad sense) a High Brow. But that subject must wait for another chapter. At the tail-end of this I must repeat (for this is the overall impression left by Wyvern) that I was tired. Consciousness itself was becoming the supreme evil; sleep, the prime good. To lie down, to be out of the sound of voices, to pretend and grimace and evade and slink no more, that was the object of all desire — if only there were not another morning ahead — if only sleep could last for ever!

VII. Light and Shade

No situation, however wretched it seems, but has some sort of comfort attending it.
GOLDSMITH

Here's a fellow, you say, who used to come before us as a moral and religious writer, and now, if you please, he's written a whole chapter describing his old school as a very furnace of impure loves without one word on the heinousness of the sin. But there are two reasons. One you shall hear before this chapter ends. The other is that, as I have said, the sin in question is one of the two (gambling is the other) which I have never been tempted to commit. I will not indulge in futile philippics against enemies I never met in battle.

("This means, then, that all the other vices you have so largely written about..." Well, yes, it does, and more's the pity; but it's nothing to our purpose at the moment.)

I have now to tell you how Wyvern made me a prig. When I went there, nothing was further from my mind than the idea that my private taste for fairly good books, for Wagner, for mythology, gave me any sort of superiority to those who read nothing but magazines and listened to nothing but the (then fashionable) Rag-time. The claim might seem unbelievable if I did not add that I had been protected from this sort of conceit by downright ignorance. Mr. Ian Hay somewhere draws a picture of the reading minority at a Public School in his day as boys who talked about "G. B. S. and G. K. C." in the same spirit in which other boys secretly smoked; both sets were inspired by the same craving for forbidden fruit and the same desire to be grown-up. And I suppose boys such as he describes might come from Chelsea or Oxford or Cambridge homes where they heard things about contemporary literature. But my position was wholly different. I was, for example, a great reader of Shaw about the time I went to Wyvern, but I had never dreamed that reading Shaw was anything to be proud of. Shaw was an author on my father's shelves like any other author. I began reading him because his *Dramatic Opinions* contained a good deal about Wagner and Wagner's very name was then a lure to me. Thence I went on to read most of the other Shaws we had. But how his reputation stood in the literary

world I neither knew nor cared; I didn't know there was "a literary world". My father told me Shaw was "a mountebank" but that there were some laughs in *John Bull's Other Island*. It was the same with all my other reading; no one (thank God) had ever admired or encouraged it. (William Morris, for some unfathomable reason, my father always referred to as "that whistlepainter".) I might be — no doubt I was — conceited at Chartres for being good at my Latin; this was something recognised as meritorious. But "Eng. Lit." was blessedly absent from the official syllabus, so I was saved from any possibility of conceit about it. Never in my life had I read a work of fiction, poetry, or criticism in my own language except because, after trying the first few pages, I liked the taste of it. I could not help knowing that most other people, boys and grown-ups alike, did not care for the books I read. A very few tastes I could share with my father, a few more with my brother; apart from that, there was no point of contact, and this I accepted as a sort of natural law. If I reflected on it at all, it would have given me, I think, a slight feeling, not of superiority, but of inferiority. The latest popular novel was so obviously a more adult, a more normal, a more sophisticated taste than any of mine. A certain shame or bashfulness attached itself to whatever one deeply and privately enjoyed. I went to the Coll far more disposed to excuse my literary tastes than to plume myself on them.

But this innocence did not last. It was, from the first, a little shaken by all that I soon began to learn from my form-master about the glories of literature. I was at last made free of the dangerous secret that others had, like me, found there "enormous bliss" and been maddened by beauty. Among the other New Bugs of my year, too, I met a pair of boys who came from the Dragon School at Oxford (where Naomi Mitchison in her 'teens had just produced her first play) and from them also I got the dim impression that there was a world I had never dreamed of, a world in which poetry, say, was a thing public and accepted, just as Games and Gallantry were accepted at Wyvern; nay, a world in which a taste for such things was almost meritorious. I felt as Siegfried felt when it first dawned on him that he was not Mime's son. What had been "my" taste was apparently "our" taste (if only I could ever meet the "we" to whom that "our" belonged). And if "our" taste, then — by a perilous transition — perhaps "good" taste or "the right taste". For that transition involves a kind of Fall. The moment good taste knows itself, some of its goodness is lost. Even then, however, it

is not necessary to take the further downward step of despising the "philistines" who do not share it. Unfortunately I took it. Hitherto, though increasingly miserable at Wyvern, I had been half ashamed of my own misery, still ready (if I were only allowed) to admire the Olympians, still a little overawed, cowed rather than resentful. I had, you see, no standing place against the Wyvernian *ethos*, no side for which I could play against it; it was a bare "I" against what seemed simply the world. But the moment that "I" became, however vaguely, a *we* — and Wyvern not *the* world but *a* world — the whole thing changed. It was now possible, at least in thought, to retaliate. I can remember what may well have been the precise moment of this transition. A prefect called Blugg or Glubb or some such name stood opposite me, belching in my face, giving me some order. The belching was not intended as an insult. You can't "insult" a fag any more than an animal. If Bulb had thought of my reactions at all, he would have expected me to find his eructations funny. What pushed me over the edge into pure priggery was his face — the puffy bloated cheeks, the thick, moist, sagging lower lip, the yokel blend of drowsiness and cunning. "The lout!" I thought. "The clod! The dull, crass clown! For all his powers and privileges, I would not be he." I had become a Prig, a High-Brow.

The interesting thing is that the Public School system had thus produced the very thing which it was advertised to prevent or cure. For you must understand (if you have not been dipped in that tradition yourself) that the whole thing was devised to "knock the nonsense" out of the smaller boys and "put them in their place". "If the junior boys weren't fagged," as my brother once said, "they would become insufferable." That is why I felt so embarrassed, a few pages ago, when I had to confess that I got rather tired of perpetual fagging. If you say this, every true defender of the system will diagnose your case at once, and they will all diagnose it in the same way. "Ho-ho!" they will cry, "so *that's* the trouble! Thought yourself too good to black your betters' boots, did you? That just shows how badly you needed to be fagged. It's to cure young prigs like you that the system exists." That any cause except "thinking yourself too good for it" might awaken discontent with a fag's lot will not be admitted. You have only to transfer the thing to adult life and you will, apparently, see the full logic of the position. If some neighbouring V.I.P. had irresistible authority to call on you for any service he pleased at any hour when you were not in the office — if, when you came home on a summer evening, tired from work and with more

work to prepare against the morrow, he could drag you to the links and make you his caddy till the light failed — if at last he dismissed you unthanked with a suitcase full of his clothes to brush and clean and return to him before breakfast, and a hamper full of his foul linen for your wife to wash and mend — and if, under this regime, you were not always perfectly happy and contented; where could the cause lie except in your own vanity? What else, after all, could it be? For, almost by definition, every offence a junior boy commits must be due to “cheek” or “side”; and to be miserable, even to fall short of rapturous enthusiasm, is an offence.

Obviously a certain grave danger was ever-present to the minds of those who built up the Wyvernian hierarchy. It seemed to them self-evident that, if you left things to themselves, boys of nineteen who played rugger for the county and boxed for the school would everywhere be knocked down and sat on by boys of thirteen. And that, you know, would be a very shocking spectacle. The most elaborate mechanism, therefore, had to be devised for protecting the strong against the weak, the close corporation of Old Hands against the parcel of new-comers who were strangers to one another and to everyone in the place, the poor, trembling lions against the furious and ravening sheep.

There is, of course, some truth in it. Small boys can be cheeky; and half an hour in the society of a French thirteen-year-old makes most of us feel that there is something to be said for fagging after all. Yet I cannot help thinking that the bigger boys would have been able to hold their own without all the complicated assurances, pattings on the back, and encouragement which the authorities gave them. For, of course, these authorities, not content with knocking the “nonsense” out of the sheep, were always coaxing and petting an at least equal quantity of “nonsense” into the lions; power and privilege and an applauding audience for the games they play. Might not the mere nature of boys have done all, and rather more than all, that needed doing in this direction without assistance?

But whatever the rationality of the design, I contend that it did not achieve its object. For the last thirty years or so England has been filled with a bitter, truculent, sceptical, debunking, and cynical *intelligentsia*. A great many of them were at public schools, and I believe very few of them liked it. Those who defend the schools will, of course, say that these Prigs are the cases which the system failed to cure; they were not kicked, mocked, fagged, flogged, and humiliated enough. But surely it is equally

possible that they are the products of the system? that they were not Prigs at all when they came to their schools but were made Prigs by their first year, as I was? For, really, that would be a very natural result. Where oppression does not completely and permanently break the spirit, has it not a natural tendency to produce retaliatory pride and contempt? We reimburse ourselves for cuffs and toil by a double dose of self-esteem. No one is more likely to be arrogant than a lately freed slave.

I write, of course, only to neutral readers. With the wholehearted adherents of the system there is no arguing, for, as we have already seen, they have maxims and logic which the lay mind cannot apprehend. I have even heard them defend compulsory games on the ground that all boys "except a few rotters" like the games; they have to be compulsory because no compulsion is needed. (I wish I had never heard chaplains in the Armed Forces produce a similar argument in defence of the wicked institution of Church Parades.)

But the essential evil of public school life, as I see it, did not lie either in the sufferings of the fags or in the privileged arrogance of the Bloods. These were symptoms of something more all-pervasive, something which, in the long run, did most harm to the boys who succeeded best at school and were happiest there. Spiritually speaking, the deadly thing was that school life was a life almost wholly dominated by the social struggle; to get on, to arrive, or, having reached the top, to remain there, was the absorbing preoccupation. It is often, of course, the preoccupation of adult life as well; but I have not yet seen any adult society in which the surrender to this impulse was so total. And from it, at school as in the world, all sorts of meanness flow; the sycophancy that courts those higher in the scale, the cultivation of those whom it is well to know, the speedy abandonment of friendships that will not help on the upward path, the readiness to join the cry against the unpopular, the secret motive in almost every action. The Wyvernians seem to me in retrospect to have been the least spontaneous, in that sense the least boyish, society I have ever known. It would perhaps not be too much to say that in some boys' lives everything was calculated to the great end of advancement. For this games were played; for this clothes, friends, amusements, and vices were chosen.

And that is why I cannot give pederasty anything like a first place among the evils of the Coll. There is much hypocrisy on this theme. People commonly talk as if every other evil were more tolerable than this. But

why? Because those of us who do not share the vice feel for it a certain nausea, as we do, say, for necrophily? I think that of very little relevance to moral judgement. Because it produces permanent perversion? But there is very little evidence that it does. The Bloods would have preferred girls to boys if they could have come by them; when, at a later age, girls were obtainable, they probably took them. Is it then on Christian grounds? But how many of those who fulminate on the matter are in fact Christians? And what Christian, in a society so worldly and cruel as that of Wyvern, would pick out the carnal sins for special reprobation? Cruelty is surely more evil than lust and the World at least as dangerous as the Flesh. The real reason for all the pother is, in my opinion, neither Christian nor ethical. We attack this vice not because it is the worst but because it is, by adult standards, the most disreputable and unmentionable, and happens also to be a crime in English law. The World will lead you only to Hell; but sodomy may lead you to jail and create a scandal, and lose you your job. The World, to do it justice, seldom does that.

If those of us who have known a school like Wyvern dared to speak the truth, we should have to say that pederasty, however great an evil in itself, was, in that time and place, the only foothold or cranny left for certain good things. It was the only counterpoise to the social struggle; the one oasis (though green only with weeds and moist only with foetid water) in the burning desert of competitive ambition. In his unnatural love-affairs, and perhaps only there, the Blood went a little out of himself, forgot for a few hours that he was One of the Most Important People There Are. It softens the picture. A perversion was the only chink left through which something spontaneous and uncalculating could creep in. Plato was right after all. Eros, turned upside down, blackened, distorted, and filthy, still bore the traces of his divinity.

What an answer, by the by, Wyvern was to those who derive all the ills of society from economics! For money had nothing to do with its class system. It was not (thank Heaven) the boys with threadbare coats who became Punts, nor the boys with plenty of pocket-money who became Bloods. According to some theorists, therefore, it ought to have been entirely free from bourgeois vulgarities and iniquities. Yet I have ever seen a community so competitive, so full of snobbery and flunkeyism, a ruling class so selfish and so class-conscious, or a proletariat so fawning, so lacking in all solidarity and sense of corporate honour. But perhaps one

hardly needs to cite experience for a truth so obvious *a priori*. As Aristotle remarked, men do not become dictators in order to keep warm. If a ruling class has some other source of strength, why need it bother about money? Most of what it wants will be pressed upon it by emulous flatterers; the rest can be taken by force.

There were two blessings at Wyvern that wore no disguise; one of them was my form master, Smewgy as we called him. I spell the name so as to insure the right pronunciation — the first syllable should rhyme exactly with *Fugue* — though the Wyvernian spelling was "Smugy".

Except at Oldie's I had been fortunate in my teachers ever since I was born; but Smewgy was "beyond expectation, beyond hope". He was a grey-head with large spectacles and a wide mouth which combined to give him a froglike expression, but nothing could be less froglike than his voice. He was honey-tongued. Every verse he read turned into music on his lips: something midway between speech and song. It is not the only good way of reading verse, but it is the way to enchant boys; more dramatic and less rhythmical ways can be learned later. He first taught me the right sensuality of poetry, how it should be savoured and mouthed in solitude. Of Milton's "Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers" he said, "That line made me happy for a week." It was not the sort of thing I had heard anyone say before. Nor had I ever met before perfect courtesy in a teacher. It had nothing to do with softness; Smewgy could be very severe, but it was the severity of a judge, weighty and measured, without taunting —

He never yet no vileinye ne sayde
In all his lyf unto no maner wight.

He had a difficult team to drive, for our form consisted partly of youngsters, New Bugs with scholarships, starting there like myself, and partly of veterans who had arrived there at the end of their slow journey up the school. He made us a unity by his good manners. He always addressed us as "gentlemen" and the possibility of behaving otherwise seemed thus to be ruled out from the beginning; and in that room at least the distinction between fags and Bloods never raised its head. On a hot day, when he had given us permission to remove our coats, he asked our permission before removing his gown. Once for bad work I was sent by him to the Headmaster to be threatened and rated. The Headmaster misunderstood

Smewgy's report and thought there had been some complaint about my manners. Afterward Smewgy got wind of the Head's actual words and at once corrected the mistake, drawing me aside and saying, "There has been some curious misunderstanding. I said nothing of the sort about you. You will have to be whipped if you don't do better at your Greek Grammar next week, but naturally that has nothing to do with your manners or mine." The idea that the tone of conversation between one gentleman and another should be altered by a flogging (any more than by a duel) was ridiculous. His manner was perfect: no familiarity, no hostility, no threadbare humour; mutual respect; decorum. "Never let us live with *amousia*," was one of his favourite maxims: *amousia*, the absence of the Muses. And he knew, as Spenser knew, that courtesy was of the Muses.

Thus, even had he taught us nothing else, to be in Smewgy's form was to be in a measure ennobled. Amidst all the banal ambition and flashy splendours of school life he stood as a permanent reminder of things more gracious, more humane, larger and cooler. But his teaching, in the narrower sense, was equally good. He could enchant but he could also analyse. An idiom or a textual crux, once expounded by Smewgy, became clear as day. He made us feel that the scholar's demand for accuracy was not merely pedantic, still less an arbitrary moral discipline, but rather a niceness, a delicacy, to lack which argued "a gross and swainish disposition". I began to see that the reader who misses syntactical points in a poem is missing aesthetic points as well.

In those days a boy on the classical side officially did almost nothing but classics. I think this was wise; the greatest service we can do to education to-day is to teach fewer subjects. No one has time to do more than a very few things well before he is twenty, and when we force a boy to be a mediocrity in a dozen subjects we destroy his standards, perhaps for life. Smewgy taught us Latin and Greek, but everything else came in incidentally. The books I liked best under his teaching were Horace's Odes, Aeneid IV, and Euripides' *Bacchae*. I had always in one sense "liked" my classical work, but hitherto this had only been the pleasure that everyone feels in mastering a craft. Now I tasted the classics as poetry. Euripides' picture of Dionysus was closely linked in my mind with the whole mood of Mr. Stephens' *Crock of Gold*, which I had lately read for the first time with great excitement. Here was something very different from the Northernness. Pan and Dionysus lacked the cold, piercing appeal of Odin and Frey. A new

quality entered my imagination: something Mediterranean and volcanic, the orgiastic drum-beat. Orgiastic, but not, or not strongly, erotic. It was perhaps unconsciously connected with my growing hatred of the public school orthodoxies and conventions, my desire to break and tear it all.

The other undisguised blessing of the Coll was “the Gurney”, the school library; not only because it was a library, but because it was sanctuary. As the negro used to become free on touching English soil, so the meanest boy was “unfaggable” once he was inside the Gurney. It was not, of course, easy to get there. In the winter terms if you were not on the list for “Clubs” you had to go out for a run. In summer you could reach sanctuary of an afternoon only under favourable conditions. You might be put down for Clubs, and that excluded you. Or there might be either a House match or a Coll match which you were compelled to watch. Thirdly, and most probably, on your way to the Gurney you might be caught and fagged for the whole afternoon. But sometimes one succeeded in running the gauntlet of all these dangers; and then — books, silence, leisure, the distant sound of bat and ball (“Oh the brave music of a *distant* drum”), bees buzzing at the open windows, and freedom. In the Gurney I found *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* and tried, vainly but happily, to hammer out the originals from the translation at the bottom of the page. There too I found Milton, and Yeats, and a book on Celtic mythology, which soon became, if not a rival, yet a humble companion, to Norse. That did me good; to enjoy two mythologies (or three, now that I had begun to love the Greek), fully aware of their differing flavours, is a balancing thing, and makes for catholicity. I felt keenly the difference between the stony and fiery sublimity of Asgard, the green, leafy, amorous, and elusive world of Cruachan and the Red Branch and Tir-nan-Og, the harder, more defiant, sun-bright beauty of Olympus. I began (presumably in the holidays) an epic on Cuchulain and another on Finn, in English hexameters and in fourteeners respectively. Luckily they were abandoned before these easy and vulgar metres had time to spoil my ear.

But the Northernness still came first and the only work I completed at this time was a tragedy, Norse in subject and Greek in form. It was called *Loki Bound* and was as classical as any Humanist could have desired, with Prologos, Parodos, Epeisodia, Stasima, Exodos, Stichomythia, and (of course) one passage in trochaic *septenarii* — with rhyme. I never enjoyed anything more. The content is significant. My Loki was not merely

malicious. He was against Odin because Odin had created a world though Loki had clearly warned him that this was a wanton cruelty. Why should creatures have the burden of existence forced on them without their consent? The main contrast in my play was between the sad wisdom of Loki and the brutal orthodoxy of Thor. Odin was partly sympathetic; he could at least see what Loki meant and there had been old friendship between those two before cosmic politics forced them apart. Thor was the real villain, Thor with his hammer and his threats, who was always egging Odin on against Loki and always complaining that Loki did not sufficiently respect the major gods; to which Loki replied

I pay respect to wisdom not to strength.

Thor was, in fact, the symbol of the Bloods; though I see that more clearly now than I did at the time. Loki was a projection of myself; he voiced that sense of priggish superiority whereby I was, unfortunately, beginning to compensate myself for my unhappiness.

The other feature in *Loki Bound* which may be worth commenting on is the pessimism. I was at this time living, like so many Atheists or Antitheists, in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world.

How far was this pessimism, this desire not to have been, sincere? Well, I must confess that this desire quite slipped out of my mind during the seconds when I was covered by the wild Earl's revolver. By the Chestertonian test, then, the test of *Manalive*, it was not sincere at all. But I am still not convinced by Chesterton's argument. It is true that when a pessimist's life is threatened he behaves like other men; his impulse to preserve life is stronger than his judgement that life is not worth preserving. But how does this prove that the judgement was insincere or even erroneous? A man's judgement that whisky is bad for him is not invalidated by the fact that when the bottle is at hand he finds desire stronger than reason and succumbs. Having once tasted life, we are subjected to the impulse of self-preservation. Life, in other words, is as habit-forming as cocaine. What then? If I still held creation to be "a great injustice" I should hold that this impulse to retain life aggravates the injustice. If it is bad to be forced to drink the potion, how does it mend matters that the potion turns out to be an addiction drug? Pessimism cannot be answered so. Thinking as I then thought about the universe, I was reasonable in condemning it. At the

same time I now see that my view was closely connected with a certain lop-sidedness of temperament. I had always been more violent in my negative than in my positive demands. Thus, in personal relations, I could forgive much neglect more easily than the least degree of what I regarded as interference. At table I could forgive much insipidity in my food more easily than the least suspicion of what seemed to me excessive or inappropriate seasoning. In the course of life I could put up with any amount of monotony far more patiently than even the smallest disturbance, bother, bustle, or what the Scotch call *kurfuffle*. Never at any age did I clamour to be amused; always and at all ages (where I dared) I hotly demanded not to be interrupted. The pessimism, or cowardice, which would prefer non-existence itself to even the mildest unhappiness was thus merely the generalisation of all these pusillanimous preferences. And it remains true that I have, almost all my life, been quite unable to feel that horror of nonentity, of annihilation, which, say, Dr. Johnson felt so strongly. I felt it for the very first time only in 1947. But that was after I had long been re-converted and thus begun to know what life really is and what would have been lost by missing it.

VIII. Release

As Fortune is wont, at her chosen hour,
Whether she sends us solace or sore,
The wight to whom she shows her power
Will find that he gets still more and more.
PEARL

A few chapters ago I warned the reader that the return of Joy had introduced into my life a duality which makes it difficult to narrate. Reading through what I have just written about Wyvern, I find myself exclaiming, "Lies, lies! This was really a period of ecstasy. It consisted chiefly of moments when you were too happy to speak, when the gods and heroes rioted through your head, when satyrs danced and Maenads roared on the mountains, when Brynhild and Sieglinde, Deirdre, Maeve and Helen were all about you, till sometimes you felt that it might break you with mere richness." And all that is true. There were more Leprechauns than fags in that House. I have seen the victories of Cuchulain more often than those of the first eleven. Was Borage the Head of the Coll? or was it Conachar MacNessa? And the world itself — can I have been unhappy, living in Paradise? What keen, tingling sunlight there was! The mere smells were enough to make a man tipsy — cut grass, dew-dabbled mosses, sweet pea, autumn woods, wood burning, peat, salt water. The sense ached. I was sick with desire; that sickness better than health. All this is true, but it does not make the other version a lie. I am telling a story of two lives. They have nothing to do with each other: oil and vinegar, a river running beside a canal, Jekyll and Hyde. Fix your eye on either and it claims to be the sole truth. When I remember my outer life I see clearly that the other is but momentary flashes, seconds of gold scattered in months of dross, each instantly swallowed up in the old, familiar, sordid, hopeless weariness. When I remember my inner life I see that everything mentioned in the last two chapters was merely a coarse curtain which at any moment might be drawn aside to reveal all the heavens I then knew. The same duality perplexes the story of my home life, to which I must now turn.

Once my brother had left Wyvern and I had gone to it, the classic period of our boyhood was at an end. Something not so good succeeded it, but this

had long been prepared by slow development within the classic age itself. All began, as I have said, with the fact that our father was out of the house from nine in the morning till six at night. From the very first we built up for ourselves a life that excluded him. He on his part demanded a confidence even more boundless, perhaps, than a father usually, or wisely, demands. One instance of this, early in my life, had far reaching effects. Once when I was at Oldie's and had just begun to try to live as a Christian I wrote out a set of rules for myself and put them in my pocket. On the first day of the holidays, noticing that my pockets bulged with all sorts of papers and that my coat was being pulled out of all shape, he plucked out the whole pile of rubbish and began to go through it. Boylike, I would have died rather than let him see my list of good resolutions. I managed to keep them out of his reach and get them into the fire. I do not see that either of us was to blame; but never from that moment until the hour of his death did I enter his house without first going through my own pockets and removing anything that I wished to keep private.

A habit of concealment was thus bred before I had anything guilty to conceal. By now I had plenty. And even what I had no wish to hide I could not tell. To have told him what Wyvern or even Chartres was really like would have been risky (he might write to the Headmaster) and intolerably embarrassing. It would also have been impossible; and here I must touch on one of his strangest characteristics.

My father — but these words, at the head of a paragraph, will carry the reader's mind inevitably to *Tristram Shandy*. On second thoughts I am content that they should. It is only in a Shandean spirit that my matter can be approached. I have to describe something as odd and whimsical as ever entered the brain of Sterne; and if I could, I would gladly lead you to the same affection for my father as you have for Tristram's. And now for the thing itself. You will have grasped that my father was no fool. He had even a streak of genius in him. At the same time he had — when seated in his own arm chair after a heavy mid-day dinner on an August afternoon with all the windows shut — more power of confusing an issue or taking up a fact wrongly than any man I have ever known. As a result it was impossible to drive into his head any of the realities of our school life, after which (nevertheless) he repeatedly enquired. The first and simplest barrier to communication was that, having earnestly asked, he did not "stay for an answer" or forgot it the moment it was uttered. Some facts must have been

asked for and told him, on a moderate computation, once a week, and were received by him each time as perfect novelties. But this was the simplest barrier. Far more often he retained something, but something very unlike what you had said. His mind so bubbled over with humour, sentiment, and indignation that, long before he had understood or even listened to your words, some accidental hint had set his imagination to work, he had produced his own version of the facts, and believed that he was getting it from you. As he invariably got proper names wrong (no name seemed to him less probable than another) his *textus receptus* was often almost unrecognisable. Tell him that a boy called Churchwood had caught a fieldmouse and kept it as a pet, and a year, or ten years later, he would ask you, “Did you ever hear what became of poor Chickweed who was so afraid of the rats?” For his own version, once adopted, was indelible, and attempts to correct it only produced an incredulous “Hm! Well, that’s not the story you *used* to tell.” Sometimes, indeed, he took in the facts you had stated; but truth fared none the better for that. What are facts without interpretation? It was axiomatic to my father (in theory) that nothing was said or done from an obvious motive. Hence he who in his real life was the most honourable and impulsive of men, and the easiest victim that any knave or impostor could hope to meet, became a positive Machiavel when he knitted his brows and applied to the behaviour of people he had never seen the spectral and labyrinthine operation which he called “reading between the lines”. Once embarked upon that, he might make his landfill anywhere in the wide world: and always with unshakable conviction. “I see it all”— “I understand it perfectly”— “It’s as plain as a pikestaff,” he would say; and then, as we soon learned, he would believe till his dying day in some deadly quarrel, some slight, some secret sorrow or some immensely complex machination, which was not only improbable but impossible. Dissent on our part was attributed, with kindly laughter, to our innocence, gullibility, and general ignorance of life. And besides all these confusions, there were the sheer *non sequiturs* when the ground seemed to open at one’s feet. “Did Shakespeare spell his name with an E at the end?” asked my brother. “I believe,” said I — but my father interrupted: “I very much doubt if he used the Italian calligraphy *at all*.” A certain church in Belfast has both a Greek inscription over the door and a curious tower. “That church is a great landmark,” said I, “I can pick it out from all sorts of places — even

from the top of Cave Hill." "Such nonsense," said my father, "how could you make out Greek letters three or four miles away?"

One conversation, held several years later, may be recorded as a specimen of these continual cross-purposes. My brother had been speaking of a re-union dinner for the officers of the Nth Division which he had lately attended. "I suppose your friend Collins was there," said my father.

B. Collins? Oh no. He wasn't in the Nth, you know.

F. (After a pause.) Did these fellows not like Collins then?

B. I don't quite understand. What fellows?

F. The Johnnies that got up the dinner.

B. Oh no, not at all. It was nothing to do with liking or not liking. You see, it was a purely Divisional affair. There'd be no question of asking anyone who hadn't been in the Nth.

F. (After a long pause.) Hm! Well, I'm sure poor Collins was very much hurt.

There are situations in which the very genius of Filial Piety would find it difficult not to let some sign of impatience escape him.

I would not commit the sin of Ham. Nor would I, as historian, reduce a complex character to a false simplicity. The man who, in his armchair, sometimes appeared not so much incapable of understanding anything as determined to misunderstand everything, was formidable in the police court and, I presume, efficient in his office. He was a humorist, even, on occasion, a wit. When he was dying, the pretty nurse, rallying him, said, "What an old pessimist you are! You're just like my father." "I suppose," replied her patient, "he has *several* daughters."

The hours my father spent at home were thus hours of perplexity for us boys. After an evening of the sort of conversation I have been describing one felt as if one's head were spinning like a top. His presence put an end to all our innocent as well as to all our forbidden occupations. It is a hard thing — nay, a wicked thing — when a man is felt to be an intruder in his own house. And yet, as Johnson said, "Sensation is sensation." I am sure it was not his fault, I believe much of it was ours; what is certain is that I increasingly found it oppressive to be with him. One of his most amiable qualities helped to make it so. I have said before that he "conned no state"; except during his Philippics he treated us as equals. The theory was that we lived together more like three brothers than like a father and two sons. That, I say, was the theory. But of course it was not and could not be so; indeed

ought not to have been so. That relation cannot really exist between schoolboys and a middle-aged man of overwhelming personality and of habits utterly unlike theirs. And the pretence that it does ends by putting a curious strain on the juniors. Chesterton has laid his finger on the weak point of all such factitious equality: “If a boy’s aunts are his pals, will it not soon follow that a boy needs no pals but his aunts?” That was not, of course, the question for us; we wanted no pals. But we did want liberty, if only liberty to walk about the house. And my father’s theory that we were three boys together actually meant that while he was at home we were as closely bound to his presence as if the three of us had been chained together; and all our habits were frustrated. Thus if my father came home unexpectedly at midday, having allowed himself an extra half-holiday, he might, if it were summer, find us with chairs and books in the garden. An austere parent, of the formal school, would have gone in to his own adult occupations. Not so my father. Sitting in the garden? An excellent idea. But would not all three of us be better on the summer-seat? Thither, after he had assumed one of his “light spring overcoats”, we would go. (I do not know how many overcoats he had; I am still wearing two of them.) After sitting for a few minutes, thus clad, on a shadeless seat where the noonday sun was blistering the paint, he not unnaturally began to perspire. “I don’t know what you two think,” he would say, “but I’m finding this almost *too* hot. What about moving indoors?” That meant an adjournment to the study, where even the smallest chink of open window was rather grudgingly allowed. I say “allowed”, but there was no question of authority. In theory, everything was decided by the general Will. “Liberty Hall, boys, Liberty Hall,” as he delighted to quote. “What time would you like lunch?” But we knew only too well that the meal which would otherwise have been at one had already been shifted, in obedience to his lifelong preference, to two or even two-thirty; and that the cold meats which we liked had already been withdrawn in favour of the only food our father ever voluntarily ate — hot butcher’s meat, boiled, stewed or roast... and this to be eaten in mid-afternoon in a dining-room that faced south. For the whole of the rest of the day, whether sitting or walking, we were inseparable; and the speech (you see that it could hardly be called conversation), the speech with its cross-purposes, with its tone (inevitably) always set by him, continued intermittently till bedtime. I should be worse than a dog if I blamed my lonely father for thus desiring the friendship of his sons; or even if the

miserable return I made him did not to this day lie heavy on my conscience. But “sensation is sensation”. It was extraordinarily tiring. And in my own contributions to these endless talks — which were indeed too adult for me, too anecdotal, too prevailingly jocular — I was increasingly aware of an artificiality. The anecdotes were, indeed, admirable in their kind: business stories, Mahaffy stories (many of which I found attached to Jowett at Oxford), stories of ingenious swindles, social blunders, police-court “drunks”. But I was acting when I responded to them. Drollery, whimsicality, the kind of humour that borders on the fantastic, was my line. I had to act. My father’s geniality and my own furtive disobediences both helped to drive me into hypocrisy. I could not “be myself” while he was at home. God forgive me, I thought Monday morning, when he went back to his work, the brightest jewel in the week.

Such was the situation which developed during the classic period. Now, when I had gone to Wyvern and my brother to a tutor to prepare for Sandhurst, there came a change. My brother had liked Wyvern as much as I loathed it. There were many reasons for this: his more adaptable temper, his face which bore no such smack-inviting signature as mine, but most of all the fact that he had gone there straight from Oldie’s and I from a preparatory school where I had been happy. No school in England but would have appeared a heaven on earth after Oldie’s. Thus in one of his first letters from Wyvern my brother communicated the startling fact that you could really eat as much (or as little) as you wanted at table. To a boy fresh from the school at Belsen, this alone would have outweighed almost everything else. But by the time I went to Wyvern I had learned to take decent feeding for granted. And now a terrible thing happened. My reaction to Wyvern was perhaps the first great disappointment my brother had ever experienced. Loving the place as he did, he had looked forward to the days when this too could be shared between us — an *idem sentire* about Wyvern succeeding an *idem sentire* about Boxen. Instead he heard, from me, blasphemies against all his gods; from Wyvern, that his young brother looked like becoming a Coll Punt. The immemorial league between us was strained, all but broken.

All this was cruelly complicated by the fact that relations between my father and my brother were never before or since so bad as at this time; and Wyvern was behind that too. My brother’s reports had grown worse and worse; and the tutor to whom he had now been sent confirmed them to the

extent of saying that he seemed to have learned almost nothing at school. Nor was that all. Sentences savagely underlined in my father's copy of *The Lanchester Tradition* reveal his thoughts. They are passages about a certain glazed insolence, an elaborate, heartless flippancy, which the reforming Headmaster in that story encountered in the Bloods of the school he wished to reform. That was how my father envisaged my brother at this period: flippant, languid, emptied of the intellectual interests which had appeared in his earlier boyhood, immovable, indifferent to all real values, and urgent in his demand for a motor-bicycle.

It was, of course, to turn us into public-school boys that my father had originally sent us to Wyvern; the finished product appalled him. It is a familiar tragi-comedy and you can study it in Lockhart; Scott laboured hard to make his son a hussar, but when the actual hussar was presented to him, Scott sometimes forgot the illusion of being an aristocrat and became once more a respectable Edinburgh lawyer with strong views about Puppyism. So in our family. Mispronunciation was one of my father's favourite rhetorical weapons. He now always sounded the first syllable of Wyvern wrongly. I can still hear him growl, "Wyvernian affectation." In proportion as my brother's tone became languid and urbanely weary, so my father's voice became more richly and energetically Irish, and all manner of strange music from his boyhood in Cork and Dublin forced its way up through the more recent Belfastian crust.

During these miserable debates I occupied a most unfortunate position. To have been on my father's side and against my brother I should have had to unmake myself; it was a state of parties outside my whole philosophy of domestic politics. It was all very disagreeable.

Yet out of this "unpleasantness" (a favourite word of my father's) there sprang what I still reckon, by merely natural standards, the most fortunate thing that ever happened to me. The tutor (in Surrey) to whom my brother had been sent was one of my father's oldest friends. He had been headmaster of Lurgan when my father was a boy there. In a surprisingly short time he so re-built and extended the ruins of my brother's education that he not only passed into Sandhurst but was placed among those very few candidates at the top of the list who received prize cadetships. I do not think my father ever did justice to my brother's achievement; it came at a time when the gulf between them was too wide, and when they were friends again it had become ancient history. But he saw very clearly what it proved

about the exceptional powers of his teacher. At the same time, he was almost as sick as I of the very name of Wyvern. And I never ceased, by letter and by word of mouth, to beg that I might be taken away. All these factors urged him to the decision which he now made. Might it not after all be best to give me my desire? to have done with school for good and send me also to Surrey to read for the University with Mr. Kirkpatrick? He did not form this plan without much doubt and hesitation. He did his best to put all the risks before me: the dangers of solitude, the sudden change from the life and bustle of a great school (which change I might not like so much as I anticipated), the possibly deadening effect of living with only an old man and his old wife for company. Should I really be happy with no companions of my own age? I tried to look very grave at these questions. But it was all imposture. My heart laughed. Happy without other boys? Happy without toothache, without chilblains, happy without pebbles in my shoes? And so the arrangement was made. If it had had nothing else to recommend it, the mere thought, “Never, never, never, shall I have to play games again,” was enough to transport me. If you want to know how I felt, imagine your own feelings on waking one morning to find that income tax or unrequited love had somehow vanished from the world.

I should be sorry if I were understood to think, or if I encouraged any reader in thinking, that this invincible dislike of doing things with a bat or a ball were other than a misfortune. Not, indeed, that I allow to games any of the moral and almost mystical virtue which schoolmasters claim for them; they seem to me to lead to ambition, jealousy, and embittered partisan feeling, quite as often as to anything else. Yet not to like them is a misfortune, because it cuts you off from companionship with many excellent people who can be approached in no other way. A misfortune, not a vice; for it is involuntary. I had tried to like games and failed. That impulse had been left out of my make-up; I was to games, as the proverb has it, like an ass to the harp.

It is a curious truth, noticed by many writers, that good fortune is nearly always followed by more good fortune, and bad, by more bad. About the same time that my Father decided to send me to Mr. Kirkpatrick, another great good came to me. Many chapters ago I mentioned a boy who lived near us and who had tried, quite unsuccessfully, to make friends with my brother and myself. His name was Arthur and he was my brother’s exact contemporary; he and I had been at Campbell together though we never

met. I think it was shortly before the beginning of my last term at Wyvern that I received a message saying that Arthur was in bed, convalescent, and would welcome a visit. I can't remember what led me to accept this invitation, but for some reason I did.

I found Arthur sitting up in bed. On the table beside him lay a copy of *Myths of the Norsemen*.

"Do *you* like that?" said I.

"Do *you* like that?" said he.

Next moment the book was in our hands, our heads were bent close together, we were pointing, quoting, talking — soon almost shouting — discovering in a torrent of questions that we liked not only the same thing, but the same parts of it and in the same way; that both knew the stab of Joy and that, for both, the arrow was shot from the North. Many thousands of people have had the experience of finding the first friend, and it is none the less a wonder; as great a wonder (*pace* the novelists) as first love, or even a greater. I had been so far from thinking such a friend possible that I had never even longed for one; no more than I longed to be King of England. If I had found that Arthur had independently built up an exact replica of the Boxonian world I should not really have been much more surprised. Nothing, I suspect, is more astonishing in any man's life than the discovery that there do exist people very, very like himself.

During my last few weeks at Wyvern strange stories began to appear in the papers, for this was the summer of 1914. I remember how a friend and I puzzled over a column that bore the headline "Can England keep out of it?" "Keep out of it?" said he, "I don't see how she can get into it." Memory paints the last hours of that term in slightly apocalyptic colours, and perhaps memory lies. Or perhaps for me it was apocalyptic enough to know that I was leaving, to see all those hated things for the last time; yet not simply (at that moment) to hate them. There is a "rumness", a ghostliness, about even a Windsor chair when it says, "You will not see me again." Early in the holidays we declared war. My brother, then on leave from Sandhurst, was recalled. Some weeks later I went to Mr. Kirkpatrick at Great Bookham in Surrey.

IX. The Great Knock

You will often meet with characters in nature so extravagant that a discreet poet would not venture to set them upon the stage.
LORD CHESTERFIELD

On a September day, having crossed to Liverpool and reached London, I made my way to Waterloo and ran down to Great Bookham. I had been told that Surrey was “suburban”, and the landscape that actually flitted past the windows astonished me. I saw steep little hills, watered valleys, and wooded commons which ranked by my Wyvernian and Irish standards as forests; bracken everywhere; a world of red and russet and yellowish greens. Even the sprinkling of suburban villas (much rarer then than now) delighted me. These timbered and red-tiled houses, embosomed in trees, were wholly unlike the stuccoed monstrosities which formed the suburbs of Belfast. Where I had expected gravel drives and iron gates and interminable laurels and monkey puzzlers, I saw crooked paths running up or down hill from wicket gates, between fruit trees and birches. By a severer taste than mine these houses would all be mocked perhaps; yet I cannot help thinking that those who designed them and their gardens achieved their object, which was to suggest Happiness. They filled me with a desire for that domesticity which, in its full development, I had never known; they set one thinking of tea trays.

At Bookham I was met by my new teacher— “Kirk” or “Knock” or the Great Knock as my father, my brother, and I all called him. We had heard about him all our lives and I therefore had a very clear impression of what I was in for. I came prepared to endure a perpetual luke-warm shower bath of sentimentality. That was the price I was ready to pay for the infinite blessedness of escaping school; but a heavy price. One story of my father’s, in particular, gave me the most embarrassing forebodings. He had loved to tell how once at Lurgan, when he was in some kind of trouble or difficulty, the Old Knock, or the dear Old Knock, had drawn him aside and there “quietly and naturally” slid his arm round him and rubbed his dear old whiskers against my father’s youthful cheek and whispered a few words of comfort.... And here was Bookham at last, and there was the arch-sentimentalist himself waiting to meet me.

He was over six feet tall, very shabbily dressed (like a gardener, I thought), lean as a rake, and immensely muscular. His wrinkled face seemed to consist entirely of muscles, so far as it was visible; for he wore moustache and side whiskers with a clean-shaven chin like the Emperor Franz Joseph. The whiskers, you will understand, concerned me very much at that moment. My cheek already tingled in anticipation. Would he begin at once? There would be tears for certain; perhaps worse things. It is one of my lifelong weaknesses that I never could endure the embrace or kiss of my own sex. (An unmanly weakness, by the way; Aeneas, Beowulf, Roland, Launcelot, Johnson, and Nelson knew nothing of it.)

Apparently, however, the old man was holding his fire. We shook hands, and though his grip was like iron pincers it was not lingering. A few minutes later we were walking away from the station.

“You are now,” said Kirk, “proceeding along the principal artery between Great and Little Bookham.”

I stole a glance at him. Was this geographical exordium a heavy joke? Or was he trying to conceal his emotions? His face, however, showed only an inflexible gravity. I began to “make conversation” in the deplorable manner which I had acquired at those evening parties and indeed found increasingly necessary to use with my father. I said I was surprised at the “scenery” of Surrey; it was much “wilder” than I had expected.

“Stop!” shouted Kirk with a suddenness that made me jump. “What do you mean by wildness and what grounds had you for not expecting it?”

I replied I don’t know what, still “making conversation”. As answer after answer was torn to shreds it at last dawned upon me that he really wanted to know. He was not making conversation, nor joking, nor snubbing me; he wanted to know. I was stung into attempting a real answer. A few passes sufficed to show that I had no clear and distinct idea corresponding to the word “wildness”, and that, in so far as I had any idea at all, “wildness” was a singularly inept word. “Do you not see, then,” concluded the Great Knock, “that your remark was meaningless?” I prepared to sulk a little, assuming that the subject would now be dropped. Never was I more mistaken in my life. Having analysed my terms, Kirk was proceeding to deal with my proposition as a whole. On what had I based (but he pronounced it *baized*) my expectations about the Flora and Geology of Surrey? Was it maps, or photographs, or books? I could produce none. It had, heaven help me, never occurred to me that what I called my thoughts

needed to be “baized” on anything. Kirk once more drew a conclusion — without the slightest sign of emotion, but equally without the slightest concession to what I thought good manners: “Do you not see, then, that you had no right to have any opinion whatever on the subject?”

By this time our acquaintance had lasted about three and a half minutes; but the tone set by this first conversation was preserved without a single break during all the years I spent at Bookham. Anything more grotesquely unlike the “dear Old Knock” of my father’s reminiscences could not be conceived. Knowing my father’s invariable intention of veracity and also knowing what strange transformations every truth underwent when once it entered his mind, I am sure he did not mean to deceive us. But if Kirk at any time of his life took a boy aside and there “quietly and naturally” rubbed the boy’s face with his whiskers, I shall as easily believe that he sometimes varied the treatment by quietly and naturally standing on his venerable and egg-bald head.

If ever a man came near to being a purely logical entity, that man was Kirk. Born a little later, he would have been a Logical Positivist. The idea that human beings should exercise their vocal organs for any purpose except that of communicating or discovering truth was to him preposterous. The most casual remark was taken as a summons to disputation. I soon came to know the differing values of his three openings. The loud cry of “Stop!” was flung in to arrest a torrent of verbiage which could not be endured a moment longer; not because it fretted his patience (he never thought of that) but because it was wasting time, darkening counsel. The hastier and quieter “Excuse!” (i.e. “Excuse me”) ushered in a correction or distinction merely parenthetical and betokened that, thus set right, your remark might still, without absurdity, be allowed to reach completion. The most encouraging of all was, “I hear you.” This meant that your remark was significant and only required refutation; it had risen to the dignity of error. Refutation (when we got so far) always followed the same lines. Had I read this? Had I studied that? Had I any statistical evidence? Had I any evidence in my own experience? And so to the almost inevitable conclusion, “Do you not see then that you had no right, etc.”

Some boys would not have liked it; to me it was red beef and strong beer. I had taken it for granted that my leisure hours at Bookham would be passed in “grown-up conversation”. And that, as you know already, I had no taste for. In my experience it meant conversation about politics, money,

deaths, and digestion. I assumed that a taste for it, as for eating mustard or reading newspapers, would develop in me when I grew older (so far, all three expectations have been disappointed). The only two kinds of talk I wanted were the almost purely imaginative and the almost purely rational; such talk as I had about Boxen with my brother or about Valhalla with Arthur, on the one hand, or such talk as I had had with my uncle Gussie about astronomy on the other. I could never have gone far in any science because on the path of every science the lion Mathematics lies in wait for you. Even in Mathematics, whatever could be done by mere reasoning (as in simple geometry) I did with delight; but the moment calculation came in I was helpless. I grasped the principles but my answers were always wrong. Yet though I could never have been a scientist, I had scientific as well as imaginative impulses, and I loved ratiocination. Kirk excited and satisfied one side of me. Here was talk that was really about something. Here was a man who thought not about you but about what you said. No doubt I snorted and bridled a little at some of my tossings; but, taking it all in all, I loved the treatment. After being knocked down sufficiently often I began to know a few guards and blows, and to put on intellectual muscle. In the end, unless I flatter myself, I became a not contemptible sparring partner. It was a great day when the man who had so long been engaged in exposing my vagueness at last cautioned me against the dangers of excessive subtlety.

If Kirk's ruthless dialectic had been merely a pedagogic instrument I might have resented it. But he knew no other way of talking. No age or sex was spared the elenchus. It was a continuous astonishment to him that anyone should not desire to be clarified or corrected. When a very dignified neighbour, in the course of a Sunday call, observed with an air of finality, "Well, well, Mr. Kirkpatrick, it takes all sorts to make a world. You are a Liberal and I am a Conservative; we naturally look at the facts from different angles," Kirk replied, "What do you mean? Are you asking me to picture Liberals and Conservatives playing peep-bo at a rectangular Fact from opposite sides of a table?" If an unwary visitor, hoping to waive a subject, observed, "Of course, I know opinions differ — —" Kirk would raise both his hands and exclaim, "Good heavens! I have no *opinions* on any subject whatsoever." A favourite maxim was, "You can have enlightenment for ninepence but you prefer ignorance." The commonest metaphors would be questioned till some bitter truth had been forced from its hiding place. "These fiendish German atrocities — —" "But are not

fiends a figment of the imagination?”— “Very well, then; these brutal atrocities — —” “But none of the brutes does anything of the kind!”— “Well, what am I to call them?” “Is it not plain that we must call them simply *Human*?” What excited his supreme contempt was the conversation of other Headmasters, which he had sometimes had to endure at conferences when he himself was Head of Lurgan. “They would come and ask me, ‘What attitude do you adopt to a boy who does so-and-so?’ Good Heavens! As if I ever adopted an attitude to anybody or anything!” Sometimes, but rarely, he was driven to irony. On such occasions his voice became even weightier than usual and only the distention of his nostrils betrayed the secret to those who knew him. It was in such fashion that he produced his *dictum*, “The Master of Balliol is one of the most important beings in the universe.”

It will be imagined that Mrs. Kirkpatrick led a somewhat uneasy life: witness the occasion on which her husband by some strange error found himself in the drawing-room at the beginning of what his lady had intended to be a bridge party. About half an hour later she was observed to leave the room with a remarkable expression on her face; and many hours later still the Great Knock was discovered sitting on a stool in the midst of seven elderly ladies (“ful drery was hire chere”) begging them to clarify their terms.

I have said that he was almost wholly logical; but not quite. He had been a Presbyterian and was now an Atheist. He spent Sunday, as he spent most of his time on week-days, working in his garden. But one curious trait from his Presbyterian youth survived. He always, on Sundays, gardened in a different, and slightly more respectable, suit. An Ulster Scot may come to disbelieve in God, but not to wear his week-day clothes on the Sabbath.

Having said that he was an Atheist, I hasten to add that he was a “Rationalist” of the old, high and dry nineteenth-century type. For Atheism has come down in the world since those days, and mixed itself with politics and learned to dabble in dirt. The anonymous donor who now sends me anti-God magazines hopes, no doubt, to hurt the Christian in me; he really hurts the ex-Atheist. I am ashamed that my old mates and (which matters much more) Kirk’s old mates should have sunk to what they are now. It was different then; even McCabe wrote like a man. At the time when I knew him, the fuel of Kirk’s Atheism was chiefly of the anthropological and pessimistic kind. He was great on *The Golden Bough* and Schopenhauer.

The reader will remember that my own Atheism and Pessimism were fully formed before I went to Bookham. What I got there was merely fresh ammunition for the defence of a position already chosen. Even this I got indirectly from the tone of his mind or independently from reading his books. He never attacked religion in my presence. It is the sort of fact that no one would infer from an outside knowledge of my life, but it is a fact.

I arrived at Gastons (so the Knock's home was called) on a Saturday, and he announced that we would begin Homer on Monday. I explained that I had never read a word in any dialect but the Attic, assuming that when he knew this he would approach Homer through some preliminary lessons on the Epic language. He replied merely with a sound very frequent in his conversation which I can only spell "Huh". I found this rather disquieting; and I woke on Monday saying to myself, "Now for Homer. Golly!" The name struck awe into my soul. At nine o'clock we sat down to work in the little upstairs study which soon became so familiar to me. It contained a sofa (on which we sat side by side when he was working with me), a table and chair (which I used when I was alone), a bookcase, a gas stove, and a framed photograph of Mr. Gladstone. We opened our books at *Iliad*, Book I. Without a word of introduction Knock read aloud the first twenty lines or so in the "new" pronunciation, which I had never heard before. Like Smewgy, he was a chanter; less mellow in voice, yet his frill gutturals and rolling R's and more varied vowels seemed to suit the bronze-age epic as well as Smewgy's honey tongue had suited Horace. For Kirk, even after years of residence in England, spoke the purest Ulster. He then translated, with a few, a very few explanations, about a hundred lines. I had never seen a classical author taken in such large gulps before. When he had finished he handed me over Crusius' *Lexicon* and, having told me to go through again as much as I could of what he had done, left the room. It seems an odd method of teaching, but it worked. At first I could travel only a very short way along the trail he had blazed, but every day I could travel further. Presently I could travel the whole way. Then I could go a line or two beyond his furthest North. Then it became a kind of game to see how far beyond. He appeared at this stage to value speed more than absolute accuracy. The great gain was that I very soon became able to understand a great deal without (even mentally) translating it; I was beginning to think in Greek. That is the great Rubicon to cross in learning any language. Those in whom the Greek word lives only while they are hunting for it in the lexicon,

and who then substitute the English word for it, are not reading the Greek at all; they are only solving a puzzle. The very formula, "*Naus* means a ship," is wrong. *Naus* and *ship* both mean a thing, they do not mean one another. Behind *Naus*, as behind *navis* or *naca*, we want to have a picture of a dark, slender mass with sail or oars, climbing the ridges, with no officious English word intruding.

We now settled into a routine which has ever since served in my mind as an archtype, so that what I still mean when I speak of a "normal" day (and lament that normal days are so rare) is a day of the Bookham pattern. For if I could please myself I would always live as I lived there. I would choose always to breakfast at exactly eight and to be at my desk by nine, there to read or write till one. If a cup of good tea or coffee could be brought me about eleven, so much the better. A step or so out of doors for a pint of beer would not do quite so well; for a man does not want to drink alone and if you meet a friend in the tap-room the break is likely to be extended beyond its ten minutes. At one precisely lunch should be on the table; and by two at the latest I would be on the road. Not, except at rare intervals, with a friend. Walking and talking are two very great pleasures, but it is a mistake to combine them. Our own noise blots out the sounds and silences of the out-door world; and talking leads almost inevitably to smoking, and then farewell to nature as far as one of our senses is concerned. The only friend to walk with is one (such as I found, during the holidays, in Arthur) who so exactly shares your taste for each mood of the countryside that a glance, a halt, or at most a nudge, is enough to assure us that the pleasure is shared. The return from the walk, and the arrival of tea, should be exactly coincident, and not later than a quarter past four. Tea should be taken in solitude, as I took it at Bookham on those (happily numerous) occasions when Mrs. Kirkpatrick was out; the Knock himself disdained this meal. For eating and reading are two pleasures that combine admirably. Of course not all books are suitable for meal-time reading. It would be a kind of blasphemy to read poetry at table. What one wants is a gossipy, formless book which can be opened anywhere. The ones I learned so to use at Bookham were Boswell, and a translation of Herodotus, and Lang's *History of English Literature*. *Tristram Shandy*, *Elia* and the *Anatomy of Melancholy* are all good for the same purpose. At five a man should be at work again, and at it till seven. Then, at the evening meal and after, comes the time for talk, or, failing that, for lighter reading; and unless you are

making a night of it with your cronies (and at Bookham I had none) there is no reason why you should ever be in bed later than eleven. But when is a man to write his letters? You forget that I am describing the happy life I led with Kirk or the ideal life I would live now if I could. And it is an essential of the happy life that a man would have almost no mail and never dread the postman's knock. In those blessed days I received, and answered, only two letters a week; one from my father, which was a matter of duty, and one from Arthur which was the high light of the week, for we poured out to each other on paper all the delight that was intoxicating us both. Letters from my brother, now on active service, were longer and rarer, and so were my replies.

Such is my ideal, and such then (almost) was the reality, of "settled, calm, Epicurean life". It is no doubt for my own good that I have been so generally prevented from leading it, for it is a life almost entirely selfish. Selfish, not self centred: for in such a life my mind would be directed towards a thousand things, not one of which is myself. The distinction is not unimportant. One of the happiest men and most pleasing companions I have ever known was intensely selfish. On the other hand I have known people capable of real sacrifice whose lives were nevertheless a misery to themselves and to others, because self-concern and self-pity filled all their thoughts. Either condition will destroy the soul in the end. But till the end, give me the man who takes the best of everything (even at my expense) and then talks of other things, rather than the man who serves me and talks of himself, and whose very kindnesses are a continual reproach, a continual demand for pity, gratitude, and admiration.

Kirk did not, of course, make me read nothing but Homer. The Two Great Bores (Demosthenes and Cicero) could not be avoided. There were (oh glory!) Lucretius, Catullus, Tacitus, Herodotus. There was Virgil, for whom I still had no true taste. There were Greek and Latin compositions. (It is a strange thing that I have contrived to reach my late fifties without ever reading one word of Caesar.) There were Euripides, Sophocles, Aeschylus. In the evenings there was French with Mrs. Kirkpatrick, treated much as her husband treated Homer. We got through a great many good novels in this way and I was soon buying French books on my own. I had hoped there would be English essays, but whether because he felt he could not endure mine or because he soon guessed that I was already only too proficient in that art (which he almost certainly despised) Kirk never set me one. For the

first week or so he gave me directions about my English reading, but when he discovered that, left to myself, I was not likely to waste my time, he gave me absolute freedom. Later in my career we branched out into German and Italian. Here his methods were the same. After the very briefest contact with Grammars and Exercises I was plunged into *Faust* and the *Inferno*. In Italian we succeeded. In German I have little doubt that we should equally have succeeded if I had stayed with him a little longer. But I left too soon and my German has remained all my life that of a schoolboy. Whenever I have set about rectifying this, some other and more urgent task has always interrupted me.

But Homer came first. Day after day and month after month we drove gloriously onward, tearing the whole *Achilleid* out of the *Iliad* and tossing the rest on one side, and then reading the *Odyssey* entire, till the music of the thing and the clear, bitter brightness that lives in almost every formula had become part of me. Of course my appreciation was very romanticised — the appreciation of a boy soaked in William Morris. But this slight error saved me from that far deeper error of "classicism" with which the Humanists have hoodwinked half the world. I cannot therefore deeply regret the days when I called Circe a "wise-wife" and every marriage a "high-tide". That has all burned itself out and left no snuff, and I can now enjoy the *Odyssey* in a maturer way. The wanderings mean as much as ever they did; the great moment of "eucatastrophe" (as Professor Tolkien would call it) when Odysseus strips off his rags and bends the bow, means more; and perhaps what now pleases me best of all is those exquisite, Charlotte M. Yonge families at Pylos and elsewhere. How rightly Sir Maurice Powicke says, "There have been civilised people in all ages." And let us add, "In all ages they have been surrounded by barbarism."

Meanwhile, on afternoons and on Sundays, Surrey lay open to me. County Down in the holidays and Surrey in the term — it was an excellent contrast. Perhaps, since their beauties were such that even a fool could not force them into competition, this cured me once and for all of the pernicious tendency to compare and to prefer — an operation that does little good even when we are dealing with works of art and endless harm when we are dealing with nature. Total surrender is the first step towards the fruition of either. Shut your mouth; open your eyes and ears. Take in what is there and give no thought to what might have been there or what is somewhere else. That can come later, if it must come at all. (And notice here how the true

training for anything whatever that is good always prefigures and, if submitted to, will always help us in, the true training for the Christian life. That is a school where they can always use your previous work whatever subject it was on.) What delighted me in Surrey was its intricacy. My Irish walks commanded large horizons and the general lie of land and sea could be taken in at a glance; I will try to speak of them later. But in Surrey the contours were so tortuous, the little valleys so narrow, there was so much timber, so many villages concealed in woods or hollows, so many field paths, sunk lanes, dingles, copses, such an unpredictable variety of cottage, farmhouse, villa, and country seat, that the whole thing could never lie clearly in my mind, and to walk in it daily gave one the same sort of pleasure that there is in the labyrinthine complexity of Malory or the *Faerie Queene*. Even where the prospect was tolerably open, as when I sat looking down on the Leatherhead and Dorking valley from Polesdan Lacey, it always lacked the classic comprehensibility of the Wyvern landscape. The valley twisted away southward into another valley, a train thudded past invisible in a wooded cutting, the opposite ridge concealed its bays and promontories. This, even on a summer morning. But I remember more dearly autumn afternoons in bottoms that lay intensely silent under old and great trees, and especially the moment, near Friday Street, when our party (that time I was not alone) suddenly discovered, from recognising a curiously shaped stump, that we had travelled round in a circle for the last half-hour; or one frosty sunset over the Hog's Back at Guildford. On a Saturday afternoon in winter, when nose and fingers might be pinched enough to give an added relish to the anticipation of tea and fireside, and the whole week-end's reading lay ahead, I suppose I reached as much happiness as is ever to be reached on earth. And especially if there were some new, long-coveted book awaiting me.

For I had forgotten. When I spoke of the post I forgot to tell you that it brought parcels as well as letters. Every man of my age has had in his youth one blessing for which our juniors may well envy him: we grew up in a world of cheap and abundant books. Your *Everyman* was then a bare shilling, and, what is more, always in stock; your *World's Classic*, *Muses' Library*, *Home University Library*, *Temple Classic*, Nelson's French series, Bohn, and Longman's Pocket Library, at proportionate prices. All the money I could spare went in postal orders to Messrs. Denny of the Strand. No days, even at Bookham, were happier than those on which the afternoon

post brought me a neat little parcel in dark grey paper. Milton, Spenser, Malory, *The High History of the Holy Grail*, the *Laxdale Saga*, Ronsard, Chénier, Voltaire, *Beowulf* and *Gawain and the Green Knight* (both in translations), Apuleius, the *Kalevala*, Herrick, Walton, Sir John Mandeville, Sidney's *Arcadia*, and nearly all of Morris, came volume by volume into my hands. Some of my purchases proved disappointments and some went beyond my hopes, but the undoing of the parcel always remained a delicious moment. On my rare visits to London I looked at Messrs. Denny in the Strand with a kind of awe; so much pleasure had come from it.

Smewgy and Kirk were my two greatest teachers. Roughly, one might say (in medieval language) that Smewgy taught me Grammar and Rhetoric and Kirk taught me Dialectic. Each had, and gave me, what the other lacked. Kirk had none of Smewgy's graciousness or delicacy, and Smewgy had less humour than Kirk. It was a saturnine humour. Indeed he was very like Saturn — not the dispossessed King of Italian legend, but grim old Cronos, Father Time himself with scythe and hour-glass. The bitterest, and also funniest, things came out when he had risen abruptly from table (always before the rest of us) and stood ferreting in a villainous old tobacco jar on the mantelpiece for the dottles of former pipes which it was his frugal habit to use again. My debt to him is very great, my reverence to this day undiminished.

X. Fortune’s Smile

The fields, the floods, the heavens, with one consent
Did seeme to laugh on me, and favour mine intent.
SPENSER

At the same time that I exchanged Wyvern for Bookham I also exchanged my brother for Arthur as my chief companion. My brother, as you know, was serving in France. From 1914 to 1916, which is the Bookham period, he becomes a figure that at rare intervals appears unpredicted on leave, in all the glory of a young officer, with what then seemed unlimited wealth at his command, and whisks me off to Ireland. Luxuries hitherto unknown to me, such as first-class railway carriages and sleeping cars, glorify these journeys. You will understand that I had been crossing the Irish sea six times a year since I was nine. My brother’s leaves now often added journeys extraordinary. That is why my memory is stored with ship’s-side images to a degree unusual for such an untravelled man. I have only to close my eyes to see if I choose, and sometimes whether I choose or no, the phosphorescence of a ship’s wash, the mast unmoving against the stars though the water is rushing past us, the long salmon-coloured rifts of dawn or sunset on the horizon of cold grey-green water, or the astonishing behaviour of land as you approach it, the promontories that walk out to meet you, the complex movements and final disappearance of the mountains further inland.

These leaves were of course a great delight. The strains that had been developing (thanks to Wyvern) before my brother went to France were forgotten. There was a tacit determination on both sides to revive, for the short time allowed us, the classic period of our boyhood. As my brother was in the R.A.S.C., which in those days was reckoned a safe place to be, we did not feel that degree of anxiety about him which most families were suffering at this time. There may have been more anxiety in the unconscious than came out in fully waking thought. That, at least, would explain an experience I had, certainly once, and perhaps more often; not a belief, nor quite a dream, but an impression, a mental image, a haunting, which on a bitter winter night at Bookham represented my brother hanging about the garden and calling — or rather trying to call, but as in Virgil’s Hell *inceptus*

clamor frustratur hiantem, a bat's cry is all that comes. There hung over this image an atmosphere which I dislike as much as any I ever breathed, a blend of the macabre and the weakly, wretchedly, hopelessly pathetic — the dreary miasma of the Pagan Hades.

Though my friendship with Arthur began from an identity of taste on a particular point, we were sufficiently different to help one another. His home-life was almost the opposite of mine. His parents were members of the Plymouth Brothers, and he was the youngest of a large family; his home, nevertheless, was almost as silent as ours was noisy. He was at this time working in the business of one of his brothers, but his health was delicate and after an illness or two he was withdrawn from it. He was a man of more than one talent: a pianist and, in hope, a composer, and also a painter. One of our earliest schemes was that he should make an operatic score for *Loki Bound* — a project which, of course, after an extremely short and happy life, died a painless death. In literature he influenced me more, or more permanently, than I did him. His great defect was that he cared very little for verse. Something I did to mend this, but less than I wished. He, on the other hand, side by side with his love for myth and marvel, which I fully shared, had another taste which I lacked till I met him and with which, to my great good, he infected me for life. This was the taste for what he called "the good, solid, old books", the classic English novelists. It is astonishing how I had avoided them before I met Arthur. I had been persuaded by my father to read *The Newcomes* when I was rather too young for it and never tried Thackeray again till I was at Oxford. He is still antipathetic to me, not because he preaches but because he preaches badly. Dickens I looked upon with a feeling of horror, engendered by long poring over the illustrations before I had learned to read. I still think them depraved. Here, as in Walt Disney, it is not the ugliness of the ugly figures but the simpering dolls intended for our sympathy which really betray the secret (not that Walt Disney is not far superior to the illustrators of Dickens). Of Scott I knew only a few of the medieval, that is, the weakest, novels. Under Arthur's influence I read at this time all the best Waverleys, all the Brontës, and all the Jane Austens. They provided an admirable complement to my more fantastic reading, and each was the more enjoyed for its contrast to the other. The very qualities which had previously deterred me from such books Arthur taught me to see as their charm. What I would have called their "stodginess" or "ordinariness" he called "Homeliness" — a key word in his

imagination. He did not mean merely Domesticity, though that came into it. He meant the rooted quality which attaches them to all our simple experiences, to weather, food, the family, the neighbourhood. He could get endless enjoyment out of the opening sentence of *Jane Eyre*, or that other opening sentence in one of Hans Andersen's stories, "How it did rain, to be sure." The mere word "beck" in the Brontës was a feast to him; and so were the schoolroom and kitchen scenes. This love of the "Homely" was not confined to literature; he looked for it in out-of-door scenes as well and taught me to do the same.

Hitherto my feelings for nature had been too narrowly romantic. I attended almost entirely to what I thought awe-inspiring, or wild, or eerie, and above all to distance. Hence mountains and clouds were my especial delight; the sky was, and still is, to me one of the principal elements in any landscape, and long before I had seen them all named and sorted out in *Modern Painters* I was very attentive to the different qualities, and different heights, of the cirrus, the cumulus, and the rain-cloud. As for the Earth, the country I grew up in had everything to encourage a romantic bent, had indeed done so ever since I first looked at the unattainable Green Hills through the nursery window. For the reader who knows those parts it will be enough to say that my main haunt was the Holywood Hills-the irregular polygon you would have described if you drew a line from Stormont to Comber, from Comber to Newtownards, from Newtownards to Scrabo, from Scrabo to Craigantlet, from Craigantlet to Holywood, and thence through Knocknagonney back to Stormont. How to suggest it all to a foreigner I hardly know.

First of all, it is by Southern English standards bleak. The woods, for we have a few, are of small trees, rowan and birch and small fir. The fields are small, divided by ditches with ragged sea-nipped hedges on top of them. There is a good deal of gorse and many outcroppings of rock. Small abandoned quarries, filled with cold-looking water, are surprisingly numerous. There is nearly always a wind whistling through the grass. Where you see a man ploughing there will be gulls following him and pecking at the furrow. There are no field-paths or rights of way, but that does not matter for everyone knows you — or if they do not know you, they know your kind and understand that you will shut gates and not walk over crops. Mushrooms are still felt to be common property, like the air. The soil has none of the rich chocolate or ochre you find in parts of England: it is

pale — what Dyson calls “the ancient, bitter earth”. But the grass is soft, rich, and sweet, and the cottages, always whitewashed and single storeyed and roofed with blue slate, light up the whole landscape.

Although these hills are not very high, the expanse seen from them is huge and various. Stand at the north-eastern extremity where the slopes go steeply down to Holywood. Beneath you is the whole expanse of the Lough. The Antrim coast twists sharply to the north and out of sight; green, and humble in comparison, Down curves away southward. Between the two the Lough merges into the sea, and if you look carefully on a good day you can even see Scotland, phantom-like on the horizon. Now come further to the south and west. Take your stand at the isolated cottage which is visible from my father’s house and overlooks our whole suburb, and which everyone calls The Shepherd’s Hut, though we are not really a shepherd country. You are still looking down on the Lough, but its mouth and the sea are now hidden by the shoulder you have just come from, and it might (for all you see) be a landlocked lake. And here we come to one of those great contrasts which have bitten deeply into my mind — Niflheim and Asgard, Britain and Logres, Handramit and Harandra, air and ether, the low world and the high. Your horizon from here is the Antrim Mountains, probably a uniform mass of greyish blue, though if it is a sunny day you may just trace on the Cave Hill the distinction between the green slopes that climb two-thirds of the way to the summit and the cliff wall that perpendicularly accomplishes the rest. That is one beauty; and here where you stand is another, quite different and even more dearly loved — sunlight and grass and dew, crowing cocks and gaggling ducks. In between them, on the flat floor of the Valley at your feet, a forest of factory chimneys, gantries, and giant cranes rising out of a welter of mist, lies Belfast. Noises come up from it continually, whining and screeching of trams, clatter of horse traffic on uneven sets, and, dominating all else, the continual throb and stammer of the great shipyards. And because we have heard this all our lives it does not, for us, violate the peace of the hill-top; rather, it emphasises it, enriches the contrast, sharpens the dualism. Down in that “smoke and stir” is the hated office to which Arthur, less fortunate than I, must return to-morrow: for it is only one of his rare holidays that allows us to stand here together on a weekday morning. And down there too are the barefoot old women, the drunken men stumbling in and out of the “spirit grocers” (Ireland’s horrible substitute for the kindly English “pub”), the straining, overdriven horses,

the hard-faced rich women — all the world which Alberich created when he cursed love and twisted the gold into a ring.

Now step a little way — only two fields and across a lane and up to the top of the bank on the far side — and you will see, looking south with a little east in it, a different world. And having seen it, blame me if you can for being a romantic. For here is the thing itself, utterly irresistible, the way to the world's end, the land of longing, the breaking and blessing of hearts. You are looking across what may be called, in a certain sense, the plain of Down, and seeing beyond it the Mourne Mountains.

It was K. — that is, Cousin Quartus' second daughter, the Valkyrie — who first expounded to me what this plain of Down is really like. Here is the recipe for imagining it. Take a number of medium-sized potatoes and lay them down (one layer of them only) in a flat-bottomed tin basin. Now shake loose earth over them till the potatoes themselves, but not the shape of them, is hidden; and of course the crevices between them will now be depressions of earth. Now magnify the whole thing till those crevices are large enough to conceal each its stream and its huddle of trees. And then, for colouring, change your brown earth into the chequered pattern of fields, always small fields (a couple of acres each), with all their normal variety of crop, grass, and plough. You have now got a picture of the "plain" of Down, which is a plain only in this sense that if you were a very large giant you would regard it as level but very ill to walk on — like cobbles. And now remember that every cottage is white. The whole expanse laughs with these little white dots; it is like nothing so much as the assembly of white foam-caps when a fresh breeze is on a summer sea. And the roads are white too; there is no tarmac yet. And because the whole country is a turbulent democracy of little hills, these roads shoot in every direction, disappearing and reappearing. But you must not spread over this landscape your hard English sunlight; make it paler, make it softer, blur the edges of the white cumuli, cover it with watery gleams, deepening it, making all unsubstantial. And beyond all this, so remote that they seem fantastically abrupt, at the very limit of your vision, imagine the mountains. They are no stragglers. They are steep and compact and pointed and toothed and jagged. They seem to have nothing to do with the little hills and cottages that divide you from them. And sometimes they are blue, sometimes violet; but quite often they look transparent — as if huge sheets of gauze had been cut out into

mountainous shapes and hung up there, so that you could see through them the light of the invisible sea at their backs.

I number it among my blessings that my father had no car, while yet most of my friends had, and sometimes took me for a drive. This meant that all these distant objects could be visited just enough to clothe them with memories and not impossible desires, while yet they remained ordinarily as inaccessible as the Moon. The deadly power of rushing about wherever I pleased had not been given me. I measured distances by the standard of man, man walking on his two feet, not by the standard of the internal combustion engine. I had not been allowed to deflower the very idea of distance; in return I possessed “infinite riches” in what would have been to motorists “a little room”. The truest and most horrible claim made for modern transport is that it “annihilates space”. It does. It annihilates one of the most glorious gifts we have been given. It is a vile inflation which lowers the value of distance, so that a modern boy travels a hundred miles with less sense of liberation and pilgrimage and adventure than his grandfather got from travelling ten. Of course if a man hates space and wants it to be annihilated, that is another matter. Why not creep into his coffin at once? There is little enough space there.

Such were my outdoor delights before I met Arthur, and all these he shared and confirmed. And in his search for the Homely he taught me to see other things as well. But for him I should never have known the beauty of the ordinary vegetables that we destine to the pot. “Drills,” he used to say. “Just ordinary drills of cabbages — what can be better?” And he was right. Often he recalled my eyes from the horizon just to look through a hole in a hedge, to see nothing more than a farmyard in its mid-morning solitude, and perhaps a grey cat squeezing its way under a barn door, or a bent old woman with a wrinkled, motherly face coming back with an empty bucket from the pigstye. But best of all we liked it when the Homely and the unhomely met in sharp juxtaposition; if a little kitchen garden ran steeply up a narrowing *enclave* of fertile ground surrounded by outcroppings and furze, or some shivering quarry pool under a moonrise could be seen on our left, and on our right the smoking chimney and lamplit window of a cottage that was just settling down for the night.

Meanwhile, on the continent, the unskilled butchery of the first German War went on. As it did so and as I began to foresee that it would probably last till I reached military age, I was compelled to make a decision which

the law had taken out of the hands of English boys of my own age; for in Ireland we had no conscription. I did not much plume myself even then for deciding to serve, but I did feel that the decision absolved me from taking any further notice of the war. For Arthur, whose heart hopelessly disqualified him, there was no such question. Accordingly I put the war on one side to a degree which some people will think shameful and some incredible. Others will call it a flight from reality. I maintain that it was rather a treaty with reality, the fixing of a frontier. I said to my country, in effect, “You shall have me on a certain date, not before. I will die in your wars if need be, but till then I shall live my own life. You may have my body, but not my mind. I will take part in battles but not read about them.” If this attitude needs excusing I must say that a boy who is unhappy at school inevitably learns the habit of keeping the future in its place; if once he began to allow infiltrations from the coming term into the present holidays he would despair. Also, the Hamilton in me was always on guard against the Lewis; I had seen enough of the self-torturing temperament.

No doubt, even if the attitude was right, the quality in me which made it so easy to adopt is somewhat repellent. Yet, even so, I can hardly regret having escaped the appalling waste of time and spirit which would have been involved in reading the war news or taking more than an artificial and formal part in conversations about the war. To read without military knowledge or good maps accounts of fighting which were distorted before they reached the Divisional general and further distorted before they left him and then “written up” out of all recognition by journalists, to strive to master what will be contradicted the next day, to fear and hope intensely on shaky evidence, is surely an ill use of the mind. Even in peacetime I think those are very wrong who say that schoolboys should be encouraged to read the newspapers. Nearly all that a boy reads there in his teens will be known before he is twenty to have been false in emphasis and interpretation, if not in fact as well, and most of it will have lost all importance. Most of what he remembers he will therefore have to unlearn; and he will probably have acquired an incurable taste for vulgarity and sensationalism and the fatal habit of fluttering from paragraph to paragraph to learn how an actress has been divorced in California, a train derailed in France, and quadruplets born in New Zealand.

I was now happier than I had ever been. All the sting had been drawn from the beginning of term. Yet the homecoming at its end remained almost

as joyful as before. The holidays grew better and better. Our grown-up friends, and especially my cousins at Mountbracken, now seemed less grown up — for one's immediate elders grow downwards or backwards to meet one at that age. There were many merry meetings, much good talk. I discovered that other people besides Arthur loved books that I loved. The horrible old "social functions", the dances, were at an end, for my father now allowed me to refuse the invitations. All my engagements were now pleasant ones, within a small circle of people who were all intermarried, or very old neighbours, or (the women anyway) old school-fellows. I am shy of mentioning them. Of Mountbracken I have had to speak because the story of my life could not be told without it; beyond that I hesitate to go. Praise of one's friends is near impertinence. I cannot tell you here of Janie M. nor of her mother, nor of Bill and Mrs. Bill. In novels, provincial-suburban society is usually painted grey to black. I have not found it so. I think we Strandtown and Belmont people had among us as much kindness, wit, beauty, and taste as any circle of the same size that I have ever known.

At home the real separation and apparent cordiality between my father and myself continued. Every holidays I came back from Kirk with my thoughts and my speech a little clearer, and this made it progressively less possible to have any real conversation with my father. I was far too young and raw to appreciate the other side of the account, to weigh the rich (if vague) fertility, the generosity and humour of my father's mind against the dryness, the rather death-like lucidity, of Kirk's. With the cruelty of youth I allowed myself to be irritated by traits in my father which, in other elderly men, I have since regarded as lovable foibles. There were so many unbridgeable misunderstandings. Once I received a letter from my brother in my father's presence which he immediately demanded to see. He objected to some expressions in it about a third person. In defence of them I pleaded that they had not been addressed to him. "What nonsense!" answered my father. "He knew you would show me the letter, and intended you to show me the letter." In reality, as I well knew, my brother had foolishly gambled on the chance that it would arrive when my father was out. But this my father could not conceive. He was not overriding by authority a claim to privacy which he disallowed; he could not imagine anyone making such a claim.

My relations to my father help to explain (I am not suggesting that they excuse) one of the worst acts of my life. I allowed myself to be prepared for

confirmation, and confirmed, and to make my first Communion, in total disbelief, acting a part, eating and drinking my own condemnation. As Johnson points out, where courage is not, no other virtue can survive except by accident. Cowardice drove me into hypocrisy and hypocrisy into blasphemy. It is true that I did not and could not then know the real nature of the thing I was doing: but I knew very well that I was acting a lie with the greatest possible solemnity. It seemed to me impossible to tell my father my real views. Not that he would have stormed and thundered like the traditional orthodox parent. On the contrary, he would (at first) have responded with the greatest kindness. “Let’s talk the whole thing over,” he would have said. But it would have been quite impossible to drive into his head my real position. The thread would have been lost almost at once, and the answer implicit in all the quotations, anecdotes, and reminiscences which would have poured over me would have been one I then valued not a straw — the beauty of the Authorised Version, the beauty of the Christian tradition and sentiment and character. And later, when this failed, when I still tried to make my exact points clear, there would have been anger between us, thunder from him and a thin, peevish rattle from me. Nor could the subject, once raised, ever have been dropped again. All this, of course, ought to have been dared rather than the thing I did. But at the time it seemed to me impossible. The Syrian captain was forgiven for bowing in the house of Rimmon. I am one of many who have bowed in the house of the real God when I believed Him to be no more than Rimmon.

During the week-ends and evenings I was closely tethered to my father and felt this something of a hardship, since these were the times when Arthur was most often accessible. My week-days continued to supply me with a full ration of solitude. I had, to be sure, the society of Tim, who ought to have been mentioned far sooner. Tim was our dog. He may hold a record for longevity among Irish terriers since he was already with us when I was at Oldie’s and did not die till 1922. But Tim’s society did not amount to much. It had long since been agreed between him and me that he should not be expected to accompany me on walks. I went a good deal further than he liked, for his shape was already that of a bolster, or even a barrel, on four legs. Also, I went to places where other dogs might be met; and though Tim was no coward (I have seen him fight like a demon on his home ground) he hated dogs. In his walking days he had been known, on seeing a dog far ahead, to disappear behind the hedge and re-emerge a hundred yards later.

His mind had been formed during our schooldays and he had perhaps learned his attitude to other dogs from our attitude to other boys. By now he and I were less like master and dog than like two friendly visitors in the same hotel. We met constantly, passed the time of day, and parted with much esteem to follow our own paths. I think he had one friend of his own species, a neighbouring red setter; a very respectable, middle-aged dog. Perhaps a good influence; for poor Tim, though I loved him, was the most undisciplined, unaccomplished, and dissipated-looking creature that ever went on four legs. He never exactly obeyed you; he sometimes agreed with you.

The long hours in the empty house passed delightfully in reading and writing. I was in the midst of the Romantics now. There was a humility in me (as a reader) at that time which I shall never recapture. Some poems I could not enjoy as well as others. It never occurred to me that these might be the inferior ones; I merely thought that I was getting tired of my author or was not in the right mood. The *longueurs* of Endymion I attributed wholly to myself. The "swoony" element in Keats' sensuality (as when Porphyro grows "faint") I tried hard to like, and failed. I thought — though I have forgotten why — that Shelley must be better than Keats and was sorry I liked him less. But my great author at this period was William Morris. I had met him first in quotation in books on Norse Mythology; that led me to *Sigurd the Volsung*. I did not really like this as much as I tried to, and I think I now know why: the metre does not satisfy my ear. But then, in Arthur's bookcase, I found *The Well at the World's End*. I looked — I read chapter headings — I dipped — and next day I was off into town to buy a copy of my own. Like so many new steps it appeared to be partly a revival — "Knights in Armour" returning from a very early period of my childhood. After that I read all the Morris I could get, *Jason*, *The Earthly Paradise*, the prose romances. The growth of the new delight is marked by my sudden realisation, almost with a sense of disloyalty, that the letters WILLIAM MORRIS were coming to have at least as potent a magic in them as WAGNER.

One other thing that Arthur taught me was to love the bodies of books. I had always respected them. My brother and I might cut up stepladders without scruple; to have thumb-marked or dog's-eared a book would have filled us with shame. But Arthur did not merely respect, he was enamoured; and soon, I too. The set up of the page, the feel and smell of the paper, the

differing sounds that different papers make as you turn the leaves, became sensuous delights. This revealed to me a flaw in Kirk. How often have I shuddered when he took a new classical text of mine in his gardener's hands, bent back the boards till they creaked, and left his sign on every page.

"Yes, I remember," said my father. "That was old Knock's one fault."

"A bad one," said I.

"An all but unforgivable one," said my father.

XI. Check

When bale is at highest, boote is at next.
SIR ALDINGAR

The history of Joy, since it came riding back to me on huge waves of Wagnerian music and Norse and Celtic mythology several chapters ago, must now be brought up to date.

I have already hinted how my first delight in Valhalla and Valkyries began to turn itself imperceptibly into a scholar's interest in them. I got about as far as a boy who knew no old Germanic language could get. I could have faced a pretty stiff examination in my subject. I would have laughed at popular bunglers who confused the late mythological Sagas with the classic Sagas, or the Prose with the Verse Edda, or even, more scandalously, Edda with Saga. I knew my way about the Eddaic cosmos, could locate each of the roots of the Ash and knew who ran up and down it. And only very gradually did I realise that all this was something quite different from the original Joy. And I went on adding detail to detail, progressing towards the moment when "I should know most and should least enjoy". Finally I woke from building the temple to find that the God had flown. Of course I did not put it that way. I would have said simply that I didn't get the old thrill. I was in the Wordsworthian predicament, lamenting that "a glory" had passed away.

Thence arose the fatal determination to recover the old thrill, and at last the moment when I was compelled to realise that all such efforts were failures. I had no lure to which the bird would come. And now, notice my blindness. At that very moment there arose the memory of a place and time at which I had tasted the lost Joy with unusual fullness. It had been a particular hill-walk on a morning of white mist. The other volumes of the *Ring* (*The Rheingold* and *The Valkyrie*) had just arrived as a Christmas present from my father, and the thought of all the reading before me, mixed with the coldness and loneliness of the hillside, the drops of moisture on every branch, and the distant murmur of the concealed town, had produced a longing (yet it was also fruition) which had flowed over from the mind and seemed to involve the whole body. That walk I now remembered. It seemed to me that I had tasted heaven then. If only such a moment could

return! But what I never realised was that it had returned — that the remembering of that walk was itself a new experience of just the same kind. True, it was desire, not possession. But then what I had felt on the walk had also been desire, and only possession in so far as that kind of desire is itself desirable, is the fullest possession we can know on earth; or rather, because the very nature of Joy makes nonsense of our common distinction between having and wanting. There, to have is to want and to want is to have. Thus, the very moment when I longed to be so stabbed again, was itself again such a stabbing. The Desirable which had once alighted on Valhalla was now alighting on a particular moment of my own past; and I would not recognise him there because, being an idolater and a formalist, I insisted that he ought to appear in the temple I had built him; not knowing that he cares only for temples building and not at all for temples built. Wordsworth, I believe, made this mistake all his life. I am sure that all that sense of the loss of vanished vision which fills *The Prelude* was itself vision of the same kind, if only he could have believed it.

In my scheme of thought it is not blasphemous to compare the error which I was making with that error which the angel at the Sepulchre rebuked when he said to the women, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, He is risen.” The comparison is of course between something of infinite moment and something very small; like comparison between the Sun and the Sun’s reflection in a dewdrop. Indeed, in my view, very like it, for I do not think the resemblance between the Christian and the merely imaginative experience is accidental. I think that all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth, the imagination not least. “Reflect” is the important word. This lower life of the imagination is not a beginning of, nor a step towards, the higher life of the spirit, merely an image. In me, at any rate, it contained no element either of belief or of ethics; however far pursued, it would never have made me either wiser or better. But it still had, at however many removes, the shape of the reality it reflected.

[Footnote 5] i.e. not necessarily and by its own nature. God can cause it to be such a beginning.

If nothing else suggests this resemblance it is at least suggested by the fact that we can make exactly the same mistakes on both levels. You will remember how, as a schoolboy, I had destroyed my religious life by a vicious subjectivism which made “realisations” the aim of prayer; turning away from God to seek states of mind, and trying to produce those states of

mind by “maistry”. With unbelievable folly I now proceeded to make exactly the same blunder in my imaginative life; or rather the same pair of blunders. The first was made at the very moment when I formulated the complaint that the “old thrill” was becoming rarer and rarer. For by that complaint I smuggled in the assumption that what I wanted was a “thrill”, a state of my own mind. And there lies the deadly error. Only when your whole attention and desire are fixed on something else — whether a distant mountain, or the past, or the gods of Asgard — does the “thrill” arise. It is a by-product. Its very existence presupposes that you desire not it but something other and outer. If by any perverse askesis or the use of any drug it could be produced from within, it would at once be seen to be of no value. For take away the object, and what, after all, would be left? — a whirl of images, a fluttering sensation in the diaphragm, a momentary abstraction. And who could want that? This, I say, is the first and deadly error, which appears on every level of life and is equally deadly on all, turning religion into a self-caressing luxury and love into auto-eroticism. And the second error is, having thus falsely made a state of mind your aim, to attempt to produce it. From the fading of the Northernness I ought to have drawn the conclusion that the Object, the Desirable, was further away, more external, less subjective, than even such a comparatively public and external thing as a system of mythology — had, in fact, only shone through that system. Instead, I concluded that it was a mood or state within myself which might turn up in any context. To “get it again” became my constant endeavour; while reading every poem, hearing every piece of music, going for every walk, I stood anxious sentinel at my own mind to watch whether the blessed moment was beginning and to endeavour to retain it if it did. Because I was still young and the whole world of beauty was opening before me, my own officious obstructions were often swept aside and, startled into self-forgetfulness, I again tasted Joy. But far more often I frightened it away by my greedy impatience to snare it, and, even when it came, instantly destroyed it by introspection, and at all times vulgarised it by my false assumption about its nature.

One thing, however, I learned, which has since saved me from many popular confusions of mind. I came to know by experience that it is not a disguise of sexual desire. Those who think that if adolescents were all provided with suitable mistresses we should soon hear no more of “immortal longings” are certainly wrong. I learned this mistake to be a

mistake by the simple, if discreditable, process of repeatedly making it. From the Northernness one could not easily have slid into erotic fantasies without noticing the difference; but when the world of Morris became the frequent medium of Joy, this transition became possible. It was quite easy to think that one desired those forests for the sake of their female inhabitants, the garden of Hesperus for the sake of his daughters, Hylas' river for the river nymphs. I repeatedly followed that path — to the end. And at the end one found pleasure; which immediately resulted in the discovery that pleasure (whether that pleasure or any other) was not what you had been looking for. No moral question was involved; I was at this time as nearly non-moral on that subject as a human creature can be. The frustration did not consist in finding a "lower" pleasure instead of a "higher". It was the irrelevance of the conclusion that marred it. The hounds had changed scent. One had caught the wrong quarry. You might as well offer a mutton chop to a man who is dying of thirst as offer sexual pleasure to the desire I am speaking of. I did not recoil from the erotic conclusion with chaste horror, exclaiming, "Not that!" My feelings could rather have been expressed in the words, "Quite. I see. But haven't we wandered from the real point?" Joy is not a substitute for sex; sex is very often a substitute for Joy. I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for Joy.

Such, then, was the state of my imaginative life; over against it stood the life of my intellect. The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow "rationalism". Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless. The exceptions were certain people (whom I loved and believed to be real) and nature herself. That is, nature as she appeared to the senses. I chewed endlessly on the problem: "How can it be so beautiful and also so cruel, wasteful and futile?" Hence at this time I could almost have said with Santayana, "All that is good is imaginary; all that is real is evil." In one sense nothing less like a "flight from reality" could be conceived. I was so far from wishful thinking that I hardly thought anything true unless it contradicted my wishes.

Hardly, but not quite. For there was one way in which the world, as Kirk's rationalism taught me to see it, gratified my wishes. It might be grim and deadly but at least it was free from the Christian God. Some people (not all) will find it hard to understand why this seemed to me such an

overwhelming advantage. But you must take into account both my history and my temperament. The period of faith which I had lived through at Oldie's had contained a good deal of fear. And by now, looking back on that fear, and egged on by Shaw and Voltaire and Lucretius With his *Tantum religio*, I greatly exaggerated that element in my memory and forgot the many other elements which had been combined with it. At all costs I was anxious that those full-moon-lit nights in the dormitory should never come again. I was also, as you may remember, one whose negative demands were more violent than his positive, far more eager to escape pain than to achieve happiness, and feeling it something of an outrage that I had been created without my own permission. To such a craven the materialist's universe had the enormous attraction that it offered you limited liabilities. No strictly infinite disaster could overtake you in it. Death ended all. And if ever finite disasters proved greater than one wished to bear, suicide would always be possible. The horror of the Christian universe was that it had no door marked *Exit*. It was also perhaps not unimportant that the externals of Christianity made no appeal to my sense of beauty. Oriental imagery and style largely repelled me; and for the rest, Christianity was mainly associated for me with ugly architecture, ugly music, and bad poetry. Wyvern Priory and Milton's verse were almost the only points at which Christianity and beauty had overlapped in my experience. But, of course, what mattered most of all was my deep-seated hatred of authority, my monstrous individualism, my lawlessness. No word in my vocabulary expressed deeper hatred than the word *Interference*. But Christianity placed at the centre what then seemed to me a transcendental Interferer. If its picture were true then no sort of "treaty with reality" could ever be possible. There was no region even in the innermost depth of one's soul (nay, there least of all) which one could surround with a barbed wire fence and guard with a notice No Admittance. And that was what I wanted; some area, however small, of which I could say to all other beings, "This is my business and mine only."

In this respect, and this only at first, I may have been guilty of wishful thinking. Almost certainly I was. The materialist conception would not have seemed so immensely probable to me if it had not favoured at least one of my wishes. But the difficulty of explaining even a boy's thought entirely in terms of his wishes is that on such large questions as these he always has wishes on both sides. Any conception of reality which a sane mind can

admit must favour some of its wishes and frustrate others. The materialistic universe had one great, negative attraction to offer me. It had no other. And this had to be accepted; one had to look out on a meaningless dance of atoms (remember, I was reading Lucretius), to realise that all the apparent beauty was a subjective phosphorescence, and to relegate everything one valued to the world of mirage. That price I tried loyally to pay. For I had learned something from Kirk about the honour of the intellect and the shame of voluntary inconsistency. And, of course, I exulted with youthful and vulgar pride in what I thought my enlightenment. In argument with Arthur I was a very swashbuckler. Most of it, as I now see, was incredibly crude and silly. I was in that state of mind in which a boy thinks it extremely telling to call God *Jahveh* and Jesus *Yeshua*.

Looking back on my life now, I am astonished that I did not progress into the opposite orthodoxy — did not become a Leftist, Atheist, satiric Intellectual of the type we all know so well. All the conditions seem to be present. I had hated my public school. I hated whatever I knew or imagined of the British Empire. And though I took very little notice of Morris's socialism (there were too many things in him that interested me far more) continual reading of Shaw had brought it about that such embryonic political opinions as I had were vaguely socialistic. Ruskin had helped me in the same direction. My lifelong fear of sentimentalism ought to have qualified me to become a vigorous "debunker". It is true that I hated the Collective as much as any man can hate anything; but I certainly did not then realise its relations to socialism. I suppose that my Romanticism was destined to divide me from the orthodox Intellectuals as soon as I met them; and also that a mind so little sanguine as mine about the future and about common action could only with great difficulty be made revolutionary.

Such, then, was my position: to care for almost nothing but the gods and heroes, the garden of the Hesperides, Launcelot and the Grail, and to believe in nothing but atoms and evolution and military service. At times the strain was severe, but I think this was a wholesome severity. Nor do I believe that the intermittent wavering in my materialistic "faith" (so to call it) which set in towards the end of the Bookham period would ever have arisen simply from my wishes. It came from another source.

Among all the poets whom I was reading at this time (I read *The Faerie Queene* and *The Earthly Paradise* entire) there was one who stood apart from the rest. Yeats was this poet. I had been reading him for a long time

before I discovered the difference, and perhaps I should never have discovered it if I had not read his prose as well: things like *Rosa Alchemica* and *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. The difference was that Yeats believed. His "ever living ones" were not merely feigned or merely desired. He really thought that there was a world of beings more or less like them, and that contact between that world and ours was possible. To put it quite plainly, he believed seriously in Magic. His later career as a poet has somewhat obscured that phase in popular estimates of him, but there is no doubt about the fact — as I learned when I met him some years later. Here was a pretty kettle of fish. You will understand that my rationalism was inevitably based on what I believed to be the findings of the sciences, and those findings, not being a scientist, I had to take on trust — in fact, on authority. Well, here was an opposite authority. If he had been a Christian I should have discounted his testimony, for I thought I had the Christians "placed" and disposed of forever. But I now learned that there were people, not traditionally orthodox, who nevertheless rejected the whole Materialist philosophy out of hand. And I was still very ingenuous. I had no conception of the amount of nonsense written and printed in the world. I regarded Yeats as a learned, responsible writer: what he said must be worthy of consideration. And after Yeats I plunged into Maeterlinck; quite innocently and naturally since everyone was reading him at that time and since I made a point of including a fair amount of French in my diet. In Maeterlinck I came up against Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Pantheism. Here once more was a responsible adult (and not a Christian) who believed in a world behind, or around, the material world. I must do myself the justice of saying that I did not give my assent categorically. But a drop of disturbing doubt fell into my Materialism. It was merely a "Perhaps". Perhaps (oh joy!) there was, after all, "something else"; and (oh reassurance!) perhaps it had nothing to do with Christian Theology. And as soon as I paused on that "Perhaps", inevitably all the old Occultist lore, and all the old excitement which the Matron at Chartres had innocently aroused in me, rose out of the past.

Now the fat was in the fire with a vengeance. Two things hitherto widely separated in my mind rushed together: the imaginative longing for Joy, or rather the longing which *was* Joy, and the ravenous, quasi-prurient desire for the Occult, the Preternatural as such. And with these there came (less welcome) some stirring of unease, some of the immemorial fear we have all

known in the nursery, and (if we are honest) long after the nursery age. There is a kind of gravitation in the mind whereby good rushes to good and evil to evil. This mingled repulsion and desire drew towards them everything else in me that was bad. The idea that if there were Occult knowledge it was known to very few and scorned by the many became an added attraction; “we few”, you will remember, was an evocative expression for me. That the means should be Magic — the most exquisitely unorthodox thing in the world, unorthodox both by Christian and by Rationalist standards — of course appealed to the rebel in me. I was already acquainted with the more depraved side of Romanticism; had read *Anactoria*, and Wilde, and pored upon Beardsley, not hitherto attracted, but making no moral judgement. Now I thought I began to see the point of it. In a word, you have already had in this story the World and the Flesh; now came the Devil. If there had been in the neighbourhood some elder person who dabbled in dirt of the Magical kind (such have a good nose for potential disciples) I might now be a Satanist or a maniac.

In actual fact I was wonderfully protected, and this spiritual debauch had in the end one rather good result. I was protected, first, by ignorance and incapacity. Whether Magic were possible or not, I at any rate had no teacher to start me on the path. I was protected also by cowardice; the reawakened terrors of childhood might add a spice to my greed and curiosity as long as it was daylight. Alone, and in darkness, I used my best endeavours to become a strict Materialist again; not always with success. A “Perhaps” is quite enough for the nerves to work upon. But my best protection was the known nature of Joy. This ravenous desire to break the bounds, to tear the curtain, to be in the secret, revealed itself, more and more clearly the longer I indulged it, to be quite different from the longing that is Joy. Its coarse strength betrayed it. Slowly, and with many relapses, I came to see that the magical conclusion was just as irrelevant to Joy as the erotic conclusion had been. Once again one had changed scents. If circles and pentangles and the Tetragrammaton had been tried and had in fact raised, or seemed to raise, a spirit, that might have been — if a man’s nerves could stand it — extremely interesting; but the real Desirable would have evaded one, the real Desire would have been left saying, “What is this to me?”

What I like about experience is that it is such an honest thing. You may take any number of wrong turnings; but keep your eyes open and you will not be allowed to go very far before the warning signs appear. You may

have deceived yourself, but experience is not trying to deceive you. The universe rings true wherever you fairly test it.

The other results of my glance into the dark room were as follows. First, I now had both a fresh motive for wishing Materialism to be true and a decreased confidence that it was. The fresh motive came, as you have divined, from those fears which I had so wantonly stirred up from their sleeping place in the memories of childhood; behaving like a true Lewis who will not leave well alone. Every man who is afraid of spooks will have a reason for wishing to be a Materialist; that creed promises to exclude the bogies. As for my shaken confidence, it remained in the form of a "Perhaps", stripped of its directly and grossly magical "affect" — a pleasing possibility that the Universe might combine the snugness of Materialism here and now with... well, with I didn't know what; somewhere or something beyond, "the unimaginable lodge for solitary thinkings". This was very bad. I was beginning to try to have it both ways: to get the comforts both of a materialist and of a spiritual philosophy without the rigours of either. But the second result was better. I had learned a wholesome antipathy to everything occult and magical which was to stand me in good stead when, at Oxford, I came to meet Magicians, Spiritualists, and the like. Not that the ravenous lust was never to tempt me again but that I now knew it for a temptation. And above all, I now knew that Joy did not point in that direction.

You might sum up the gains of this whole period by saying that henceforward the Flesh and the Devil, though they could still tempt, could no longer offer me the supreme bribe. I had learned that it was not in their gift. And the World had never even pretended to have it.

And then, on top of this, in superabundance of mercy, came that event which I have already more than once attempted to describe in other books. I was in the habit of walking over to Leatherhead about once a week and sometimes taking the train back. In summer I did so chiefly because Leatherhead boasted a tiny swimming-bath; better than nothing to me who had learned to swim almost before I can remember and who, till middle age and rheumatism crept upon me, was passionately fond of being in water. But I went in winter, too, to look for books and to get my hair cut. The evening that I now speak of was in October. I and one porter had the long, timbered platform of Leatherhead station to ourselves. It was getting just dark enough for the smoke of an engine to glow red on the underside with

the reflection of the furnace. The hills beyond the Dorking Valley were of a blue so intense as to be nearly violet and the sky was green with frost. My ears tingled with the cold. The glorious week-end of reading was before me. Turning to the bookstall, I picked out an Everyman in a dirty jacket, *Phantasies, a faerie Romance*, George MacDonald. Then the train came in. I can still remember the voice of the porter calling out the village names, Saxon and sweet as a nut— "Bookham, Effingham, Horsley train". That evening I began to read my new book.

The woodland journeyings in that story, the ghostly enemies, the ladies both good and evil, were close enough to my habitual imagery to lure me on without the perception of a change. It is as if I were carried sleeping across the frontier, or as if I had died in the old country and could never remember how I came alive in the new. For in one sense the new country was exactly like the old. I met there all that had already charmed me in Malory, Spenser, Morris, and Yeats. But in another sense all was changed. I did not yet know (and I was long in learning) the name of the new quality, the bright shadow, that rested on the travels of Anodos. I do now. It was Holiness. For the first time the song of the sirens sounded like the voice of my mother or my nurse. Here were old wives' tales; there was nothing to be proud of in enjoying them. It was as though the voice which had called to me from the world's end were now speaking at my side. It was with me in the room, or in my own body, or behind me. If it had once eluded me by its distance, it now eluded me by proximity — something too near to see, too plain to be understood, on this side of knowledge. It seemed to have been always with me; if I could ever have turned my head quick enough I should have seized it. Now for the first time I felt that it was out of reach not because of something I could not do but because of something I could not stop doing. If I could only leave off, let go, unmake myself, it would be there. Meanwhile, in this new region all the confusions that had hitherto perplexed my search for Joy were disarmed. There was no temptation to confuse the scenes of the tale with the light that rested upon them, or to suppose that they were put forward as realities, or even to dream that if they had been realities and I could reach the woods where Anodos journeyed I should thereby come a step nearer to my desire. Yet, at the same time, never had the wind of Joy blowing through any story been less separable from the story itself. Where the god and the *idolon* were most nearly one there was least danger of confounding them. Thus, when the great moments came I

did not break away from the woods and cottages that I read of to seek some bodiless light shining beyond them, but gradually, with a swelling continuity (like the sun at mid-morning burning through a fog) I found the light shining on those woods and cottages, and then on my own past life, and on the quiet room where I sat and on my old teacher where he nodded above his little *Tacitus*. For I now perceived that while the air of the new region made all my erotic and magical perversions of Joy look like sordid trumpery, it had no such disenchanting power over the bread upon the table or the coals in the grate. That was the marvel. Up till now each visitation of Joy had left the common world momentarily a desert— “The first touch of the earth went nigh to kill”. Even when real clouds or trees had been the material of the vision, they had been so only by reminding me of another world; and I did not like the return to ours. But now I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged. Or, more accurately, I saw the common things drawn into the bright shadow. *Unde hoc mihi?* In the depth of my disgraces, in the then invincible ignorance of my intellect, all this was given me without asking, even without consent. That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptised; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer. I had not the faintest notion what I had let myself in for by buying *Phantastes*.

XII. Guns and Good Company

La compagnie, de tant d'hommes vous plaist, nobles, jeunes, actifs; la liberté de cette conversation sans art, et une façon de vie masle et sans cérémonie.

MONTAIGNE

The old pattern began to repeat itself. The Bookham days, like a longer and more glorious holidays, drew to their end; a scholarship examination and, after that, the Army, loomed behind them like a grimmer term. The good time had never been better than in its last months. I remember, in particular, glorious hours of bathing in Donegal. It was surf bathing: not the formal affair with boards that you have now, but mere rough and tumble, in which the waves, the monstrous, emerald, deafening waves, are always the winner, and it is at once a joke, a terror, and a joy to look over your shoulder and see (too late) one breaker of such sublime proportions that you would have avoided him had you known he was coming. But they gather themselves up, pre-eminent above their fellows, as suddenly and unpredictably as a revolution.

It was late in the winter term of 1916 that I went to Oxford to sit for my scholarship examination. Boys who have faced this ordeal in peace-time will not easily imagine the indifference with which I went. This does not mean that I underestimated the importance (in one sense) of succeeding. I knew very well by now that there was hardly any position in the world save that of a don in which I was fitted to earn a living, and that I was staking everything on a game in which few won and hundreds lost. As Kirk had said of me in a letter to my father (I did not, of course, see it till many years later), "You may make a writer or a scholar of him, but you'll not make anything else. You may make up your mind to *that*." And I knew this myself; sometimes it terrified me. What blunted the edge of it now was that whether I won a scholarship or no I should next year go into the army; and even a temper more sanguine than mine could feel in 1916 that an infantry subaltern would be insane to waste anxiety on anything so hypothetical as his post-war life. I once tried to explain this to my father; it was one of the attempts I often made (though doubtless less often than I ought) to break through the artificiality of our intercourse and admit him to my real life. It

was a total failure. He replied at once with fatherly counsels about the necessity of hard work and concentration, the amount that he had already spent in educating me, the very moderate, nay negligible, assistance he would be able to give me in later life. Poor man! He misjudged me sadly if he thought that idleness at my book was among my many vices. And how, I asked myself, could he expect the winning or losing of a scholarship to lose none of its importance when life and death were the real issues? The truth is, I think, that while death (mine, his, everyone's) was often vividly present to him as a subject of anxiety and other emotions, it had no place in his mind as a sober, matter-of-fact contingency from which consequences could be drawn. At any rate the conversation was a failure. It shipwrecked on the old rock. His intense desire for my total confidence co-existed with an inability to listen (in any strict sense) to what I said. He could never empty, or silence, his own mind to make room for an alien thought.

My first taste of Oxford was comical enough. I had made no arrangements about quarters and, having no more luggage than I could carry in my hand, I sallied out of the railway station on foot to find either a lodging-house or a cheap hotel; all agog for "dreaming spires" and "last enchantments". My first disappointment at what I saw could be dealt with. Towns always show their worst face to the railway. But as I walked on and on I became more bewildered. Could this succession of mean shops really be Oxford? But I still went on, always expecting the next turn to reveal the beauties, and reflecting that it was a much larger town than I had been led to suppose. Only when it became obvious that there was very little town left ahead of me, that I was, in fact, getting to open country, did I turn round and look. There, behind me, far away, never more beautiful since, was the fabled cluster of spires and towers. I had come out of the station on the wrong side and been all this time walking into what was even then the mean and sprawling suburb of Botley. I did not see to what extent this little adventure was an allegory of my whole life. I merely walked back to the station, somewhat footsore, took a hansom, and asked to be driven to "some place where I can get rooms for a week, please". The method, which I should now think hazardous, was a complete success, and I was soon at tea in comfortable lodgings. The house is still there, the first on the right as you turn into Mansfield Road out of Holywell. I shared the sitting-room with another candidate, a man from Cardiff College, which he pronounced to be

architecturally superior to anything in Oxford. His learning terrified me, but he was an agreeable man. I have never seen him since.

It was very cold and next day snow began to fall, turning pinnacles into wedding-cake decorations. The examination was held in the Hall of Oriel, and we all wrote in greatcoats and mufflers and wearing at least our left-hand gloves. The Provost, old Phelps, gave out the papers. I remember very little about them, but I suppose I was outshone in pure classics by many of my rivals and succeeded on my general knowledge and dialectics. I had the impression that I was doing badly. Long years (or years that seemed long) with the Knock had cured me of my defensive Wyvernian priggery, and I no longer supposed other boys to be ignorant of what I knew. Thus the essay was on a quotation from Johnson. I had read several times the Boswellian conversation in which it occurred and was able to replace the whole question in that context; but I never thought that this (any more than a fairish knowledge of Schopenhauer) would gain me any particular credit. It was a blessed state to be in, but for the moment depressing. As I left the Hall after that essay I heard one candidate say to his friend, “I worked in all my stuff about Rousseau and the Social Contract.” That struck dismay into my soul, for though I had dabbled (not to my good) in the *Confessions* I knew nothing of the *Contrat Social*. At the beginning of the morning a nice Harrovian had whispered to me, “I don’t even know if it’s Sam or Ben.” In my innocence I explained to him that it was Sam and could not be Ben because Ben was spelled without an H. I did not think there could be any harm in giving away such information.

When I arrived home I told my father that I had almost certainly failed. It was an admission calculated to bring out all his tenderness and chivalry. The man who could not understand a boy’s taking his own possible, or probable, death into account could very well understand a child’s disappointment. Not a word was now heard of expenses and difficulties; nothing but consolation, reassurance and affection. Then, almost on Christmas Eve, we heard that “Univ.” (University College) had elected me.

Though I was now a scholar of my College I still had to pass “Responsions”, which involved elementary mathematics. To prepare for this I returned after Christmas for one last term with Kirk — a golden term, poignantly happy under the approaching shadow. At Easter I was handsomely ploughed in Responsions, having been unable as usual to get my sums right. “Be more careful,” was the advice that everyone gave me,

but I found it useless. The more care I took the more mistakes I made; just as, to this day, the more anxiously I fair copy a piece of writing the more certain I am to make a ghastly clerical error in the very first line.

In spite of this I came into residence in the summer (Trinity) term of 1917; for the real object now was simply to enter the University Officers' Training Corps as my most promising route into the Army. My first studies at Oxford, nevertheless, still had Responsions in view. I read algebra (devil take it!) with old Mr. Campbell of Hertford who turned out to be a friend of our dear friend Janie M. That I never passed Responsions is certain, but I cannot remember whether I again sat for it and was again ploughed. The question became unimportant after the war, for a benevolent decree exempted ex-Service men from taking it. Otherwise, no doubt, I should have had to abandon the idea of going to Oxford.

I was less than a term at Univ when my papers came through and I enlisted; and the conditions made it a most abnormal term. Half the College had been converted into a hospital and was in the hands of the R.A.M.C. In the remaining portion lived a tiny community of undergraduates — two of us not yet of military age, two unfit, one a Sinn-Feiner who would not fight for England, and a few other oddments which I never quite placed. We dined in the little lecture room which is now a passage between Common Room and Hall. Small though our numbers were (about eight) we were rather distinguished, for we included E. V. Gordon, afterwards Professor of English at Manchester, and A. C. Ewing, the Cambridge philosopher; also that witty and kindly man, Theobald Butler, skilled in turning the most lurid limericks into Greek verse. I enjoyed myself greatly; but it bore little resemblance to normal undergraduate life and was for me an unsettled, excited, and generally useless period. Then came the Army. By a remarkable turn of fate this did not mean removal from Oxford. I was drafted into a Cadet Battalion whose billet was Keble.

I passed through the ordinary course of training (a mild affair in those days compared with that of the recent war) and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Somerset Light Infantry, the old XIIIth Foot. I arrived in the front line trenches on my nineteenth birthday (November 1917), saw most of my service in the villages before Arras — Fampoux and Monchy — and was wounded at Mt. Bernenchon, near Lillers, in April 1918.

I am surprised that I did not dislike the Army more. It was, of course, detestable. But the words “of course” drew the sting. That is where it differed from Wyvern. One did not expect to like it. Nobody said you ought to like it. Nobody pretended to like it. Everyone you met took it for granted that the whole thing was an odious necessity, a ghastly interruption of rational life. And that made all the difference. Straight tribulation is easier to bear than tribulation which advertises itself as pleasure. The one breeds *camaraderie* and even (when intense) a kind of love between the fellow-sufferers; the other, mutual distrust, cynicism, concealed and fretting resentment. And secondly, I found my military elders and betters incomparably nicer than the Wyvern Bloods. This is no doubt because Thirty is naturally kinder to Nineteen than Nineteen is to Thirteen: it is really grown-up and does not need to reassure itself. But I am inclined to think that my face had altered. That “look” which I had so often been told to “take off it” had apparently taken itself off — perhaps when I read *Phantastes*. There is even some evidence that it had been succeeded by a look which excited either pity or kindly amusement. Thus, on my very first night in France, in a vast marquee or drill hall where about a hundred officers were to sleep on plank beds, two middle-aged Canadians at once took charge of me and treated me, not like a son (that might have given offence) but like a long-lost friend. Blessings upon them! Once, too, in the Officers’ Club at Arras where I was dining alone, and quite happy with my book and my wine (a bottle of Heidsieck then cost 8 francs, and a bottle of Perrier Jouet, 12) two immensely senior officers, all covered with ribbons and red tabs, came over to my table towards the end of the meal, and hailing me as “Sunny Jim” carried me off to their own for brandy and cigars. They weren’t drunk either; nor did they make me drunk. It was pure good will. And though exceptional, this was not so very exceptional. There were nasty people in the army; but memory fills those months with pleasant, transitory contacts. Every few days one seemed to meet a scholar, an original, a poet, a cheery buffoon, a raconteur, or at the least a man of good will.

Some time in the middle of that winter I had the good luck to fall sick with what the troops called “trench fever” and the doctors P.U.O. (Pyrexia, unknown origin) and was sent for a wholly delightful three weeks to hospital at Le Tréport. Perhaps I ought to have mentioned before that I had had a weak chest ever since childhood and had very early learned to make a minor illness one of the pleasures of life, even in peace-time. Now, as an

alternative to the trenches, a bed and a book were “very heaven”. The hospital was a converted hotel and we were two in a room. My first week was marred by the fact that one of the night nurses was conducting a furious love affair with my room-mate. I had too high a temperature to be embarrassed, but the human whisper is a very tedious and unmusical noise; especially at night. After that my fortune mended. The amorous man was sent elsewhere and replaced by a musical misogynist from Yorkshire, who on our second morning together said to me, “Eh, lad, if we make beds ourselves dom b —— s won’t stay in room so long” (or words to that effect). Accordingly, we made our own beds every day, and every day when the two V.A.D.’s looked in they said, “Oh, they’ve made their beds! Aren’t these two good?” and rewarded us with their brightest smiles. I think they attributed our action to gallantry.

It was here that I first read a volume of Chesterton’s essays. I had never heard of him and had no idea of what he stood for; nor can I quite understand why he made such an immediate conquest of me. It might have been expected that my pessimism, my atheism, and my hatred of sentiment would have made him to me the least congenial of all authors. It would almost seem that Providence, or some “second cause” of a very obscure kind, quite over-rules our previous tastes when It decides to bring two minds together. Liking an author may be as involuntary and improbable as falling in love. I was by now a sufficiently experienced reader to distinguish liking from agreement. I did not need to accept what Chesterton said in order to enjoy it. His humour was of the kind which I like best — not “jokes” imbedded in the page like currants in a cake, still less (what I cannot endure), a general tone of flippancy and jocularity, but the humour which is not in any way separable from the argument but is rather (as Aristotle would say) the “bloom” on dialectic itself. The sword glitters not because the swordsman set out to make it glitter but because he is fighting for his life and therefore moving it very quickly. For the critics who think Chesterton frivolous or “paradoxical” I have to work hard to feel even pity; sympathy is out of the question. Moreover, strange as it may seem, I liked him for his goodness. I can attribute this taste to myself freely (even at that age) because it was a liking for goodness which had nothing to do with any attempt to be good myself. I have never felt the dislike of goodness which seems to be quite common in better men than me. “Smug” and “smugness” were terms of disapprobation which had never had a place in my critical

vocabulary. I lacked the cynic's nose, the *odora canum vis* or bloodhound sensitivity for hypocrisy or Pharisaism. It was a matter of taste: I felt the "charm" of goodness as a man feels the charm of a woman he has no intention of marrying. It is, indeed, at that distance that its "charm" is most apparent.

In reading Chesterton, as in reading MacDonald, I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading. There are traps everywhere—"Bibles laid open, millions of surprises," as Herbert says, "fine nets and stratagems." God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous.

In my own battalion also I was assailed. Here I met one Johnson (on whom be peace) who would have been a lifelong friend if he had not been killed. He was, like me, already a scholar of an Oxford college (Queen's) who hoped to take up his scholarship after the war, but a few years my senior and at that time in command of a company. In him I found dialectical sharpness such as I had hitherto known only in Kirk, but coupled with youth and whim and poetry. He was moving towards Theism and we had endless arguments on that and every other topic whenever we were out of the line. But it was not this that mattered. The important thing was that he was a man of conscience. I had hardly till now encountered principles in anyone so nearly of my own age and my own sort. The alarming thing was that he took them for granted. It crossed my mind for the first time since my apostasy that the severer virtues might have some relevance to one's own life. I say "the severer virtues" because I already had some notion of kindness and faithfulness to friends and generosity about money — as who has not till he meets the temptation which gives all their opposite vices new and more civil names? But it had not seriously occurred to me that people like ourselves, people like Johnson and me who wanted to know whether beauty was objective or how Aeschylus handled the reconciliation of Zeus and Prometheus, should be attempting strict veracity, chastity, or devotion to duty. I had taken it that they were not our subjects. There was no discussion between us on the point and I do not think he ever suspected the truth about me. I was at no pains to display it. If this is hypocrisy, then I must conclude that hypocrisy can do a man good. To be ashamed of what you were about to say, to pretend that something which you had meant seriously was only a joke — this is an ignoble part. But it is better than not to be ashamed at all. And the distinction between pretending you are better

than you are and beginning to be better in reality is finer than moral sleuthhounds conceive. I was, in intention, concealing only a part: I accepted his principles at once, made no attempt internally to defend my own “unexamined life”. When a boor first enters the society of courteous people what can he do, for a while, except imitate the motions? How can he learn except by imitation?

You will have divined that ours was a very nice battalion; a minority of good regulars ruling a pleasantly mixed population of promoted rankers (west country farmers, these), barristers, and university men. You could get as good talk there as anywhere. Perhaps the best of us all was our butt, Wallie. Wallie was a farmer, a Roman Catholic, a passionate soldier (the only man I met who really longed for fighting) and gullible to any degree by the rawest subaltern. The technique was to criticise the Yeomanry. Poor Wallie knew that it was the bravest, the most efficient, the hardest and cleanest corps that ever sat on horses. He knew all that inside, having learned it from an uncle in the Yeomanry when he was a child. But he could not get it out. He stammered and contradicted himself and always came at last to his trump card: “I wish my Uncle Ben was here to talk to you. Uncle Bend talk to you. He’d tell you.” Mortals must not judge; but I doubt whether any man fought in France who was more likely to go straight to Heaven if he were killed. I would have been better employed cleaning his boots than laughing at him. I may add that I did not enjoy the short time I spent in the company he commanded. Wallie had a genuine passion for killing Germans and a complete disregard of his own or anyone else’s safety. He was always striking out bright ideas at which the hair of us subalterns stood on end. Luckily he could be very easily dissuaded by any plausible argument that occurred to us. Such was his valour and innocence that he never for a moment suspected us of any but a military motive. He could never grasp the neighbourly principles which, by the tacit agreement of the troops, were held to govern trench-warfare, and to which I was introduced at once by my sergeant. I had suggested “pooping” a rifle grenade into a German post where we had seen heads moving. “Just as ‘ee like, zir,” said the sergeant, scratching his head, “but once ‘ee start doing that kind of thing, ‘ee’ll get zummit back, zee?”

I must not paint the war-time army all gold. I met there both the World and the great goddess Nonsense. The world presented itself in a very ridiculous form on that night (my nineteenth birthday) when I first arrived

“up the line”. As I emerged from the shaft into the dug-out and blinked in the candle-light I noticed that the Captain to whom I was reporting was a master whom I had liked more than I had respected at one of my schools. I ventured to claim acquaintance. He admitted in a low, hurried voice that he had once been a schoolmaster, and the topic was never raised between us again. The impact of the Great Goddess was even funnier, and I met it long before I had reached my own battalion. The troop train from Rouen — that interminable, twelve-mile-an-hour train, in which no two coaches were alike — left at about ten in the evening. Three other officers and I were allotted a compartment. There was no heating; for light we brought our own candles; for sanitation there were the windows. The journey would last about fifteen hours. It was freezing hard. In the tunnel just outside Rouen (all my generation remember it) there was a sudden wrenching and grating noise and one of our doors dropped off bodily into the dark. We sat with chattering teeth till the next stop, where the officer commanding the train came bustling up and demanded what we had done with our door. “It came off, sir,” said we. “Don’t talk nonsense,” said he, “it wouldn’t have come off if there hadn’t been some horseplay!” — as if nothing were more natural than that four officers (being, of course, provided with screwdrivers) should begin a night journey in midwinter by removing the door of their carriage.

The war itself has been so often described by those who saw more of it than I that I shall here say little about it. Until the great German attack came in the Spring we had a pretty quiet time. Even then they attacked not us but the Canadians on our right, merely “keeping us quiet” by pouring shells into our line about three a minute all day. I think it was that day I noticed how a greater terror overcomes a less: a mouse that I met (and a poor shivering mouse it was, as I was a poor shivering man) made no attempt to run from me. Through the winter, weariness and water were our chief enemies. I have gone to sleep marching and woken again and found myself marching still. One walked in the trenches in thigh gum boots with water above the knee; one remembers the icy stream welling up inside the boot when you punctured it on concealed barbed wire. Familiarity both with the very old and the very recent dead confirmed that view of corpses which had been formed the moment I saw my dead mother. I came to know and pity and reverence the ordinary man: particularly dear Sergeant Ayres, who was (I suppose) killed by the same shell that wounded me. I was a futile officer (they gave commissions too easily then), a puppet moved about by him, and

he turned this ridiculous and painful relation into something beautiful, became to me almost like a father. But for the rest, the war — the frights, the cold, the smell of H.E., the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles, the sitting or standing corpses, the landscape of sheer earth without a blade of grass, the boots worn day and night till they seemed to grow to your feet — all this shows rarely and faintly in memory. It is too cut off from the rest of my experience and often seems to have happened to someone else. It is even in a way unimportant. One imaginative moment seems now to matter more than the realities that followed. It was the first bullet I heard — so far from me that it “whined” like a journalist’s or a peace-time poet’s bullet. At that moment there was something not exactly like fear, much less like indifference: a little quavering signal that said, “This is War. This is what Homer wrote about.”

XIII. The New Look

This wall I was many a weary month in finishing, and yet never thought myself safe till it was done.
DEFOE, *Robinson Crusoe*

The rest of my war experiences have little to do with this story. How I "took" about sixty prisoners — that is, discovered to my great relief that the crowd of field-grey figures who suddenly appeared from nowhere, all had their hands up-is not worth telling, save as a joke. Did not Falstaff "take" Sir Colville of the Dale? Nor does it concern the reader to know how I got a sound "Blighty" from an English shell, or how the exquisite Sister N. in the C.C.S. has ever since embodied my idea of Artemis. Two things stand out. One is the moment, just after I had been hit, when I found (or thought I found) that I was not breathing and concluded that this was death. I felt no fear and certainly no courage. It did not seem to be an occasion for either. The proposition "Here is a man dying" stood before my mind as dry, as factual, as unemotional as something in a text-book. It was not even interesting. The fruit of this experience was that when, some years later, I met Kant's distinction between the Noumenal and the Phenomenal self, it was more to me than an abstraction. I had tasted it; I had proved that there was a fully conscious "I" whose connections with the "me" of introspection were loose and transitory. The other momentous experience was that of reading Bergson in a Convalescent Camp on Salisbury Plain. Intellectually this taught me to avoid the snares that lurk about the word *Nothing*. But it also had a revolutionary effect on my emotional outlook. Hitherto my whole bent had been towards things pale, remote, and evanescent; the water-colour world of Morris, the leafy recesses of Malory, the twilight of Yeats. The word "life" had for me pretty much the same associations it had for Shelley in *The Triumph of Life*. I would not have understood what Goethe meant by *des Lebens goldnes Baum*. Bergson showed me. He did not abolish my old loves, but he gave me a new one. From him I first learned to relish energy, fertility, and urgency; the resource, the triumphs, and even the insolence, of things that grow. I became capable of appreciating artists who would, I believe, have meant nothing to me before; all the resonant, dogmatic, flaming, unanswerable people like Beethoven, Titian (in his mythological

pictures), Goethe, Dunbar, Pindar, Christopher Wren, and the more exultant Psalms.

[Footnote 6] The iron in Malory, the tragedy of contrition, I did not yet at all perceive.

I returned to Oxford— "demobbed" — in January 1919. But before I say anything of my life there I must warn the reader that one huge and complex episode will be omitted. I have no choice about this reticence. All I can or need say is that my earlier hostility to the emotions was very fully and variously avenged. But even were I free to tell the story, I doubt if it has much to do with the subject of the book.

The first lifelong friend I made at Oxford was A. K. Hamilton Jenkin, since known for his books on Cornwall. He continued (what Arthur had begun) my education as a seeing, listening, smelling, receptive creature. Arthur had had his preference for the Homely. But Jenkin seemed to be able to enjoy everything; even ugliness. I learned from him that we should attempt a total surrender to whatever atmosphere was offering itself at the moment; in a squalid town to seek out those very places where its squalor rose to grimness and almost grandeur, on a dismal day to find the most dismal and dripping wood, on a windy day to seek the windiest ridge. There was no Betjemannic irony about it; only a serious, yet gleeful, determination to rub one's nose in the very quiddity of each thing, to rejoice in its being (so magnificently) what it was.

My next was Owen Barfield. There is a sense in which Arthur and Barfield are the types of every man's First Friend and Second Friend. The First is the *alter ego*, the man who first reveals to you that you are not alone in the world by turning out (beyond hope) to share all your most secret delights. There is nothing to be overcome in making him your friend; he and you join like rain-drops on a window. But the Second Friend is the man who disagrees with you about everything. He is not so much the *alter ego* as the anti-self. Of course he shares your interests; otherwise he would not become your friend at all. But he has approached them all at a different angle. He has read all the right books but has got the wrong thing out of every one. It is as if he spoke your language but mispronounced it. How can he be so nearly right and yet, invariably, just not right? He is as fascinating (and infuriating) as a woman. When you set out to correct his heresies, you find that he forsooth has decided to correct yours! And then you go at it, hammer and tongs, far into the night, night after night, or walking through

fine country that neither gives a glance to, each learning the weight of the other's punches, and often more like mutually respectful enemies than friends. Actually (though it never seems so at the time) you modify one another's thought; out of this perpetual dog-fight a community of mind and a deep affection emerge. But I think he changed me a good deal more than I him. Much of the thought which he afterwards put into *Poetic Diction* had already become mine before that important little book appeared. It would be strange if it had not. He was of course not so learned then as he has since become; but the genius was already there.

Closely linked with Barfield of Wadham was his friend (and soon mine), A. C. Harwood of The House, later a pillar of Michael Hall, the Steinerite school at Kidbrooke. He was different from either of us; a wholly imperturbable man. Though poor (like most of us) and wholly without "prospects", he wore the expression of a nineteenth-century gentleman with something in the Funds. On a walking tour when the last light of a wet evening had just revealed some ghastly error in map-reading (probably his own) and the best hope was "Five miles to Mudham (if we could find it) and we *might* get beds there," he still wore that expression. In the heat of argument he wore it still. You would think that he, if anyone, would have been told to "take that look off his face". But I don't believe he ever was. It was no mask and came from no stupidity. He has been tried since by all the usual sorrows and anxieties. He is the sole Horatio known to me in this age of Hamlets; no "stop for Fortune's finger".

There is one thing to be said about these and other friends whom I made at Oxford. They were all, by decent Pagan standards (much more, by so low a standard as mine), "good". That is, they all, like my friend Johnson, believed, and acted on the belief, that veracity, public spirit, chastity, and sobriety were obligatory— "to be attempted," as the examiners say, "by all candidates." Johnson had prepared me to be influenced by them. I accepted their standards in principle and perhaps (this part I do not very well remember) tried to act accordingly.

During my first two years at Oxford I was busily engaged (apart from "doing Mods." and "beginning Greats") in assuming what we may call an intellectual "New Look". There was to be no more pessimism, no more self-pity, no flirtations with any idea of the supernatural, no romantic delusions. In a word, like the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, I formed the resolution "of always judging and acting in future with the greatest good sense". And

good sense meant, for me at that moment, a retreat, almost a panic-stricken flight, from all that sort of romanticism which had hitherto been the chief concern of my life. Several causes operated together.

For one thing, I had recently come to know an old, dirty, gabbling, tragic, Irish parson who had long since lost his faith but retained his living. By the time I met him his only interest was the search for evidence of "human survival". On this he read and talked incessantly, and, having a highly critical mind, could never satisfy himself. What was especially shocking was that the ravenous desire for personal immortality co-existed in him with (apparently) a total indifference to all that could, on a sane view, make immortality desirable. He was not seeking the Beatific Vision and did not even believe in God. He was not hoping for more time in which to purge and improve his own personality. He was not dreaming of reunion with dead friends or lovers; I never heard him speak with affection of anybody. All he wanted was the assurance that something he could call "himself" would, on almost any terms, last longer than his bodily life. So, at least, I thought. I was too young and hard to suspect that what secretly moved him was a thirst for the happiness which had been wholly denied him on earth. And his state of mind appeared to me the most contemptible I had ever encountered. Any thoughts or dreams which might lead one into that fierce monomania were, I decided, to be utterly shunned. The whole question of immortality became rather disgusting to me. I shut it out. All one's thoughts must be confined to

the very world, which is the world
Of all of us — the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all.

Secondly, it had been my chance to spend fourteen days, and most of the fourteen nights as well, in close contact with a man who was going mad. He was a man whom I had dearly loved, and well he deserved love. And now I helped to hold him while he kicked and wallowed on the floor, screaming out that devils were tearing him and that he was that moment falling down into Hell. And this man, as I well knew, had not kept the beaten track. He had flirted with Theosophy, Yoga, Spiritualism, Psychoanalysis, what not? Probably these things had in fact no connection with his insanity, for which (I believe) there were physical causes. But it did not seem so to me at the

time. I thought I had seen a warning; it was to this, this raving on the floor, that all romantic longings and unearthly speculations led a man in the end —

Be not too wildly amorous of the far
Nor lure thy fantasy to its utmost scope.

Safety first, thought I: the beaten track, the approved road, the centre of the road, the lights on. For some months after that nightmare fortnight, the words “ordinary” and “humdrum” summed up everything that appeared to me most desirable.

Thirdly, the new Psychology was at that time sweeping through us all. We did not swallow it whole (few people then did) but we were all influenced. What we were most concerned about was “Fantasy” or “wishful thinking”. For (of course) we were all poets and critics and set a very great value on “Imagination” in some high Coleridgean sense, so that it became important to distinguish Imagination, not only (as Coleridge did) from Fancy, but also from Fantasy as the psychologists understand that term. Now what, I asked myself, were all my delectable mountains and western gardens but sheer Fantasies? Had they not revealed their true nature by luring me, time and again, into undisguisedly erotic reverie or the squalid nightmare of Magic? In reality, of course, as previous chapters have told, my own experience had repeatedly shown that these romantic images had never been more than a sort of flash, or even slag, thrown off by the occurrence of Joy, that those mountains and gardens had never been what I wanted but only symbols which professed themselves to be no more, and that every effort to treat them as the real Desirable soon honestly proved itself to be a failure. But now, busy with my New Look, I managed to forget this. Instead of repenting my idolatry I vilified the unoffending images on which I had lavished it. With the confidence of a boy I decided I had done with all that. No more Avalon, no more Hesperides. I had (this was very precisely the opposite of the truth) “seen through” them. And I was never going to be taken in again.

Finally, there was of course Bergson. Somehow or other (for it does not seem very clear when I re-open his books today) I found in him a refutation of the old haunting idea, Schopenhauer’s idea, that the universe “might not have existed”. In other words one Divine attribute, that of necessary

existence, rose above my horizon. It was still, and long after, attached to the wrong subject; to the universe, not to God. But the mere attribute was itself of immense potency. When once one has dropped the absurd notion that reality is an arbitrary alternative to “nothing”, one gives up being a pessimist (or even an optimist). There is no sense in blaming or praising the Whole, nor, indeed, in saying anything about it. Even if you persist in hurling Promethean or Hardyesque defiances at it, then, since you are part of it, it is only that same Whole which through you “quietly declaims the cursings of itself” — a futility which seems to me to vitiate Lord Russell’s stirring essay on “The Worship of a Free Man”. Cursings were as futile, and as immature, as dreams about the western garden. One must (like Carlyle’s lady) “accept” the universe; totally, with no reservations, loyally. This sort of Stoical Monism was the philosophy of my New Look. And it gave me a great sense of peace. It was perhaps the nearest thing to a religious experience which I had had since my prep. school days. It ended (I hope forever) any idea of a treaty or compromise with reality. So much the perception of even one Divine attribute can do.

As for Joy, I labelled it “aesthetic experience” and talked much about it under that name and said it was very “valuable”. But it came very seldom and when it came it didn’t amount to much.

Those early days of the New Look were on the whole happy ones. Very gradually the sky changed. There came to be more unhappiness and anxiety in my own life; and Barfield was living through

that whole year of youth
When life ached like an aching tooth.

Our generation, the generation of the returned soldiers, began to pass. Oxford was full of new faces. Freshmen began to make historical allowances for our warped point of view. The problem of one’s career loomed larger and grimmer.

It was then that a really dreadful thing (dreadful to me) happened. First Harwood (still without changing his expression), and then Barfield, embraced the doctrines of Steiner and became Anthroposophists. I was hideously shocked. Everything that I had laboured so hard to expel from my own life seemed to have flared up and met me in my best friends. Not only my best friends but those whom I would have thought safest; the one so

immovable, the other brought up in a free-thinking family and so immune from all “superstition” that he had hardly heard of Christianity itself until he went to school. (The gospel first broke on Barfield in the form of a dictated list of Parables Peculiar to St. Matthew.) Not only in my seeming-safest friends but at a moment when we all had most need to stand together. And as I came to learn (so far as I ever have learned) what Steiner thought, my horror turned into disgust and resentment. For here, apparently, were all the abominations; none more abominable than those which had once attracted me. Here were gods, spirits, after-life and pre-existence, initiates, occult knowledge, meditation. “Why — damn it — it’s *medieval*,” I exclaimed; for I still had all the chronological snobbery of my period and used the names of earlier periods as terms of abuse. Here was everything which the New Look had been designed to exclude; everything that might lead one off the main road into those dark places where men wallow on the floor and scream that they are being dragged down into Hell. Of course it was all arrant nonsense. There was no danger of *my* being taken in. But then, the loneliness, the sense of being deserted.

Naturally, I attributed to my friends the same desires which, had I become an Anthroposophist, would have been operative in me. I thought they were falling under that ravenous, salt lust for the occult. I now see that, from the very first, all the evidence was against this. They were not that sort. Nor does Anthroposophy, so far as I can see, cater for that sort. There is a difficulty and (to me) a re-assuring Germanic dullness about it which would soon deter those who were looking for thrills. Nor have I ever seen that it had a deleterious effect on the character of those who embraced it; I have once known it to have a very good one.

I say this, not because I ever came within a hundred miles of accepting the thing myself, but in common fairness, and also as a tardy amends for the many hard, unjust and bitter things I once said about it to my friends. For Barfield’s conversion to Anthroposophy marked the beginning of what I can only describe as the Great War between him and me. It was never, thank God, a quarrel, though it could have become one in a moment if he had used to me anything like the violence I allowed myself to him. But it was an almost incessant disputation, sometimes by letter and sometimes face to face, which lasted for years. And this Great War was one of the turning points of my life.

Barfield never made me an Anthroposophist, but his counter-attacks destroyed forever two elements in my own thought. In the first place he made short work of what I have called my “chronological snobbery”, the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited. You must find why it went out of date. Was it ever refuted (and if so by whom, where, and how conclusively) or did it merely die away as fashions do? If the latter, this tells us nothing about its truth or falsehood. From seeing this, one passes to the realisation that our own age is also “a period”, and certainly has, like all periods, its own characteristic illusions. They are likeliest to lurk in those wide-spread assumptions which are so ingrained in the age that no one dares to attack or feels it necessary to defend them. In the second place he convinced me that the positions we had hitherto held left no room for any satisfactory theory of knowledge. We had been, in the technical sense of the term, “realists”; that is, we accepted as rock-bottom reality the universe revealed by the senses. But at the same time we continued to make for certain phenomena of consciousness all the claims that really went with a theistic or idealistic view. We maintained that abstract thought (if obedient to logical rules) gave indisputable truth, that our moral judgment was “valid”, and our aesthetic experience not merely pleasing but “valuable”. The view was, I think, common at the time; it runs through Bridges’ *Testament of Beauty*, the work of Gilbert Murray, and Lord Russell’s “Worship of a Free Man”. Barfield convinced me that it was inconsistent. If thought were a purely subjective event, these claims for it would have to be abandoned. If one kept (as rock-bottom reality) the universe of the senses, aided by instruments and co-ordinated so as to form “science”, then one would have to go much further — as many have since gone — and adopt a Behaviouristic theory of logic, ethics, and aesthetics. But such a theory was, and is, unbelievable to me. I am using the word “unbelievable”, which many use to mean “improbable” or even “undesirable”, in a quite literal sense. I mean that the act of believing what the behaviourist believes is one that my mind simply will not perform. I cannot force my thought into that shape any more than I can scratch my ear with my big toe or pour wine out of a bottle into the cavity at the base of that same bottle. It is as final as a physical impossibility. I was therefore compelled to give up realism. I had been trying to defend it ever since I began reading philosophy. Partly, no doubt, this was mere “cussedness”.

Idealism was then the dominant philosophy at Oxford and I was by nature "against Government". But partly, too, realism satisfied an emotional need. I wanted Nature to be quite independent of our observation; something other, indifferent, self-existing. (This went with the Jenkinian zest for rubbing one's nose in the mere quiddity.) But now, it seemed to me, I had to give that up. Unless I were to accept an unbelievable alternative, I must admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*.

It is astonishing (at this time of day) that I could regard this position as something quite distinct from Theism. I suspect there was some wilful blindness. But there were in those days all sorts of blankets, insulators, and insurances which enabled one to get all the conveniences of Theism, without believing in God. The English Hegelians, writers like T. H. Green, Bradley, and Bosanquet (then mighty names), dealt in precisely such wares. The Absolute Mind — better still, the Absolute — was impersonal, or it knew itself (but not us?) only in us, and it was so absolute that it wasn't really much more like a mind than anything else. And anyway, the more muddled one got about it and the more contradictions one committed, the more this proved that our discursive thought moved only on the level of "Appearance", and "Reality" must be somewhere else. And where else but, of course, in the Absolute? There, not here, was "the fuller splendour" behind the "sensuous curtain". The emotion that went with all this was certainly religious. But this was a religion that cost nothing. We could talk religiously about the Absolute: but there was no danger of Its doing anything about us. It was "there"; safely and immovably "there". It would never come "here", never (to be blunt) make a nuisance of Itself. This quasi-religion was all a one-way street; all *eros* (as Dr. Nygren would say) steaming up, but no *agape* darting down. There was nothing to fear; better still, nothing to obey.

Yet there was one really wholesome element in it. The Absolute was "there", and that "there" contained the reconciliation of all contraries, the transcendence of all finitude, the hidden glory which was the only perfectly real thing there is. In fact, it had much of the quality of Heaven. But it was a Heaven none of us could ever get to. For we are appearances. To be "there" is, by definition, not to be we. All who embrace such a philosophy live, like Dante's virtuous Pagans, "in desire without hope". Or like Spinoza they so

love their God as to be unable even to wish that He should love them in return. I should be very sorry not to have passed through that experience. I think it is more religious than many experiences that have been called Christian. What I learned from the Idealists (and still most strongly hold) is this maxim: it is more important that Heaven should exist than that any of us should reach it.

And so the great Angler played His fish and I never dreamed that the hook was in my tongue. But two great advances had been made. Bergson had showed me necessary existence; and from Idealism I had come one step nearer to understanding the words, “We give thanks to thee for thy great glory.” The Norse gods had given me the first hint of it; but then I didn’t believe in them, and I did believe (so far as one can believe an *Unding*) in the Absolute.

XIV. Checkmate

The one principle of hell is— "I am my own."
GEORGE MACDONALD

In the summer of 1922 I finished Greats. As there were no philosophical posts going, or none that I could get, my long-suffering father offered me a fourth year at Oxford during which I read English so as to get a second string to my bow. The Great War with Barfield had, I think, begun at this time.

No sooner had I entered the English School than I went to George Gordon's discussion class. And there I made a new friend. The very first words he spoke marked him out from the ten or twelve others who were present; a man after my own heart, and that too at an age when the instantaneous friendships of earlier youth were becoming rather rare events. His name was Nevill Coghill. I soon had the shock of discovering that he — clearly the most intelligent and best-informed man in that class — was a Christian and a thoroughgoing supernaturalist. There were other traits that I liked but found (for I was still very much a modern) oddly archaic; chivalry, honour, courtesy, "freedom", and "gentillesse". One could imagine him fighting a duel. He spoke much "ribaldry" but never "villeinye". Barfield was beginning to overthrow my chronological snobbery; Coghill gave it another blow. Had something really dropped out of our lives? Was the archaic simply the civilised, and the modern simply the barbaric? It will seem strange to many of my critics who regard me as a typical *laudator temporis acti* that this question should have arisen so comparatively late in my life. But then the key to my books is Donne's maxim, "The heresies that men leave are hated most." The things I assert most vigorously are those that I resisted long and accepted late.

These disturbing factors in Coghill ranged themselves with a wider disturbance which was now threatening my whole earlier outlook. All the books were beginning to turn against me. Indeed, I must have been as blind as a bat not to have seen, long before, the ludicrous contradiction between my theory of life and my actual experiences as a reader. George MacDonald had done more to me than any other writer; of course it was a pity he had that bee in his bonnet about Christianity. He was good *in spite of it*.

Chesterton had more sense than all the other moderns put together; bating, of course, his Christianity. Johnson was one of the few authors whom I felt I could trust utterly; curiously enough, he had the same kink. Spenser and Milton by a strange coincidence had it too. Even among ancient authors the same paradox was to be found. The most religious (Plato, Aeschylus, Virgil) were clearly those on whom I could really feed. On the other hand, those writers who did not suffer from religion and with whom in theory my sympathy ought to have been complete — Shaw and Wells and Mill and Gibbon and Voltaire — all seemed a little thin; what as boys we called "tinny". It wasn't that I didn't like them. They were all (especially Gibbon) entertaining; but hardly more. There seemed to be no depth in them. They were too simple. The roughness and density of life did not appear in their books.

Now that I was reading more English, the paradox began to be aggravated. I was deeply moved by the *Dream of the Rood*; more deeply still by Langland; intoxicated (for a time) by Donne; deeply and lastingly satisfied by Thomas Browne. But the most alarming of all was George Herbert. Here was a man who seemed to me to excel all the authors I had ever read in conveying the very quality of life as we actually live it from moment to moment; but the wretched fellow, instead of doing it all directly, insisted on meditating it though what I would still have called "the Christian mythology". On the other hand most of the authors who might be claimed as precursors of modern enlightenment seemed to me very small beer and bored me cruelly. I thought Bacon (to speak frankly) a solemn, pretentious ass, yawned my way through Restoration Comedy, and, having manfully struggled on to the last line of *Don Juan*, wrote on the end-leaf "Never again". The only non-Christians who seemed to me really to know anything were the Romantics; and a good many of them were dangerously tinged with something like religion, even at times with Christianity. The upshot of it all could nearly be expressed in a perversion of Roland's great line in the *Chanson* —

Christians are wrong, but all the rest are bores.

The natural step would have been to inquire a little more closely whether the Christians were, after all, wrong. But I did not take it. I thought I could explain their superiority without that hypothesis. Absurdly (yet many Absolute Idealists have shared this absurdity) I thought that "the Christian myth" conveyed to unphilosophic minds as much of the truth, that is of

Absolute Idealism, as they were capable of grasping, and that even that much put them above the irreligious. Those who could not rise to the notion of the Absolute would come nearer to the truth by belief in “a God” than by disbelief. Those who could not understand how, as Reasoners, we participated in a timeless and therefore deathless world, would get a symbolic shadow of the truth by believing in a life after death. The implication — that something which I and most other undergraduates could master without extraordinary pains would have been too hard for Plato, Dante, Hooker, and Pascal — did not yet strike me as absurd. I hope this is because I never looked it squarely in the face.

As the plot quickens and thickens towards its end, I leave out more and more of such matters as would go into a full autobiography. My father’s death, with all the fortitude (even playfulness) which he displayed in his last illness, does not really come into the story I am telling. My brother was at that time in Shanghai. Nor would it be relevant to tell in detail how I became a temporary lecturer at Univ. for a year and was elected a fellow of Magdalen in 1925. The worst is that I must leave undescribed many men whom I love and to whom I am deeply in debt; G. H. Stevenson and E. F. Carritt, my tutors, the Fark (but who could paint him anyway?), and five great Magdalen men who enlarged my very idea of what a learned life should be — P. V. M. Benecke, C. C. J. Webb, J. A. Smith, F. E. Brightman, and C. T. Onions. Except for Oldie, I have always been blessed both in my official and my unofficial teachers. In my earlier years at Magdalen I inhabited a world where hardly anything I wanted to know needed to be found out by my own unaided efforts. One or other of these could always give you a clue. (“You’ll find something about it in Alanus....”— “Macrobius would be the man to try....”— “Doesn’t Comparetti mention it?”... “Have you looked for it in Du Cange?”) I found, as always, that the ripest are kindest to the raw and the most studious have most time to spare. When I began teaching for the English Faculty, I made two other friends, both Christians (these queer people seemed now to pop up on every side) who were later to give me much help in getting over the last stile. They were H. V. V. Dyson (then of Reading) and J. R. R. Tolkien. Friendship with the latter marked the breakdown of two old prejudices. At my first coming into the world I had been (implicitly) warned never to trust a Papist, and at my first coming into the English Faculty (explicitly) never to trust a philologist. Tolkien was both.

Realism had been abandoned; the New Look was somewhat damaged; and chronological snobbery was seriously shaken. All over the board my pieces were in the most disadvantageous positions. Soon I could no longer cherish even the illusion that the initiative lay with me. My Adversary began to make His final moves.

The first Move annihilated the last remains of the New Look. I was suddenly impelled to re-read (which was certainly no business of mine at the moment) the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. In one chorus all that world's end imagery which I had rejected when I assumed my New Look rose before me. I liked, but did not yield; I tried to patronise it. But next day I was overwhelmed. There was a transitional moment of delicious uneasiness, and then — instantaneously — the long inhibition was over, the dry desert lay behind, I was off once more into the land of longing, my heart at once broken and exalted as it had never been since the old days at Bookham. There was nothing whatever to do about it; no question of returning to the desert. I had simply been ordered — or, rather, compelled — to "take that look off my face". And never to resume it either.

The next Move was intellectual, and consolidated the first Move. I read in Alexander's *Space Time and Deity* his theory of "Enjoyment" and "Contemplation". These are technical terms in Alexander's philosophy; "Enjoyment" has nothing to do with pleasure, nor "Contemplation" with the contemplative life. When you see a table you "enjoy" the act of seeing and "contemplate" the table. Later, if you took up Optics and thought about Seeing itself, you would be contemplating the seeing and enjoying the thought. In bereavement you contemplate the beloved and the beloved's death and, in Alexander's sense, "enjoy" the loneliness and grief; but a psychologist, if he were considering you as a case of melancholia, would be contemplating your grief and enjoying psychology. We do not "think a thought" in the same sense in which we "think that Herodotus is unreliable". When we think a thought, "thought" is a cognate accusative (like "blow" in "strike a blow"). We enjoy the thought (that Herodotus is unreliable) and, in so doing, contemplate the unreliability of Herodotus.

I accepted this distinction at once and have ever since regarded it as an indispensable tool of thought. A moment later its consequences — for me quite catastrophic — began to appear. It seemed to me self-evident that one essential property of love, hate, fear, hope, or desire was attention to their object. To cease thinking about or attending to the woman is, so far, to cease

loving; to cease thinking about or attending to the dreaded thing is, so far, to cease being afraid. But to attend to your own love or fear is to cease attending to the loved or dreaded object. In other words the enjoyment and the contemplation of our inner activities are incompatible. You cannot hope and also think about hoping at the same moment; for in hope we look to hope's object and we interrupt this by (so to speak) turning round to look at the hope itself. Of course the two activities can and do alternate with great rapidity; but they are distinct and incompatible. This was not merely a logical result of Alexander's analysis, but could be verified in daily and hourly experience. The surest means of disarming an anger or a lust was to turn your attention from the girl or the insult and start examining the passion itself. The surest way of spoiling a pleasure was to start examining your satisfaction. But if so, it followed that all introspection is in one respect misleading. In introspection we try to look "inside ourselves" and see what is going on. But nearly everything that was going on a moment before is stopped by the very act of our turning to look at it. Unfortunately this does not mean that introspection finds nothing. On the contrary, it finds precisely what is left behind by the suspension of all our normal activities; and what is left behind is mainly mental images and physical sensations. The great error is to mistake this mere sediment or track or by-product for the activities themselves. That is how men may come to believe that thought is only unspoken words, or the appreciation of poetry only a collection of mental pictures, when these in reality are what the thought or the appreciation, when interrupted, leave behind — like the swell at sea, working after the wind has dropped. Not, of course, that these activities, before we stopped them by introspection, were unconscious. We do not love, fear, or think without knowing it. Instead of the twofold division into Conscious and Unconscious, we need a three-fold division: the Unconscious, the Enjoyed, and the Contemplated.

This discovery flashed a new light back on my whole life. I saw that all my waitings and watchings for Joy, all my vain hopes to find some mental content on which I could, so to speak, lay my finger and say, "This is it," had been a futile attempt to contemplate the enjoyed. All that such watching and waiting ever *could* find would be either an image (Asgard, the Western Garden, or what not) or a quiver in the diaphragm. I should never have to bother again about these images or sensations. I knew now that they were merely the mental track left by the passage of Joy — not the wave but the

wave’s imprint on the sand. The inherent dialectic of desire itself had in a way already shown me this; for all images and sensations, if idolatrously mistaken for Joy itself, soon honestly confessed themselves inadequate. All said, in the last resort, “It is not I. I am only a reminder. Look! Look! What do I remind you of?”

So far, so good. But it is at the next step that awe overtakes me. There was no doubt that Joy was a desire (and, in so far as it was also simultaneously a good, it was also a kind of love). But a desire is turned not to itself but to its object. Not only that, but it owes all its character to its object. Erotic love is not like desire for food, nay, a love for one woman differs from a love for another woman in the very same way and the very same degree as the two women differ from one another. Even our desire for one wine differs in tone from our desire for another. Our intellectual desire (curiosity) to know the true answer to a question is quite different from our desire to find that one answer, rather than another, is true. The form of the desired is in the desire. It is the object which makes the desire harsh or sweet, coarse or choice, “high” or “low”. It is the object that makes the desire itself desirable or hateful. I perceived (and this was a wonder of wonders) that just as I had been wrong in supposing that I really desired the Garden of the Hesperides, so also I had been equally wrong in supposing that I desired Joy itself. Joy itself, considered simply as an event in my own mind, turned out to be of no value at all. All the value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring. And that object, quite clearly, was no state of my own mind or body at all. In a way, I had proved this by elimination. I had tried everything in my own mind and body; as it were, asking myself, “Is it this you want? Is it this?” Last of all I had asked if Joy itself was what I wanted; and, labelling it “aesthetic experience”, had pretended I could answer Yes. But that answer too had broken down. Inexorably Joy proclaimed, “You want — I myself am your want of — something other, outside, not you nor any state of you.” I did not yet ask, Who is the desired? only What is it? But this brought me already into the region of awe, for I thus understood that in deepest solitude there is a road right out of the self, a commerce with something which, by refusing to identify itself with any object of the senses, or anything whereof we have biological or social need, or anything imagined, or any state of our own minds, proclaims itself sheerly objective. Far more objective than bodies, for it is not, like them, clothed in our

senses; the naked Other, imageless (though our imagination salutes it with a hundred images), unknown, undefined, desired.

That was the second Move; equivalent, perhaps, to the loss of one's last remaining bishop. The third Move did not seem to me dangerous at the time. It consisted merely in linking up this new *éclaircissement* about Joy with my idealistic philosophy. I saw that Joy, as I now understood it, would fit in. We mortals, seen as the sciences see us and as we commonly see one another, are mere "appearances". But appearances of the Absolute. In so far as we really are at all (which isn't saying much) we have, so to speak, a root in the Absolute, which is the utter reality. And that is why we experience Joy: we yearn, rightly, for that unity which we can never reach except by ceasing to be the separate phenomenal beings called "we". Joy was not a deception. Its visitations were rather the moments of clearest consciousness we had, when we became aware of our fragmentary and phantasmal nature and ached for that impossible reunion which would annihilate us or that self-contradictory waking which would reveal, not that we had had, but that we *were*, a dream. This seemed quite satisfactory intellectually. Even emotionally too; for it matters more that Heaven should exist than that we should ever get there. What I did not notice was that I had passed an important milestone. Up till now my thoughts had been centrifugal; now the centripetal movement had begun. Considerations arising from quite different parts of my experience were beginning to come together with a click. This new dovetailing of my desire-life with my philosophy foreshadowed the day, now fast approaching, when I should be forced to take my "philosophy" more seriously than I ever intended. I did not foresee this. I was like a man who has lost "merely a pawn" and never dreams that this (in that state of the game) means mate in a few moves.

The fourth Move was more alarming. I was now teaching philosophy (I suspect very badly) as well as English. And my watered Hegelianism wouldn't serve for tutorial purposes. A tutor must make things clear. Now the Absolute cannot be made clear. Do you mean Nobody-knows-what, or do you mean a superhuman mind and therefore (we may as well admit) a Person? After all, did Hegel and Bradley and all the rest of them ever do more than add mystifications to the simple, workable, theistic idealism of Berkeley? I thought not. And didn't Berkeley's "God" do all the same work as the Absolute, with the added advantage that we had at least some notion of what we meant by Him? I thought He did. So I was driven back into

something like Berkeleyanism; but Berkeleyanism with a few top-dressings of my own. I distinguished this philosophical “God” very sharply (or so I said) from “the God of popular religion”. There was, I explained, no possibility of being in a personal relation with Him. For I thought He projected us as a dramatist projects his characters, and I could no more “meet” Him, than Hamlet could meet Shakespeare. I didn’t call Him “God” either; I called Him “Spirit”. One fights for one’s remaining comforts.

[Footnote 7] Not, of course, that I thought it a tutor’s business to make converts to his own philosophy. But I found I needed a position of my own as a basis from which to criticise my pupils’ essays.

Then I read Chesterton’s *Everlasting Man* and for the first time saw the whole Christian outline of history set out in a form that seemed to me to make sense. Somehow I contrived not to be too badly shaken. You will remember that I already thought Chesterton the most sensible man alive “apart from his Christianity”. Now, I veritably believe, I thought — I didn’t of course *say*; words would have revealed the nonsense — that Christianity itself was very sensible “apart from its Christianity”. But I hardly remember, for I had not long finished *The Everlasting Man* when something far more alarming happened to me. Early in 1926 the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good. “Rum thing,” he went on. “All that stuff of Frazer’s about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once.” To understand the shattering impact of it, you would need to know the man (who has certainly never since shown any interest in Christianity). If he, the cynic of cynics, the toughest of the toughs, were not — as I would still have put it— “safe”, where could I turn? Was there then no escape?

The odd thing was that before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice. In a sense. I was going up Headington Hill on the top of a bus. Without words and (I think) almost without images, a fact about myself was somehow presented to me. I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out. Or, if you like, that I was wearing some stiff clothing, like corsets, or even a suit of armour, as if I were a lobster. I felt myself being, there and then, given a free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle the armour or keep it on. Neither choice was presented as a duty;

no threat or promise was attached to either, though I knew that to open the door or to take off the corslet meant the incalculable. The choice appeared to be momentous but it was also strangely unemotional. I was moved by no desires or fears. In a sense I was not moved by anything. I chose to open, to unbuckle, to loosen the rein. I say, “I chose,” yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite. On the other hand, I was aware of no motives. You could argue that I was not a free agent, but I am more inclined to think that this came nearer to being a perfectly free act than most that I have ever done. Necessity may not be the opposite of freedom, and perhaps a man is most free when, instead of producing motives, he could only say, “I am what I do.” Then came the repercussion on the imaginative level. I felt as if I were a man of snow at long last beginning to melt. The melting was starting in my back — drip-drip and presently trickle-trickle. I rather disliked the feeling.

The fox had been dislodged from Hegelian Wood and was now running in the open, “with all the wo in the world,” bedraggled and weary, hounds barely a field behind. And nearly everyone was now (one way or another) in the pack; Plato, Dante, MacDonald, Herbert, Barfield, Tolkien, Dyson, Joy itself. Everyone and everything had joined the other side. Even my own pupil Griffiths — now Dom Bede Griffiths — though not yet himself a believer, did his share. Once, when he and Barfield were lunching in my room, I happened to refer to philosophy as “a subject”. “It wasn’t a *subject* to Plato,” said Barfield, “it was a way.” The quiet but fervent agreement of Griffiths, and the quick glance of understanding between these two, revealed to me my own frivolity. Enough had been thought, and said, and felt, and imagined. It was about time that something should be done.

For of course there had long been an ethic (theoretically) attached to my Idealism. I thought the business of us finite and half-unreal souls was to multiply the consciousness of Spirit by seeing the world from different positions while yet remaining qualitatively the same as Spirit; to be tied to a particular time and place and set of circumstances, yet there to will and think as Spirit itself does. This was hard; for the very act whereby Spirit projected souls and a world gave those souls different and competitive interests, so that there was a temptation to selfishness. But I thought each of us had it in his power to discount the emotional perspective produced by his own particular selfhood, just as we discount the optical perspective produced by our position in space. To prefer my own happiness to my

neighbour's was like thinking that the nearest telegraph post was really the largest. The way to recover, and act upon, this universal and objective vision was daily and hourly to remember our true nature, to reascend or return into that Spirit which, in so far as we really were at all, we still were. Yes; but I now felt I had better try to do it. I freed at last (in MacDonald's words) "something to be neither more nor less nor other than *done*". An attempt at complete virtue must be made.

Really, a young Atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully. Dangers lie in wait for him on every side. You must not do, you must not even try to do, the will of the Father unless you are prepared to "know of the doctrine". All my acts, desires, and thoughts were to be brought into harmony with universal Spirit. For the first time I examined myself with a seriously practical purpose. And there I found what appalled me; a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a hareem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion.

Of course I could do nothing — I could not last out one hour — without continual conscious recourse to what I called Spirit. But the fine, philosophical distinction between this and what ordinary people call "prayer to God" breaks down as soon as you start doing it in earnest. Idealism can be talked, and even felt; it cannot be lived. It became patently absurd to go on thinking of "Spirit" as either ignorant of, or passive to, my approaches. Even if my own philosophy were true, how could the initiative lie on my side? My own analogy, as I now first perceived, suggested the opposite: if Shakespeare and Hamlet could ever meet, it must be Shakespeare's doing. Hamlet could initiate nothing. Perhaps, even now, my Absolute Spirit still differed in some way from the God of religion. The real issue was not, or not yet, there. The real terror was that if you seriously believed in even such a "God" or "Spirit" as I admitted, a wholly new situation developed. As the dry bones shook and came together in that dreadful valley of Ezekiel's, so now a philosophical theorem, cerebrally entertained, began to stir and heave and throw off its gravecloths, and stood upright and became a living presence. I was to be allowed to play at philosophy no longer. It might, as I say, still be true that my "Spirit" differed in some way from "the God of popular religion". My Adversary waived the point. It sank into utter unimportance. He would not argue about it. He only said, "I am the Lord"; "I am that I am"; "I am".

[Footnote 8] i.e. Shakespeare could, in principle, make himself appear as Author within the play, and write a dialogue between Hamlet and himself. The "Shakespeare" within the play would of course be at once Shakespeare and one of Shakespeare's creatures. It would bear some analogy to Incarnation.

People who are naturally religious find difficulty in understanding the horror of such a revelation. Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about "man's search for God". To me, as I then was, they might as well have talked about the mouse's search for the cat. The best image of my predicament is the meeting of Mime and Wotan in the first act of *Siegfried*; *hier brauch' ich nicht Spärer noch Späher, Einsam will ich...* (I've no use for spies and snoopers. I would be private....)

Remember, I had always wanted, above all things, not to be "interfered with". I had wanted (mad wish) "to call my soul my own". I had been far more anxious to avoid suffering than to achieve delight. I had always aimed at limited liabilities. The supernatural itself had been to me, first, an illicit dram, and then, as by a drunkard's reaction, nauseous. Even my recent attempt to live my philosophy had secretly (I now knew) been hedged round by all sorts of reservations. I had pretty well known that my ideal of virtue would never be allowed to lead me into anything intolerably painful; I would be "reasonable". But now what had been an ideal became a command; and what might not be expected of one? Doubtless, by definition, God was Reason itself. But would He also be "reasonable" in that other, more comfortable, sense? Not the slightest assurance on that score was offered me. Total surrender, the absolute leap in the dark, were demanded. The reality with which no treaty can be made was upon me. The demand was not even "All or nothing". I think that stage had been passed, on the bus-top when I unbuckled my armour and the snow-man started to melt. Now, the demand was simply "All".

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The

Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The words *compelle intrare*, compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.

XV. The Beginning

Aliud est de silvestri cacumine videre patriam pacis... et aliud tenere viam illuc ducentem.

ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, VII, xxi

For it is one thing to see the land of peace from a wooded ridge... and another to tread the road that leads to it.

It must be understood that the conversion recorded in the last chapter was only to Theism, pure and simple, not to Christianity. I knew nothing yet about the Incarnation. The God to whom I surrendered was sheerly non-human.

It may be asked whether my terror was at all relieved by the thought that I was now approaching the source from which those arrows of Joy had been shot at me ever since childhood. Not in the least. No slightest hint was vouchsafed me that there ever had been or ever would be any connection between God and Joy. If anything, it was the reverse. I had hoped that the heart of reality might be of such a kind that we can best symbolise it as a place; instead, I found it to be a Person. For all I knew, the total rejection of what I called Joy might be one of the demands, might be the very first demand, He would make upon me. There was no strain of music from within, no smell of eternal orchards at the threshold, when I was dragged through the doorway. No kind of desire was present at all.

My conversion involved as yet no belief in a future life. I now number it among my greatest mercies that I was permitted for several months, perhaps for a year, to know God and to attempt obedience without even raising that question. My training was like that of the Jews, to whom He revealed Himself centuries before there was a whisper of anything better (or worse) beyond the grave than shadowy and featureless *Sheol*. And I did not dream even of that. There are men, far better men than I, who have made immortality almost the central doctrine of their religion; but for my own part I have never seen how a preoccupation with that subject at the outset could fail to corrupt the whole thing. I had been brought up to believe that goodness was goodness only if it were disinterested, and that any hope of reward or fear of punishment contaminated the will. If I was wrong in this

(the question is really much more complicated than I then perceived) my error was most tenderly allowed for. I was afraid that threats or promises would demoralise me; no threats or promises were made. The commands were inexorable, but they were backed by no “sanctions”. God was to be obeyed simply because he was God. Long since, through the gods of Asgard, and later through the notion of the Absolute, He had taught me how a thing can be revered not for what it can do to us but for what it is in itself. That is why, though it was a terror, it was no surprise to learn that God is to be obeyed because of what He is in Himself. If you ask why we should obey God, in the last resort the answer is, “I am.” To know God is to know that our obedience is due to Him. In His nature His sovereignty *de jure* is revealed.

Of course, as I have said, the matter is more complicated than that. The primal and necessary Being, the Creator, has sovereignty *de facto* as well as *de jure*. He has the power as well as the kingdom and the glory. But the *de jure* sovereignty was made known to me before the power, the right before the might. And for this I am thankful. I think it is well, even now, sometimes to say to ourselves, “God is such that if (*per impossibile*) his power could vanish and His other attributes remain, so that the supreme right were forever robbed of the supreme might, we should still owe Him precisely the same kind and degree of allegiance as we now do.” On the other hand, while it is true to say that God’s own nature is the real sanction of His commands, yet to understand this must, in the end, lead us to the conclusion that union with that Nature is bliss and separation from it horror. Thus Heaven and Hell come in. But it may well be that to think much of either except in this context of thought, to hypostatise them as if they had a substantial meaning apart from the presence or absence of God, corrupts the doctrine of both and corrupts us while we so think of them.

The last stage in my story, the transition from mere Theism to Christianity, is the one on which I am now least informed. Since it is also the most recent, this ignorance may seem strange. I think there are two reasons. One is that as we grow older we remember the more distant past better than what is nearer. But the other is, I believe, that one of the first results of my Theistic conversion was a marked decrease (and high time, as all readers of this book will agree) in the fussy attentiveness which I had so long paid to the progress of my own opinions and the states of my own mind. For many healthy extroverts self-examination first begins with

conversion. For me it was almost the other way round. Self-examination did of course continue. But it was (I suppose, for I cannot quite remember) at stated intervals, and for a practical purpose; a duty, a discipline, an uncomfortable thing, no longer a hobby or a habit. To believe and to pray were the beginning of extroversion. I had been, as they say, “taken out of myself”. If Theism had done nothing else for me, I should still be thankful that it cured me of the time-wasting and foolish practice of keeping a diary. (Even for autobiographical purposes a diary is nothing like so useful as I had hoped. You put down each day what you think important; but of course you cannot each day see what will prove to have been important in the long run.)

[Footnote 9] The only real good I got from keeping a diary was that it taught me a just appreciation of Boswell’s amazing genius. I tried very hard to reproduce conversations, in some of which very amusing and striking people had taken part. But none of these people came to life in the diary at all. Obviously something quite different from mere accurate reporting went to the presentation of Boswell’s Langton, Beauclerk, Wilkes, and the rest.

As soon as I became a Theist I started attending my parish church on Sundays and my college chapel on weekdays; not because I believed in Christianity, nor because I thought the difference between it and simple Theism a small one, but because I thought one ought to “fly one’s flag” by some unmistakable overt sign. I was acting in obedience to a (perhaps mistaken) sense of honour. The idea of churchmanship was to me wholly unattractive. I was not in the least anti-clerical, but I was deeply anti-ecclesiastical. That curates and archdeacons and churchwardens should exist, was admirable. They gratified my Jenkinian love of everything which has its own strong flavour. And (apart from Oldie) I had been fortunate in my clerical acquaintances; especially in Adam Fox, the Dean of Divinity at Magdalen, and in Arthur Barton (later Archbishop of Dublin) who had been our Rector at home in Ireland. (He, by the by, had once suffered under Oldie at Belsen. Speaking of Oldie’s death, I had said to him, “Well, we shan’t see *him* again.” “You mean,” he answered with a grim smile, “we *hope* we shan’t.”) But though I liked clergymen as I liked bears, I had as little wish to be in the Church as in the zoo. It was, to begin with, a kind of collective; a wearisome “get-together” affair. I couldn’t yet see how a concern of that sort should have anything to do with one’s spiritual life. To me, religion ought to have been a matter of good men praying alone and meeting by

twos and threes to talk of spiritual matters. And then the fussy, time-wasting botheration of it all! the bells, the crowds, the umbrellas, the notices, the bustle, the perpetual arranging and organising. Hymns were (and are) extremely disagreeable to me. Of all musical instruments I liked (and like) the organ least. I have, too, a sort of spiritual *gaucherie* which makes me unapt to participate in any rite.

Thus my churchgoing was a merely symbolical and provisional practice. If it in fact helped to move me in the Christian direction, I was and am unaware of this. My chief companion on this stage of the road was Griffiths, with whom I kept up a copious correspondence. Both now believed in God, and were ready to hear more of Him from any source, Pagan or Christian. In my mind (I cannot now answer for his, and he has told his own story admirably in *The Golden String*) the perplexing multiplicity of "religions" began to sort itself out. The real clue had been put into my hand by that hard-boiled Atheist when he said, "Rum thing, all that about the Dying God. Seems to have really happened once"; by him and by Barfield's encouragement of a more respectful, if not more delighted, attitude to Pagan myth. The question was no longer to find the one simply true religion among a thousand religions simply false. It was rather, "Where has religion reached its true maturity? Where, if anywhere, have the hints of all Paganism been fulfilled?" With the irreligious I was no longer concerned; their view of life was henceforth out of court. As against them, the whole mass of those who had worshipped — all who had danced and sung and sacrificed and trembled and adored — were clearly right. But the intellect and the conscience, as well as the orgy and the ritual, must be our guide. There could be no question of going back to primitive, untheologised and unmoralised, Paganism. The God whom I had at last acknowledged was one, and was righteous. Paganism had been only the childhood of religion, or only a prophetic dream. Where was the thing full grown? or where was the awaking? (*The Everlasting Man* was helping me here.) There were really only two answers possible: either in Hinduism or in Christianity. Everything else was either a preparation for, or else (in the French sense) a *vulgarisation* of, these. Whatever you could find elsewhere you could find better in one of these. But Hinduism seemed to have two disqualifications. For one thing, it appeared to be not so much a moralised and philosophical maturity of Paganism as a mere oil-and-water coexistence of philosophy side by side with Paganism unpurged; the Brahmin meditating in the forest,

and, in the village a few miles away, temple-prostitution, *sati*, cruelty, monstrosity. And secondly, there was no such historical claim as in Christianity. I was by now too experienced in literary criticism to regard the Gospels as myths. They had not the mythical taste. And yet the very matter which they set down in their artless, historical fashion — those narrow, unattractive Jews, too blind to the mythical wealth of the Pagan world around them — was precisely the matter of the great myths. If ever a myth had become fact, had been incarnated, it would be just like this. And nothing else in all literature was just like this. Myths were like it in one way. Histories were like it in another. But nothing was simply like it. And no person was like the Person it depicted; as real, as recognisable, through all that depth of time, as Plato's Socrates or Boswell's Johnson (ten times more so than Eckermann's Goethe or Lockhart's Scott), yet also numinous, lit by a light from beyond the world, a god. But if a god — we are no longer polytheists — then not a god, but God. Here and here only in all time the myth must have become fact; the Word, flesh; God, Man. This is not "a religion", nor "a philosophy". It is the summing up and actuality of them all.

As I have said, I speak of this last transition less certainly than of any which went before it, and it may be that in the preceding paragraph I have mixed thoughts that came later. But I can hardly be wrong about the main lines. Of one thing I am sure. As I drew near the conclusion, I felt a resistance almost as strong as my previous resistance to Theism. As strong, but shorter-lived, for I understood it better. Every step I had taken, from the Absolute to "Spirit" and from "Spirit" to "God", had been a step towards the more concrete, the more imminent, the more compulsive. At each step one had less chance "to call one's soul one's own". To accept the Incarnation was a further step in the same direction. It brings God nearer, or near in a new way. And this, I found, was something I had not wanted. But to recognise the ground for my evasion was of course to recognise both its shame and its futility. I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought. Nor in great emotion. "Emotional" is perhaps the last word we can apply to some of the most important events. It was more like when a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake. And it

was, like that moment on top of the bus, ambiguous. Freedom, or necessity? Or do they differ at their maximum? At that maximum a man is what he does; there is nothing of him left over or outside the act. As for what we commonly call Will, and what we commonly call Emotion, I fancy these usually talk too loud, protest too much, to be quite believed, and we have a secret suspicion that the great passion or the iron resolution is partly a put-up job.

They have spoiled Whipsnade since then. Wallaby Wood, with the birds singing overhead and the bluebells underfoot and the Wallabies hopping all round one, was almost Eden come again.

But what, in conclusion, of Joy? for that, after all, is what the story has mainly been about. To tell you the truth, the subject has lost nearly all interest for me since I became a Christian. I cannot, indeed, complain, like Wordsworth, that the visionary gleam has passed away. I believe (if the thing were at all worth recording) that the old stab, the old bittersweet, has come to me as often and as sharply since my conversion as at any time of my life whatever. But I now know that the experience, considered as a state of my own mind, had never had the kind of importance I once gave it. It was valuable only as a pointer to something other and outer. While that other was in doubt, the pointer naturally loomed large in my thoughts. When we are lost in the woods the sight of a signpost is a great matter. He who first sees it cries, “Look!” The whole party gathers round and stares. But when we have found the road and are passing signposts every few miles, we shall not stop and stare. They will encourage us and we shall be grateful to the authority that set them up. But we shall not stop and stare, or not much; not on this road, though their pillars are of silver and their lettering of gold. “We would be at Jerusalem.”

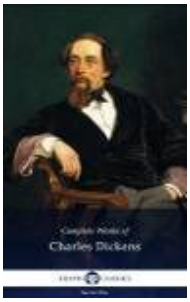
Not, of course, that I don’t often catch myself stopping to stare at roadside objects of even less importance.

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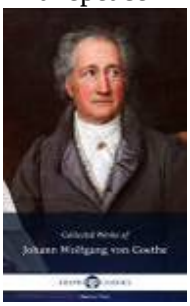
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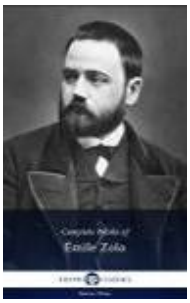
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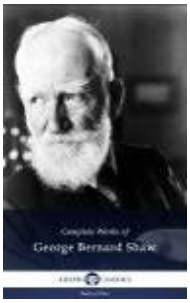
Series Three

Ambrose Bierce
Ann Radcliffe
Ben Jonson
Charles Lever
Émile Zola
Ford Madox Ford
Geoffrey Chaucer
George Gissing
George Orwell
Guy de Maupassant
H. P. Lovecraft
Henrik Ibsen
Henry David Thoreau
Henry Fielding
J. M. Barrie
James Fenimore Cooper
John Buchan
John Galsworthy
Jonathan Swift
Kate Chopin
Katherine Mansfield
L. M. Montgomery
Laurence Sterne
Mary Shelley
Sheridan Le Fanu
Washington Irving



Series Four

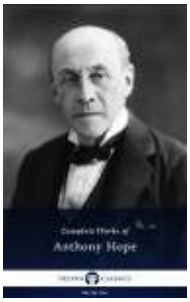
Arnold Bennett
Arthur Machen
Beatrix Potter
Bret Harte
Captain Frederick Marryat
Charles Kingsley
Charles Reade
G. A. Henty
Edgar Rice Burroughs
Edgar Wallace
E. M. Forster
E. Nesbit
George Meredith
Harriet Beecher Stowe
Jerome K. Jerome
John Ruskin
Maria Edgeworth
M. E. Braddon
Miguel de Cervantes
M. R. James
R. M. Ballantyne
Robert E. Howard
Samuel Johnson
Stendhal
Stephen Crane
Zane Grey



Series Five

Algernon Blackwood
Anatole France
Beaumont and Fletcher
Charles Darwin
Edward Bulwer-Lytton
Edward Gibbon
E. F. Benson
Frances Hodgson Burnett
Friedrich Nietzsche
George Bernard Shaw
George MacDonald

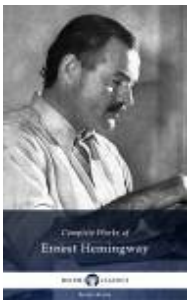
Hilaire Belloc
John Bunyan
John Webster
Margaret Oliphant
Maxim Gorky
Oliver Goldsmith
Radclyffe Hall
Robert W. Chambers
Samuel Butler
Samuel Richardson
Sir Thomas Malory
Thomas Carlyle
William Harrison Ainsworth
William Dean Howells
William Morris



Series Six

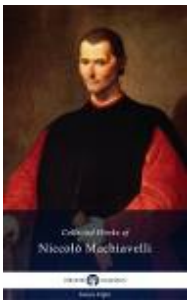
Anthony Hope
Aphra Behn
Arthur Morrison
Baroness Emma Orczy
Captain Mayne Reid
Charlotte M. Yonge
Charlotte Perkins Gilman
E. W. Hornung
Ellen Wood
Frances Burney
Frank Norris
Frank R. Stockton
Hall Caine
Horace Walpole
One Thousand and One Nights
R. Austin Freeman
Rafael Sabatini
Saki
Samuel Pepys
Sir Issac Newton
Stanley J. Weyman
Thomas De Quincey

Thomas Middleton
Voltaire
William Hazlitt
William Hope Hodgson



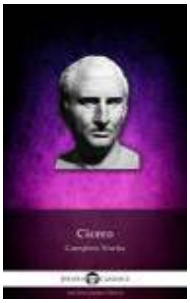
Series Seven

Adam Smith
Benjamin Disraeli
Confucius
David Hume
E. M. Delafield
E. Phillips Oppenheim
Edmund Burke
Ernest Hemingway
Frances Trollope
Galileo Galilei
Guy Boothby
Hans Christian Andersen
Ian Fleming
Immanuel Kant
Karl Marx
Kenneth Grahame
Lytton Strachey
Mary Wollstonecraft
Michel de Montaigne
René Descartes
Richard Marsh
Sax Rohmer
Sir Richard Burton
Talbot Mundy
Thomas Babington Macaulay
W. W. Jacobs



Series Eight

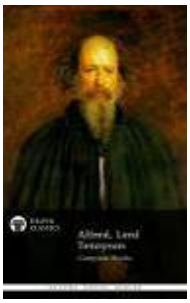
Anna Katharine Green
Arthur Schopenhauer
The Brothers Grimm
C. S. Lewis
Charles and Mary Lamb
Elizabeth von Arnim
Ernest Bramah
Francis Bacon
Gilbert and Sullivan
Grant Allen
Henryk Sienkiewicz
Hugh Walpole
Jean-Jacques Rousseau
John Locke
John Muir
Joseph Addison
Lafcadio Hearn
Lord Dunsany
Marie Corelli
Niccolò Machiavelli
Ouida
Richard Brinsley Sheridan
Sigmund Freud
Theodore Dreiser
Walter Pater
W. Somerset Maugham



Ancient Classics

Achilles Tatius
Aeschylus
Ammianus Marcellinus
Apollodorus
Appian
Apuleius
Apollonius of Rhodes
Aristophanes
Aristotle
Arrian
Augustine
Aulus Gellius
Bede
Cassius Dio
Cato
Catullus
Cicero
Clement of Alexandria
Cornelius Nepos
Demosthenes
Diodorus Siculus
Diogenes Laërtius
Euripides
Frontius
Herodotus
Hesiod
Hippocrates
Homer
Horace
Isocrates
Josephus
Julius Caesar
Juvenal
Livy
Longus
Lucan
Lucian
Lucretius
Marcus Aurelius
Martial
Nonnus
Ovid
Pausanias
Petronius
Pindar
Plato
Plautus
Pliny the Elder
Pliny the Younger
Plotinus

Plutarch
Polybius
Procopius
Propertius
Ptolemy
Quintus Curtius Rufus
Quintus Smyrnaeus
Sallust
Sappho
Seneca the Younger
Septuagint
Sidonius
Sophocles
Statius
Strabo
Suetonius
Tacitus
Terence
Theocritus
Thucydides
Tibullus
Virgil
Xenophon



Delphi Poets Series

A. E. Housman
Alexander Pope
Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Algernon Charles Swinburne
Andrew Marvell
Beowulf
Charlotte Smith
Christina Rossetti
D. H Lawrence (poetry)
Dante Alighieri (English)
Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Delphi Poetry Anthology
Edgar Allan Poe (poetry)
Edmund Spenser

Edward Lear
Edward Thomas
Edwin Arlington Robinson
Ella Wheeler Wilcox
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
Emily Dickinson
Ezra Pound
Friedrich Schiller (English)
George Chapman
George Herbert
Gerard Manley Hopkins
Gertrude Stein
Hafez
Heinrich Heine
Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Isaac Rosenberg
James Russell Lowell
Johan Ludvig Runeberg
John Clare
John Donne
John Dryden
John Keats
John Milton
John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester
Joseph Addison
Leigh Hunt
Lord Byron
Ludovico Ariosto
Luís de Camões
Matthew Arnold
Matthew Prior
Michael Drayton
Nikolai Nekrasov
Percy Bysshe Shelley
Petrarch
Ralph Waldo Emerson
Robert Browning
Robert Burns
Robert Frost
Robert Southey
Rumi
Rupert Brooke
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Sir Philip Sidney
Sir Thomas Wyatt
Sir Walter Raleigh
Thomas Chatterton
Thomas Gray
Thomas Hardy (poetry)

Thomas Hood
Thomas Moore
Torquato Tasso
T. S. Eliot
W. B. Yeats
Walter Savage Landor
Walt Whitman
Wilfred Owen
William Blake
William Cowper
William Wordsworth



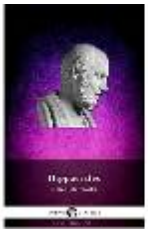
Masters of Art

Albrecht Dürer
Amedeo Modigliani
Artemisia Gentileschi
Camille Pissarro
Canaletto
Caravaggio
Caspar David Friedrich
Claude Lorrain
Claude Monet
Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Diego Velázquez
Edgar Degas
Édouard Manet
Edvard Munch
Eugène Delacroix
Francisco Goya
Giotto
Giovanni Bellini
Gustave Courbet
Gustav Klimt
J. M. W. Turner
Johannes Vermeer
John Constable
Leonardo da Vinci
Michelangelo
Paul Cézanne

Paul Gauguin
Paul Klee
Peter Paul Rubens
Piero della Francesca
Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Sandro Botticelli
Raphael
Rembrandt van Rijn
Thomas Gainsborough
Tintoretto
Titian
Vincent van Gogh
Wassily Kandinsky

Alphabetical List of Titles






A. E. Housman
Achilles Tatius
Adam Smith
Aeschylus
Albrecht Dürer
Alexander Pope
Alexander Pushkin
Alexandre Dumas (English)
Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Algernon Blackwood
Algernon Charles Swinburne
Ambrose Bierce
Amedeo Modigliani
Ammianus Marcellinus
Anatole France
Andrew Lang
Andrew Marvell
Ann Radcliffe
Anna Katharine Green
Anthony Hope
Anthony Trollope
Anton Chekhov
Aphra Behn
Apollodorus
Apollonius of Rhodes

Appian
Apuleius
Aristophanes
Aristotle
Arnold Bennett
Arrian
Artemisia Gentileschi
Arthur Machen
Arthur Morrison
Arthur Schopenhauer
Augustine
Aulus Gellius
Baroness Emma Orczy
Beatrix Potter
Beaumont and Fletcher
Bede
Ben Jonson
Benjamin Disraeli
Beowulf
Bram Stoker
Bret Harte
C. S. Lewis
Camille Pissarro
Canaletto
Captain Frederick Marryat
Captain Mayne Reid
Caravaggio
Caspar David Friedrich
Cassius Dio
Cato
Catullus
Charles and Mary Lamb
Charles Darwin
Charles Dickens
Charles Kingsley
Charles Lever
Charles Reade
Charlotte M. Yonge
Charlotte Perkins Gilman
Charlotte Smith
Christina Rossetti
Christopher Marlowe
Cicero
Claude Lorrain
Claude Monet
Clement of Alexandria
Confucius
Cornelius Nepos
D. H Lawrence (poetry)
D.H. Lawrence

Daniel Defoe
Dante Alighieri (English)
Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Dante Gabriel Rossetti
David Hume
Delphi Poetry Anthology
Demosthenes
Dickensiana Volume I
Diego Velázquez
Diodorus Siculus
Diogenes Laërtius
E. F. Benson
E. M. Delafield
E. M. Forster
E. Nesbit
E. Phillips Oppenheim
E. W. Hornung
Edgar Allan Poe
Edgar Allan Poe (poetry)
Edgar Degas
Edgar Rice Burroughs
Edgar Wallace
Edith Wharton
Edmund Burke
Edmund Spenser
Édouard Manet
Edvard Munch
Edward Bulwer-Lytton
Edward Gibbon
Edward Lear
Edward Thomas
Edwin Arlington Robinson
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
Elizabeth Gaskell
Elizabeth von Arnim
Ella Wheeler Wilcox
Ellen Wood
Émile Zola
Emily Dickinson
Ernest Bramah
Ernest Hemingway
Eugène Delacroix
Euripides
Ezra Pound
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Ford Madox Ford
Frances Burney
Frances Hodgson Burnett
Frances Trollope
Francis Bacon

Francisco Goya
Frank Norris
Frank R. Stockton
Friedrich Nietzsche
Friedrich Schiller (English)
Frontius
Fyodor Dostoyevsky
G. A. Henty
G. K. Chesterton
Galileo Galilei
Geoffrey Chaucer
George Bernard Shaw
George Chapman
George Eliot
George Gissing
George Herbert
George MacDonald
George Meredith
George Orwell
Gerard Manley Hopkins
Gertrude Stein
Gilbert and Sullivan
Giotto
Giovanni Bellini
Grant Allen
Gustav Klimt
Gustave Courbet
Gustave Flaubert (English)
Guy Boothby
Guy de Maupassant
H. G. Wells
H. P. Lovecraft
H. Rider Haggard
Hafez
Hall Caine
Hans Christian Andersen
Harriet Beecher Stowe
Heinrich Heine
Henrik Ibsen
Henry David Thoreau
Henry Fielding
Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey
Henry James
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Henryk Sienkiewicz
Herman Melville
Herodotus
Hesiod
Hilaire Belloc
Hippocrates

Homer
Honoré de Balzac (English)
Horace
Horace Walpole
Hugh Walpole
Ian Fleming
Immanuel Kant
Isaac Rosenberg
Isocrates
Ivan Turgenev
J. M. Barrie
J. M. W. Turner
J. W. von Goethe (English)
Jack London
James Fenimore Cooper
James Joyce
James Russell Lowell
Jane Austen
Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Jerome K. Jerome
Johan Ludvig Runeberg
Johannes Vermeer
John Buchan
John Bunyan
John Clare
John Constable
John Donne
John Dryden
John Galsworthy
John Keats
John Locke
John Milton
John Muir
John Ruskin
John Webster
John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester
Jonathan Swift
Joseph Addison
Joseph Addison
Joseph Conrad
Josephus
Jules Verne
Julius Caesar
Juvenal
Karl Marx
Kate Chopin
Katherine Mansfield
Kenneth Grahame
L. Frank Baum
L. M. Montgomery

Lafcadio Hearn
Laurence Sterne
Leigh Hunt
Leo Tolstoy
Leonardo da Vinci
Lewis Carroll
Livy
Longus
Lord Byron
Lord Dunsany
Louisa May Alcott
Lucan
Lucian
Lucretius
Ludovico Ariosto
Luís de Camões
Lytton Strachey
M. E. Braddon
M. R. James
Marcel Proust (English)
Marcus Aurelius
Margaret Oliphant
Maria Edgeworth
Marie Corelli
Mark Twain
Martial
Mary Shelley
Mary Wollstonecraft
Matthew Arnold
Matthew Prior
Maxim Gorky
Michael Drayton
Michel de Montaigne
Michelangelo
Miguel de Cervantes
Nathaniel Hawthorne
Niccolò Machiavelli
Nikolai Gogol
Nikolai Nekrasov
Nonnus
O. Henry
Oliver Goldsmith
One Thousand and One Nights
Oscar Wilde
Ouida
Ovid
Paul Cézanne
Paul Gauguin
Paul Klee
Pausanias

Percy Bysshe Shelley
Peter Paul Rubens
Petrarch
Petronius
Piero della Francesca
Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Pindar
Plato
Plautus
Pliny the Elder
Pliny the Younger
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Plutarch
Polybius
Procopius
Propertius
Ptolemy
Quintus Curtius Rufus
Quintus Smyrnaeus
R. Austin Freeman
R. M. Ballantyne
Radclyffe Hall
Rafael Sabatini
Ralph Waldo Emerson
Raphael
Rembrandt van Rijn
René Descartes
Richard Brinsley Sheridan
Richard Marsh
Robert Browning
Robert Burns
Robert E. Howard
Robert Frost
Robert Louis Stevenson
Robert Southey
Robert W. Chambers
Rudyard Kipling
Rumi
Rupert Brooke
Saki
Sallust
Samuel Butler
Samuel Johnson
Samuel Pepys
Samuel Richardson
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Sandro Botticelli
Sappho
Sax Rohmer

Seneca the Younger
Septuagint
Sheridan Le Fanu
Sidonius
Sigmund Freud
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Sir Issac Newton
Sir Philip Sidney
Sir Richard Burton
Sir Thomas Malory
Sir Thomas Wyatt
Sir Walter Raleigh
Sir Walter Scott
Sophocles
Stanley J. Weyman
Statius
Stendhal
Stephen Crane
Strabo
Suetonius
T. S. Eliot
Tacitus
Talbot Mundy
Terence
The Brontës
The Brothers Grimm
Theocritus
Theodore Dreiser
Thomas Babington Macaulay
Thomas Carlyle
Thomas Chatterton
Thomas De Quincey
Thomas Gainsborough
Thomas Gray
Thomas Hardy
Thomas Hardy (poetry)
Thomas Hood
Thomas Middleton
Thomas Moore
Thucydides
Tibullus
Tintoretto
Titian
Tobias Smollett
Torquato Tasso
Victor Hugo
Vincent van Gogh
Virgil
Virginia Woolf
Voltaire

W. B. Yeats
W. Somerset Maugham
W. W. Jacobs
Walt Whitman
Walter Pater
Walter Savage Landor
Washington Irving
Wassily Kandinsky
Wilfred Owen
Wilkie Collins
William Blake
William Cowper
William Dean Howells
William Harrison Ainsworth
William Hazlitt
William Hope Hodgson
William Makepeace Thackeray
William Morris
William Shakespeare
William Wordsworth
Xenophon
Zane Grey

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Holy Trinity Church, Headington Quarry — Lewis' final resting place



Lewis' grave